

Country Motor

Australia



Issue 58

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

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Back copies of Country Motor are
available upon request



Lancia Aprilia restored by Peter Renou

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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Austrian Tour 2023 Vineyards and Historic Sites



Wolfgang Prohazka

This years tour took place in a very hilly landscape between Italy, Slovenia and Austria which, during the Austrain Hungarian Monarchy, was the geographical center of the Habsburg Empire

The hotel 'Ratscher Landhaus' is close to the border between Slovenia and Austria. We stayed there the whole week and started our tours from there.

rescuing injured US Officers from the battle ground. The car joined the Isonzo battles No 11 and 12 with the US army supporting Italy.

finally found our way to the presentation of ham production – right at the point of time when various types of ham and good wine had to be tested!

We followed the road book to the castle 'Herberstein' still with parts of the building from the 12th century. We had a guided tour and learned that the Duke of Herberstein served the Habsburgs in the 15th and 16th century as diplomats.

As the tour guide had underestimated the possible average speed of pre-war cars – we arrived rather late at the hotel for dinner. As an apology for his failure, every team found a bottle of fine white wine in the room with an excuse for the exhausting tour driving pre-war cars. Not necessary to mention that it was a silent dinner and an early night.

On Tuesday we drove through the beautiful landscape to an oil mill, producing oil out of pumpkin seeds since the 19th century. The taste of that type of oil is very much appreciated on salads, however it left marks on white shirts.

Wednesday became a real hardship for the Buick and driver. We had underestimated the length of steep roads up and down to arrive at the monastery of St. Pauls. About 5 miles up and 8 miles down in the first gear – at about 5 miles per hour. I managed to prevent the

During the evening gathering, we received the road books with some additions. Due to land slides we had to change the route right at the start. We were guided to turn right on a narrow road entering Slovenija on a 23% descending road. Recalling a previous bad experience, I had filled the engine with an additional 1.5 litre of oil above the maximum point. Going downhill more than 14% the oil pump wouldn't get oil to pump it towards the crankshaft bearings.

We realized we were going the wrong way after about less than a quarter mile. For stronger cars no problem to turn around and go back – for us a no go! The Buick would never make it about half a mile ascending a 23% bumpy road.

We had to find another way – which was possible with google maps. After a 30 mile detour we ended up – at the start again! Through heavy rain we made it and



It was like deja vu for my 1918 Buick – it caught, somewhere in that area, a bullet in the engine block during WWI while serving as an ambulance car,

machine from overheating but going downhill, the brakes were overheating and I had to stop and pour water over the rear wheels. Then we had to wait a while before we could continue driving.

We missed the tour of the St. Paul Monastery at Lavanttal. The most interesting part of the guided tour was the 1945 the monastery sold the original Gutenberg Bible to the US Army, having freed Austria from Nazi dictatorship. Today you may see the Gutenberg Bible in the Library Of Congress in Washington.

The way back to the hotel was tiring at very slow pace. Very late arrival at the hotel and again a personal apology from the tour manager, a fine bottle of wine only for Michi and me, because he had underestimated the time it would cost the Buick to drive that long and steep distance back and forth over the mountains.

The next day Michi had to do a longer training session for a marathon competition in September – so we did not join the days tour. After finishing the training we had a fine picnic at a little pond. On Thursday a guided tour was planned at the castle of Eggenberg at the town of Graz. That was a real hardship

for the navigator to find the right direction through the city of Graz.

We were proud, we managed to be there on time, high noon, at the meeting point. Only a few teams managed to be there on time and had the benefit of an almost individual guided tour through the castle of Eggenberg.

Afterwards, only a few miles of driving and we reached a winery at the country side for lunch.

On the last day of the tour we visited the highest winery in Austria on the Slovenian border.

Overlooking the parking place from a memorial stone for the killed ones in WWI and WWII during both wars partisans were fighting against the soldiers of the other party.

After 500 miles the Austrian tour ended – the Buick did very well, no



problems at all, except the little errors in the road book!

Wolfgang

The above story was provided by the Early Buick & McLaughlin-Buick Owners Newsletter Group

Editor's Entries

Welcome to issue 58 of Country Motor Australia, maybe I should call it Country Motor International? As, like previous issues, I have included stories from overseas.

The first story is a tour in Austria by Wolfgang Prohazka. He is very active with his 1918 Buick, taking on the challenging hilly country of Austria.

There are some amazing designs seen on Lancias and other Italian cars. Keen Lancia enthusiast Peter Renou has worked on several models including the one shown in this issue, an Aprilia Ghia Grand Sport. A difficult restoration that resulted in a beautiful little spyder.

The Italian designers were not content to design bodies on their own indigenous brands but also many UK cars benefitted from their brilliance. The little known Bentley Cresta was case in mind based on the Mark VI. Its flowing Farina coupe lines are reminiscent of the Bentley Continental.

The Bentley Mark VI in its standard format is the subject of a story from Tasmanian Peter Anderson.

Regular contributor Richard Uncles has provided a story on his favourite subject, the Fiat 501 followed by pictures of the unusual two door 6-light saloons.

It is not often a Sunbeam Rapier is seen on display days, such as the British and European Motoring Shows. The model has quite a following in South Africa and expert on the series is Abie Fullard who has not only shown all the variations made of the model but also a story on the many he has owned over the years.

Robert Theidman has experienced a drive I have never had the opportunity to do. He learned how to drive a model T Ford!

Every now and then I am able to add more information on a particular car that has been shown in the magazine. David Gibson was a vintage motorist in the late sixties when I was more active in the VDC. He got in touch to discuss more about Roger Rayson's Invicta.

I have been out and about in the Alvis. The few events I have reported on were the Rheola Charity Carnival and the

Logan Pub gathering. Last year the Carnival raised \$60,000. More events will be shown in issue 59.

I have always been fascinated by army tanks. The VSCC Newsletter reminded me of a visit to Bovington Tank Museum back in the 1950s.

Bits and Pieces always has a few items of interest. Jim Oliver discusses the tools he has saved for many decades. Any readers may like to contribute stories on tools they have or used in the past.

Information on Alvises in Australia is still being sought by Dale Parcel for a book on Australian Alvises. If you have any relevant stories please contact Dale.

Finally a brief preview on "Australia Motoring Events From 1903-1930" researched by Terry Parker.

The next issue will feature a detailed story on the restoration of a three wheeler Morgan by a perfectionist, Chris Powell. Anyone who has or experienced a three wheel Morgan I would love to receive a story from you.

Happy Motoring

David

Aprilia Ghia Grand Sport Restoration



Peter Renou

In 1981 I visited the workshop of Giovanni Basso in Turin with Gerald Batt. There, just inside the door was a very pretty, partly restored Lancia Aprilia Spider.

Before we left Gerald had bought the car and he still owns it. The official name is Lancia Aprilia Ghia Grand Sport and this car has chassis number 00103.

Later Gerald told me of another identical car in America and I was eventually able to buy it and ship it home from the workshop of Jim Proffitt in California.

Basso built these cars and it seems only two were made, mine has chassis number 00101 and Gerald's 00103. The cars were built on a 'tubolare' chassis said to be designed by Basso and built by Nardi e Danese with Lancia Aprilia running gear.

The second series Aprilia V4 engine had been modified by Nardi with a twin carburetor manifold, extractor exhaust and a special water pump, stamped

The Lancia when new



Nardi, on the timing cover.

The drive train and 4-wheel independent suspension was standard Aprilia. The body was designed by Giovanni Michelotti, built by Rocco



The replica badge

Motto and badged by Ghia. The bonnet and boot lid were aluminium but the rest of the body was steel which was welded to the chassis for added stiffness.

The car was in a terrible state. It had suffered from much collision damage, rust and bad repairs. The original engine had

been replaced with a Volvo engine and to accommodate it one chassis tube had been removed and the steering re-routed.

When I got the car the Volvo engine had been removed. In the detritus on the floor I found the original knobs from the dash board switches and the remains of the original Nardi water pump,

The late Don Wright in Sydney did the mechanical work. He rebuilt an Aprilia engine for me and we rebuilt the water pump. Don replaced the missing chassis tube and reinstated the steering column.

A major problem was the lack of leg room as the car was built for short leg, long arm Italians.

We placed the engine further forward in the chassis and the pedal box beside the bell housing. It was necessary for me to make a remote gear shift with the gearbox further forward; it works very well giving a crisp gear change. All this gave sufficient room for 6 foot drivers, but a

A similar Basso chassis of a different car



narrow left shoe is necessary.

An Aprilia gearbox, the differential, the 4-wheel independent suspension and the brakes were overhauled. It sounds simple but was time consuming.

I had to reset the front springs and pack the axle to set the ride height to the usual 1/3 rebound and 2/3 bounce.

The rear suspension ride height was easily set by adjusting the rear torsion bars which were part of the complicated rear suspension.

Brian Hawke repaired and painted the body. The car was all out of shape so Brian decided the best place to start was the off side headlight and used it as the datum point for rebuilding the front



*The poor little battered car
Brian's datum point*

half of the body.

Brian was a superlative craftsman and did a wonderful job. I sold the car to him in the late '80s and he owned it until his death earlier this year.

My job was to reinstate the dashboard, the instruments, the steering wheel, the 'clap hands' windscreen wipers, the windscreen pillars, the headlights, the tail lights, the pop out



The dash board

door handles, the Ghia badges and the wheel covers.

From the parts found in the detritus on the floor and my parts bin an original ignition switch, secondary switches and turn indicator switch were found.

The gate guarding the glove box was repaired and chrome plated. The instrument cans had Fiat electronic inserts, badly fitted. Luckily I was able to rebuild them as the original Perspex chapter rings with the numbers impressed from the back survived.

To the left can I fitted a rev counter from an Aurelia GT and a new oil pressure gauge (from the Appia parts bin). There were ten small holes in the back of the can which is where the Aprilia fuel gauge was originally.

Nine lights gave fuel level on pressing a button and the tenth lit up automatically when the fuel was down to reserve. It was a simple matter to remake this.

To the right can I fitted a new Appia speedo with dynamo light. The steering wheel required a new wood rim and the horn button with the silver 'G' on a gold background was intact.

I made the windscreen wipers using a new Appia motor and linkage which required modification to reproduce the 'clap hands' motion. The windscreen pillars had been broken and badly welded so I had replicas made, an expensive exercise because of the shape and compound curves.

The pop out door handles which open by pressing one end were worn but were easily reamed and bushed. The Ghia badges were battered but making replicas was straight forward.

To replicate the wheel covers I used 14" covers from a Humber Super Snipe which are barely distinguishable from the originals. I had

1" rims spun by a friend and riveted these on to the covers to fit the 400mm Aprilia rims.

Finally the lights. A friend had 7" head light glasses from an Italian 1940s car, so I fitted these to modern semi-sealed headlight inserts. For the tail lights only the chrome rims survived. I made lenses from orange acrylic sheet, a Rolls Royce trick, as the red stop/tail light shines through as well as the amber turn indicator. The sockets and reflectors came from a modern Lancia.

I think most people would regard it a being a beautiful little car, Michelotti at his best. It also drives very well. It has adequate power being light, excellent brakes and suspension which provides above average handling. We once held a Lotus Elan at bay going through the Adelaide Hills due primarily to the handling. *Peter*



The Bentley Cresta



As Europe started to rebuild itself in the years after WW2 the coach builders of Italy were having a pretty tough time. A lack of materials, a lack of customers in Italy and a reluctance from most of Europe to do business with the 'enemy'.

Battista 'Pinin' Farina was grabbing any opportunity he could find to rebuild his business.

In 1948 Jean Daninos the boss of the French industrial firm Facel-Metallon, a self confessed petrol head, believed there was a business opportunity to develop an exclusive new motorcar based on the Bentley Mk VI. Together with Walter Sleator (head of Parisian Bentley distributor Franco-Britannic Automobiles) they

commissioned Farina to design the car. Farina built the first 2 or 3 cars before manufacture switched to the Facel coachworks in France.

Somewhere between 12 to 17 cars were built which doesn't seem many considering the impact the car created. With its Pininfarina designed and Facel built coachwork, the new Cresta was the first true sporting Bentley of the post-war era.

Lancia enthusiasts interest in the car is the striking similarity to the Aurelia B20 and the Fiat 1400 designed by Michelotti around the same time.

Michelotti worked for Farina before going freelance in 1949.

These pictures are of a later car

from 1951 and has only had 2 owners. The first owner drove the car for 50 years until his death in 2001. It last changed hands in the USA in 2021.



Bentley Mark VI



Engineers build bridges. Dentists fix teeth. Economists know 103 ways to make love—but can't find partners.

On my way to an Alice in Wonderland B.Ec (Hons), there I was in 1973, slogging through a 14-variable equation (there being 14 teaching weeks in the semester back then) which, in the manner of all preposterous myths, ludicrously purported to explain the workings of capitalist economies. The Lecturer who invented this stuff wrote a book, which won him Emeritus Professorship.

Meanwhile a respite glance out the window revealed a black Mk VI Bentley in the car yard opposite campus.

At \$4,000, a mate and I each tried to borrow \$2,000 for joint ownership. Both banks knocked us back on the spurious grounds that we had no means of repayment.

It took me 50 years to buy one to call my own. In the meantime for 33 years I owned wonderful SFC26, a superb Silver Dawn which now lives in Meander, Tasmania, about 10 km from my Western Creek property.

Early in 2022 I sold all my old cars. 1935 Austin 10; 1948 Citroen Light 15; 1951 Rolls Royce SFC26; 1964 Jaguar S. and with the proceeds bought a house for a penniless family in the Philippines. At 70, I figured my classic car days were over.

Then in August 2023, a phone call from someone in Brisbane (never heard of him) to say apparently I was interested in a

Mk VI (no, not me mate) ... but slowly the penny dropped. The caller was Steve Sparks (NBS Services, RR-B specialists) who, together with his father Barry, had spruced up SFC26 some 15 years earlier. The Mk VI belonged to a couple I met at an RR-B function about the same time. They drove me around in their later Bentley and took me to see their immaculate Mk VI which they had owned since the late 70s.

In 2019 I read in Chassis Plate that they still owned both cars, and sent an email saying if ever the Mk VI was for sale I would be interested—and promptly forgot all about it. Roll on to 2023. A widow for 12 months, the owner decided to sell the Mk VI.

I had to buy it. Chassis No.B367MB is as good as it gets. I had seen dozens of these fine cars and this was by far the best. After years parked under a mango tree, a splendid ground-up NBS rebuild was undertaken 2001-2005, followed by multiple Concours wins.

One of forty-six 4½ litre Mk VIs sold new in Australia, B367MB was delivered for shipment to Melbourne coachbuilder and sales/service agency Kellow-Falkiner in October 1951. Mrs. Beatrice Falkiner in South Yarra, who used



the car in Europe in 1963, was 2nd of the 5 previous owners; I assume she was married to Leigh Falkiner, brother of Ralph who co-founded Kellow-Falkiner.

My turn now! Back in business with a fantastic car in a wonderful part of Australia with excellent roads, outstanding scenery, negligible traffic and great weather. Hooroo, off I go. *Peter*





FIAT 501C Two Door Saloon

Richard Unkles

This story began in late 1925 at the Fiat Lingotto factory in Turin when the wide track chassis number 12514836 was laid down and progressed through the works as a chassis only for export to Australia. Nothing unusual as Fiat sales of the Tipo 501C to Australia were quite consistent.

It was destined for Autocar Industries in Russell Street, Melbourne, on the corner with Little Collins Street, who did not send it to the usual Melbourne Motor Body Co for a tourer or roadster body but to James Flood works in St Kilda Road for a sedan body. This was to be special as it was to be the display car on the company's stand at the 1926 Motor Show.

This was unusual as it was a 2 door car with rear seat access via the folding jump seat provided for the front passenger. The driver's seat was distinctly upmarket, so it was a driver's car, not a chauffeur's car.

No doubt one of the staff got a suitable commission when the car was sold off the stand to Mrs Bertha Horne, of 15 Dundas Street, Thornbury. This was the address of one of the local milk suppliers or local dairies. The milk business provided a suitable living for Mrs Horne and her son Robert.

During World War II, milk rounds were rationalised and rounds were given to a specific area, rather than an area being serviced by several milkmen (or woman in this case). The car was used carefully but in later years, after the demise of Mrs Horne, her son Robert continued the milk round with the horses and milk carts. If somehow a customer was missed he would fire up the Fiat rather than hitch up one of the horses and make the delivery.

It also did have some private use but sometime around 1970 it was run into by a Ford Falcon and the rear was damaged, including the chassis and torque tube. Fortunately the 501 has a scuttle mounted

fuel tank or the result might have been catastrophic. It also smashed the special tail light which had a green glass in it rather than red. Richard Unkles remembers seeing him around 1980, when he was still doing the milk round, but the Fiat laid idle in the stables.

Around 1983 Robert died and his possessions were left to a lady cousin who contacted the Vintage and Veteran Fiat Club to find a suitable new home for the damaged Fiat. The Club called for tenders and it was won by John Blakey in Cairns, who was very keen to win it. He also was keen to get the early milk bottling machine which had processed the old thick lip milk bottles fitted with the round waxed paper caps. The reason is that his grandfather had the dairy in Cairns in much earlier days.

John was keen to get into the project and carefully dismantled the major components. Unfortunately he contracted a fatal cancer soon after. He was very aware that his good friend Tony Ridolfi was very keen on the project and John made sure the car went to Tony.

Tony collected all the parts and trailed them some 80km south to his home and workshop at Babinda. But when unloading he discovered the front passenger's jump seat was missing. So he drove back to Cairns but it was not to be seen, despite his best efforts.

A couple of weeks later John's funeral was held in Cairns which Tony attended. On that day one of his friends discovered the missing seat leaning against a lamp post beside the highway. It seems that someone had picked it up but

realised they had no use for it and put it out beside the road.

Tony was a very industrious restorer and completed the restoration in a couple of years. This was one project of many Tony undertook but this one was never passed on. Eventually Tony died in 2022 aged 98 and the Fiat passed to his son Glenn in Cairns, also a car enthusiast.

Glenn says because of the usual distances covered with runs around Cairns, the Fiat does not get out as much as it should, but it is in safe hands, 98 years after it was the show car at the 1926 Melbourne Motor Show. It seems that if the right home was found for it a sale could be effected.

Actually I have a 2 door 501 sedan. It was Don Bain's. Hardly ever use it and getting it ready to sell in due course.

But it is an Italian imported body. It has a story as well. Quite different from the Flood body. Mine has one LH front door and one RH rear door.

But I am definitely keeping the Fiat taxi.

Attached is a photo is of another in Queensland. Restored in UK and brought here in the 80's, I think. It is 1925 and mine 1923 and some differences as well but very similar.

Hoping the cooler weather does not preclude the spray painting of the Austin Seven van body. (shown in a previous issue of Country Motor) Otherwise I have to wait for Springtime. The guards and running boards are already done in black. Keen to finish it this year.

Richard

A2-10 Bks-7/25

Autocar Industries Pty. Ltd. 33846
104-12 RUSSELL STREET,
Melbourne, 1926

Received from _____ of _____
the sum of _____ Pounds
_____ Shillings and _____ Pence

AUTOCAR INDUSTRIES PTY. LTD.
By Cheque Per _____
Cash With Thanks

17-11-1954

Mrs Horne

To Mr H Goodwin
Thompson, Car. Research.

Regrind cyl Head	1-15-0
8 ft H T wire	8-0
2 magnet brushes	3-6
10 1/2 cyl head bolts	1-10-0
1 cyl head gasket	1-5-0
to work done	9-0-0
Total £14-1-6	

Received
Cash
17/11/54

Various Documents Relating to the Fiat

The above is impossible to read. It was a receipt from Autocar Industries for the purchase of the Fiat for £465.0.6 on 26th May 1926. Right is an account for work on the Fiat on 17th November 1954 to repair the cylinder head, possibly due to prolonged boiling? The items below are typical forms used for the Transfer of Registration and a 1946 Drivers Licence. A fee of 5 shillings for the privilege to drive a car on public roads.

INFORMATION FOR THE USE OF THE REGISTERED OWNER

U

Transfer Form No. 1

TRANSFER OF REGISTRATION

Registered No., &c. **Fiat.** 64583 26th May. 10 £1-5-0.

The Registration described in detail on the face of this Certificate has been transferred to the undermentioned:—

Transfer Fee received on

Est. of the Late **Mr. Robert Walter HORNE.**

B. HORNE. Address 16 Dundas Street.

(Signature of Transferee) 11/5/56. **THORNBURY.**

M. Horne

Chief Commissioner of Police.

SPECIAL WARNING

TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS (a) From Buyer—Notice of possession and transfer fee. { Cars—2/6 per horse power unit. }
{ Cycles—£1—flat rate. }

(b) From Seller—Notice of disposal, Signed Owner's Certificate, and current Registration Certificate

Persons failing to forward these requirements to the Motor Registration Branch within 48 hours are liable to prosecution.

P.010/2.55—853

Date.	Receipt No.	Licence No.	Class.	Amount Paid.
SEP-23-46	57247	D 90340	8	— — * * * * *

Received amount printed above.

WARNING.—This Licence shall have no effect until the Cash Register imprint appears hereon.

Collector of Imposts.

NOT TRANSFERABLE. Section 6, Motor Car Act 1928, No. 3741, as amended by Motor Car Act 1935.

The Bearer
(Permanent Address)

Mrs. Bertha M. Horne,
16 Dundas Street,
THORNBURY. N.17.

LICENCE
No. 90340

is, on payment of a FEE of 5/-, receipt of which must be shown by Cash Register imprint hereon, licensed to drive a Motor Car (other than a Motor Cycle) on any public highway in the State of Victoria, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 19th September 1947.

Signature of Driver *B M Horne*

ALEX. M. DUNCAN, f.
Chief Commissioner of Police.



1925 Fiat 501 two-door in Queensland



1925 Fiat 501 Berlina

Oldcar



Notes on the Fiat 501

Above a Fiat 501 two-door saloons and a tourer.

The 501 was made from 1919-1926. It was a small family car. Engine was four cylinders, side valve 1460cc and a four speed manual gearbox. The dimensions were: the wheel base 104.3in and weighed 900-1000kg. Its predecessor was the Fiat 70 and was succeeded by the Fiat 503. Single carburettor. 501 was 23hp (17kw) the 501S (1921-26) 27hp (20kw) and 501SS (1921-26) 30hp (22kw) According to the 'Vintage Motor Car Pocketbook' - "like nearly all vintage Fiats, it was excessively low-geared to counteract its considerable weight and inconsiderable power output. But for those who are not in a hurry this was balanced by sound design, fine finish, good handling qualities and excellent reliability" The 501 was the first Fiat model after World War I and Fiat produced 47,000 501s in total.



Model Changes of the Sunbeam Rapier

Provided by Abie Fullard from South Africa, editor of 'The Sunbeam Voice' the club publication for the Sunbeam Sports Car Club of South Africa

I have summarized the properties of the different Series Rapiers.

Series I:

The Series I was initially not called Series I until the Series II appeared. The Series I was quite a pretty car, showing the Studebaker side scallops from the Raymond Loewy studios, but was not far removed from the Hillmans that appeared a few months later.

The Rapier was the first of the new Audax range of cars and was announced at the Motor Show in October 1955 and preceded the Hillman Minx and Singer Gazelle by several months. It was well received by the motoring press and was available in a large array of two tone colours, that was the in thing in those days.

A four seat two door coupe, leather trim, a steering column gear change and overdrive were standard features.

The engine was basically the same as

the 1390cc Hillman Minx engine but with a raised compression ratio and an altered inlet manifold with a Stromberg carburettor.

It was considered not to be powerful enough for its image, so in October 1956, it was fitted with the so-called R67 engine that replaced the Stromberg carburettor with twin Zenith carburettors on a revised inlet manifold that gave it an additional 5 hp. The total production of the Series I was 7,477, making it now quite a rare model and was discontinued in 1958 when the Series II was launched.

Series II

The Series II was announced on 6th of February 1958, and was a great improvement on the Series I. In fact, a totally different car. After Peter Harper had come 5th overall in a works prepared Series I. Rootes arranged for nine of the new Sunbeam Rapiers to be in Monte Carlo for the press to try at the end of the Monte Carlo Rally.

The Series II, was now also available as a convertible and was the start of the well known Rapier shape we all so know. The shape of the Series II changed

dramatically. Although the changes originated in the Rootes styling department, there was still a great influence on the Raymond -Loewy designs as the Series II looked remarkably like a shortened Studebaker Golden Hawk!

The traditional Sunbeam radiator grille, shortened and widened was brought back for the Series II, but because the original car had been



designed with a horizontal grille, the space left by the adoption of the Sunbeam grille was filled with horizontal side grilles. The two-tone lower body scheme of the Series I was discontinued in favour of a broad full length flash in the same colour as the roof, but the most visible change was the appearance of fins on the rear wings. The interior of the Series II was similar to that of the Series I, except that a floor gear change replaced the Humber Hawk influenced column change. This was the result of development on the works Series I rally cars and was an immediate success.



Series III

The Series III was introduced in September 1959. There were some smaller but significant changes to the Rapier's body that considerably altered the car's appearance.



These were: The number of horizontal bars in each of the side grilles was increased from three to four. The boot lid acquired an oblong number plate recess and surround in place of the square ones of earlier cars. The most visible change was the redesigned side flash, now narrower and lower down the side of the car with the Rapier script on its rear end.



The least visible, but making a big difference was a reduction in thickness of the windscreen pillars and a lowering of the scuttle line to give a 20 per cent increase in windscreen area.

However, the changes did not stop at the exterior, the Rapier III's interior had a complete redesign. Rootes stylists completely redesigned the seats, trimmed in single colour, high quality vinyl with contrasting piping.

For the first time, deep pile carpets were fitted as standard in the foot wells.



The steering wheel, knobs and switches were in black plastic instead of beige and the dashboard, instead of padded metal and plastic as in earlier cars, the dash was burr walnut veneer surmounted by a padded crash roll and

held a full complement of black-faced British Jaeger instruments. Mechanically, the Series III also had some significant changes. The Series III had the same 1494 cc engine that had been fitted to the Alpine II. Although the

cylinder block was inherited from the Series II Rapier, the new eight port aluminium cylinder head had an increased compression ratio and redesigned valves and used a new sportier camshaft. The twin Zenith carburettors from the Series II remained but were mounted on a new water heated inlet manifold. The result of these changes was a power increase of 5 bhp to 78 bhp at 5400 rpm.

Gearbox changes were also made that included higher second, third and top gear ratios, and a reduced angle of gear lever movement to make for shorter lever

travel and snappier changes.

The front brakes also were changed and new front disc brakes were fitted that significantly improved the Rapier's braking capability. Suspension changes included a widened front track to give greater stability and improved roadholding.

According to Autocar, the Series III had a top speed of 93 mph and reached 60 mph from rest in 16.5 seconds, a significant improvement over the Series II. The Series III production total was some 15,680 and production stopped in April 1961 when the Series IIIA Rapier was launched.

Series IIIA:

By 1961, The Rapier was getting very good Rally successes, and as a result, became the front line rally car for the Rootes Group competitions department. So when the Series II Alpine was announced with an enlarged 1592cc engine, the Sunbeam III soon after received the same engine and was called the Series IIIA.



The Series IIIA was announced on the 20th April, 1961.

On looks, externally and internally the Series IIIA was identical in body and interior trim to the Series III, however, I have seen a slight difference in the interior trim. On the Series III, the door and side panels had a checkered insert at the top end, whereas the the Series IIIA, it had been taken away

Rootes had concentrated on changes that would improve the car's durability by making the following changes to the Series IIIA. Engine capacity was increased to 1592 cc by boring out the cylinders to 82mm, making this engine now with its stroke of 76mm a short stroke, over square engine. A stiffer crankshaft with larger diameter con rod bearings was fitted with appropriate alterations to the con rods and gudgeon pins.

Modified oil and water pumps completed the engine changes. As a result, power output and torque were increased. The IIIA modifications included some detail changes such as an increased diameter front anti-roll bar that improved roadholding, a redesigned clutch bell housing, a stronger clutch assembly with 9 pressure springs instead of 6 and a redesigned air cleaner assembly.

(Abie's Note) For some unknown reason, in spite of more power and torque, the IIIA was no faster than the smaller engined III, in fact, the III had a higher top speed as well as a better time 0-60 than the IIIA. It might have been a difference in gear ratios, or as we have seen on some cars, that the lighter pistons were capable of higher piston speeds. However, the IIIA certainly did benefit from the engine mods to strengthen it, as the 1592cc is as bullet proof an engine as you can find anymore in the motoring world.

In mid 1963, Rootes stopped production of the convertible IIIA, but carried on with the hard top version until October 1963 when the IIIA was replaced by the Series IV Rapier.

But then some 17,354 Series IIIA Rapiers had been produced.

Series IV



Now the Series IV has an interesting initial history. By 1963, Rootes had decided that the well known and loved Rapier shape with the fins had served its life and was also not the main Rally car anymore, so they designed and started producing a brand new Series IV Rapier. They had even distributed brochures and other marketing items and some of the cars had already been produced with Rapier Series IV badges on them.



The new Rapier was to be a four door sporting saloon of very unusual design but in tests, it appeared that the new car was quite heavy on fuel consumption and the story goes that Lord Rootes did not want a fuel thirsty Sunbeam Rapier to come out of the Rootes stables. So, Rootes, having already started producing the cars, changed its name and it became the Humber Sceptre MKI.

This would have been the Series IV Sunbeam Rapier door



The Rootes designers had to go back and produce a different Series IV Rapier. At that time, Rootes were busy rationalising their product range and the new Rapier was then also included in

the project. Although they basically kept the old body shell, the new Series IV Rapier had many significant changes to make it look more modern and became a very different looking car, and in my humble opinion, a lovely looking car.

Immediately one would recognize the change by looking at the wheels, as the Series IV now also had the corporate standard 13" wheels with corporate hub caps and rim finishers. So the lovely stainless steel hub caps were gone forever.

A new bonnet made the front look lower and flatter and the front wings were modified to accept extensions housing alloy side grilles and sidelights with amber turn indicators. The traditional Sunbeam grille, already heavily stylised for the Series II, was further changed to give a lower, more square shape with a pronounced convex profile.

New headlamp rims were fitted, in fact Sunbeam Alpine rims, but chromed for the Rapier and a new front bumper using the same shape and profile as the rest of the Light Car range.

At the back, a new full width number plate plinth appeared with a new Light Car range bumper. To give a more open look from the side, the frames were removed from the side windows. Finally, small badges fitted at the bottom of each front wing and on the boot lid proclaimed each car to be a "Series IV".

Inside, a new dash, still in walnut veneer, but with the glove box raised into the dash itself allowed the inclusion of a proper storage shelf on each side of the car. Instrumentation and controls were much as before except that the heater switches and ashtray were now housed in a console in front of the gear lever. To aid driver comfort, an adjustable steering column was fitted along with new front seats which allowed more fore and aft adjustment and for the first time, included backrest adjustment.

The front suspension was re-engineered to replace the half king pin on each side of the car with a sealed for life ball joint. All other suspension joints became either sealed for life or

were rubber bushed thereby eliminating every grease point on the car.

Naturally, the gearing was adjusted overall to compensate for the smaller wheels and the front brake discs were reduced in size so that they would fit inside the smaller wheels. A brake servo became standard and the spring and damper settings were adjusted to give a softer ride. A new diaphragm clutch and new clutch master cylinder brought lighter and more progressive clutch operation.

The 1592cc engine from the Series IIIA was unchanged but the twin Zenith carburettors were replaced by single twin-choke Solex 32PA1A in the interests of serviceability. The effect of the new carburettor was to increase power to 84 bhp and torque to 91 lb/ft at 3500 rpm.

(Abie's Note) For some unknown reason, although now having only one carburettor, Rootes still kept the horrible, inefficient inlet manifold that must surely have hampered the flow of air coming in)

In October 1964, along with the rest of the Light Car range, the Series IV received the new Rootes all synchromesh gearbox, There was no convertible option The Motor road test of April 1964 gave the Series IV Rapier's maximum speed as 91 mph and its 0-60 mph time as 17 seconds.

The Series IV was replaced by the Series V after a total of 9,700 units had been produced. Also, the Rootes CKG assembly of Rapiers stopped with the Series IIIA, so no Series IV Rapiers were assembled in South Africa.



Series V

By 1965, it was now ten years after the launch of the original Sunbeam Rapier, the Series IV Rapier although still looking very well and modern, was becoming obsolete and needed to be replaced, and the plan was to replace it with the new Arrow Rapier.

However, the Fastback Rapier was not ready, so in September, 1965,

Rootes decided to give the current Rapier one more face lift and introduced the Series V.

The Series V looked exactly like the Series IV inside and out except for badges on wings and boot which now said "1725".

There was however, one significant change and that was that the Series V was now powered by the adapted 5-bearing crankshaft 1725cc engine. Other minor changes included the change of its polarity from positive to negative earth and was fitted an alternator in place of the dynamo. They also devised a new twin pipe exhaust system so that the engine could breathe more easily.

The effect of these changes was to increase the Rapier's maximum speed to 95 mph and reduce its time from rest to 60 mph to 14.1 seconds.

However, in spite of being the best Series Rapier of them all, it did not sell well and was replaced by the new "Arrow" Fastback Rapier in June 1967 after only 3,759 units had been made. This of course makes it by far the rarest of the Series Rapiers

The following is a short summary of the different models and the timeline for quick reference.

Sunbeam Rapier timeline

1955 Launch of the original Series I Sunbeam Rapier, with two-door pillarless coupe body, two-tone paint, column-shift transmission and leather upholstery. Engine is a 1360cc single-

carb unit with 63bhp.

1956 Uprated engine with twin Zenith carburettors fitted, producing 68bhp.

1958 Series II Rapier released, with revised frontal styling incorporating a narrower grille (evoking the traditional Sunbeam-Talbot shape). Convertible body now available. Engine is now 1494cc and 73bhp. Recirculating ball steering box replaces original cam-and-peg type. Floor-mounted gear change is now standard, with column-shift optional. Two-tone paint replaced by contrasting waistline colour flash. Vinyl trim now fitted in place of leather and overdrive is an option.

1959 Series III Sunbeam Rapier has many small cosmetic changes, such as redesigned front chrome trim and a narrower side flash incorporating a 'Rapier' script at its rear. Centre body profile is revised, giving a larger windscreen due to slimmer pillars and lower scuttle. New dashboard design with walnut veneer and padded top fitted. Engine gains eight-port aluminium alloy cylinder head. Gearbox has short-throw change. Front disc brakes now fitted, requiring a small increase in front track. Top speed is now 91mph and 0-60mph takes 16.6 seconds.

1961 The Series IIIA Rapier features upgraded drivetrain for better durability 1592cc engine with larger diameter crank bearings, stiffer crankshaft, larger piston gudgeon pins, uprated oil and water pumps. 1494cc engine now makes

78bhp. Stronger front anti-roll bar improves roadholding. Fresh-air heater now standard.

1963 Rapier convertible discontinued in the summer. In the autumn the Series IV Rapier is announced, with numerous mechanical upgrades introduced across the 'Audax' range at this point, including 'sealed for life' greaseless suspension and steering parts. Brake servo is now standard and springs and dampers adjusted to give a more saloon-like ride. Wheels go from 15 to 13 inches and generic Rootes wheel trims are fitted instead of bespoke Rapier ones. Front end restyled with flatter, lower-set bonnet, orange indicators incorporated into the side grilles and a smaller, convex grille fitted. Dashboard now incorporates a proper glovebox, allowing for a parcel shelf below and a centre console is fitted.

1964 All 'Audax' cars, including the Rapier, receive a new all-synchro gearbox.

1965 The Series V Rapier has a five-bearing 1725cc engine, developing 91bhp. An alternator is standard equipment and the electrical system switches to negative earth.

1967 Sunbeam Rapier production ends, in June, after 68,809 were built. *Abie*

*Below: From the 1959 Motor Show Catalogue
Earls Court, London*

SUNBEAM RAPIER

THE racy Rapier has a new high compression engine giving 78 b.h.p. and Lockheed disc brakes are fitted to front wheels to cope with the increased performance. Front track is slightly wider and road holding better. Slimmer windscreen pillars improve forward vision and new side mouldings identify the 1960 series. New walnut instrument panel with padded safety top and higher front seat backrests.

CLOSE-UP

Four-cyl.; o.h.v.; 79 x 76.2 mm.; 1,494 c.c.; 78 b.h.p.; 9.2 to 1 comp.; coil ign.; twin Zenith carbs.; 4-speed; 15.24, 9.75, 6.34, 4.55 to 1; Laycock overdrive opt.; cen. ivr.; susp., f., ind. coil, r., half-elliptic; 2-door; 4-seat; hyd. brks. disc front.; max. 90 m.p.h.; cruise, 70; m.p.g., 27-30; whl. base, 8ft.; track f., 4ft. 1 3/4 in.; r., 4ft. 0 1/2 in.; lgh., 13ft. 6 1/2 in.; wdth., 5ft. 1 in.; ht., 4ft. 10 1/2 in.; g.c. 5 1/2 in.; turng. cir., 36ft.; kerb wt., 21 cwt.; tank, 10 gals.; 12-volt.

£695 - £290.14.2 p.t. = £985.14.2



SUNBEAM RAPIER CONVERTIBLE

THIS year's hot summer brought this type of car bang into favour. Now the Mark III convertible and coupe get more power from the engine, with a new aluminium cylinder head and compression ratio raised to 9.2 to 1. With the power comes greater restraint disc brakes now being fitted to the front wheels. A graceful, gay looking car, brought right up to date.

CLOSE-UP

Four-cyl.; o.h.v.; 79 x 76.2 mm.; 1,494 c.c.; 78 b.h.p.; 9.2 to 1 comp.; coil ign.; twin Zenith carbs.; 4-speed; 15.24, 9.75, 6.34, 4.55 to 1; cen. ivr. Laycock overdrive opt.; susp., f., ind. coil, r., half-elliptic; 2-door; 4-seat; hyd brks. disc front.; max. 90 m.p.h.; cruise, 70; m.p.g. 27-30; whl. base, 8ft.; track f., 4ft. 1 3/4 in.; r., 4ft. 0 1/2 in.; lgh., 13ft. 6 1/2 in.; wdth., 5ft. 1 in.; ht. 4ft. 10 in.; g.c. 5 1/2 in.; turng. cir., 36ft.; kerb wt., 20 1/2 cwt.; tank, 10 gals.; 12-volt.

£735 - £307.7.6 p.t. = £1,042.7.6

An Obsession, Or A Disease?

Abie Fullard, a Sunbeam Rapier Enthusiast from South Africa



Having owned a total of 11 Sunbeam Rapiers, I presume I might well be called "Mr Rapier" in South Africa, I thought I would like to write about my experiences with these very fine cars

After matriculating in 1960, I spent a year in the Naval Gymnasium at Saldanha Bay after which I started working and studying for my BSc. degree after hours.

My first cars were Fiats as I loved (and still do) the Italian cars, for they were very different from the usual Anglia's, Cortina's, Opels and Datsuns that were very prevalent in South Africa in the 1960's. Those days, Sunbeam Rapiers were very expensive cars and out of reach for young people just starting to work

However, in 1967, an engineer friend of mine had a Series IIIA Rapier and driving with him, I loved the walnut dash with the fluted top, the lovely gauges and the overdrive that to me was a very new technology and the stick shift compared to the metal dash and four speed column shift of my Fiat 1200.

However, some time later, his Rapier developed enormous slippage when the overdrive was engaged and being reluctant to fix it, he offered to swap it for my very hot Fiat 1200, that I at first, was reluctant to do as I had until then, never considered myself a Sunbeam Rapier owner. But, apart from the overdrive problem, it was in superb condition in an Airforce blue/Light Blue colour combination and being a 1,600 cc engine, I agreed.

Now first a little history of typical young driver habits in South Africa in the 1960's. In those days, in most cities of South Africa, it was very common to find pull away street racing from robot to robot at nights (In South Africa only until

recently, traffic lights were called robots) This was called "Dicing" and at nights in road house restaurants, drivers would gather, have an egg burger, mill around and often dices were formed from there. Totally illegal and a wary eye had always to be on the lookout for the so called "speed cops"

For the readers who might know Pretoria, the two most common pick up points were The Doll's House right at the Eastern end of Church Street where from there you could dice back up Church Street, for many kilos past the Presidents house before hitting the first robot at Eastwood Avenue. The other was Ray's Drive-In in Vermeulen Street, where you had a long stretch from Du Toit Street up to Beckett Street from both Vermeulen and Church streets.

Up to that time, the biggest engine car I had owned was my Fiat 1200 and although highly modified, it only just held its ground against the likes of Fiat 1500's, Cortina GT's, Alfa Romeo Giulia Supers and Datsun SSS's, so when I took ownership of the Rapier, I decided that I would also modify it to see how it would fare in dices.

Although, by that time I was quite proficient in engine rebuilding, I knew nothing about overdrives and promptly threw the overdrive away and bought a new one from Stanley Motors for R150 (£7.00 in today's money), but at that time, it was one month's pay. The engine was another case altogether, I stripped it, honed the cylinder walls, had it dynamically balanced and con rods

polished. The cylinder head went to a tune-up shop for porting and skimming and I had a manifold for side draught Webers made for me from steel. The camshaft was sent to Basil van Rooyen, a well known racer and performance specialist, to have it cut to his road race specifications. I must add, being young, single and living with friends in a shared house, one could afford to spend on your passion. So, to the amazement of my friends, I assembled the engine on my bed and to avoid any dust getting into it, covered it with a sheet while at work and slept on the floor.

After a troublesome time fiddling with the Webers that took longer than I wanted, the Rapier was run in and to my delight virtually slaughtered the 1600-1,800cc competition in dices, giving a tyre squeal when slamming it into second.

While still enjoying my Rapier, my friend, now seeing his old car in a new light, offered me his almost new Fiat 1500 for the Rapier, that I accepted.

Now we jump to 1999, after a very successful career in computing and computer sales working in Europe for a California Unix Hardware manufacturer, Sun Microsystems, I returned to Pretoria and started what became a very large classic car collection.

One Sunday, while on a breakfast run with one of the Italian car clubs, I saw a Grey Sunbeam Rapier in the parking lot and my thoughts immediately went back to my great Rapier of the 1960's.

I waited a while and saw the owner walk towards the car and approached him

and told him of my Rapier. His name was Rob Maidmen and was originally from Manchester (An enormous Manchester United fan) and was a member of the Sunbeam Sports Car Club and although I had no Sunbeam, I decided to join the club.

A few months later, Rob told me that he was thinking of going back to the UK and offered the car to me for sale. I immediately bought it. Price was R13,000, (£950) it was a Series IIIA and in good condition and with it I joined in the club's events.

This was the first of many Rapiers I then bought, sometimes fixed and sold to make place for another Rapier, as I seemed to had a passion to try and keep as many of these cars on the road. I usually had at least two concurrently in my collection.



While still owning the Grey IIIA, a Series III became available that had been subjected to a total bare metal restoration by a club member. Not being able to resist this Rapier, I bought it, making my Rapier collection now two Rapiers.

In 2010 we relocated to a small village on the coast near Cape Town, called Pringle Bay, causing me to sell a lot of my collection as I was not able to find garage facilities for all my cars. Both Rapiers were included in the cars I brought down.

I joined the Cape Sunbeam Car Club and became the editor of the newsletter and with both Rapiers, took part in many events in and around the Cape Wine lands. The photo below shows the red Series III on an occasion taking part in classic car shows. Some shows, like the large George Show, was quite a far distance from where I lived. (George is quite a large town on the South East Coast about 400 Km from Cape Town)

At this time, I also decided to join the SROC as an international member.



The deal with Dave Williams comprised two Fastbacks, a running midnight blue one and a wine coloured one that had been in an accident. Not wanting to ship a wreck down to Cape Town, I decided to transport the blue Fastback to the Cape and had my son strip the red one for spares, but knowing what I know now, I should probably have invested the money to get it going as well, but at that time, I was not sure if



I would really like Fastbacks.

The Blue Fastback was horribly faded with an untidy interior. I had it resprayed in the original Midnight Blue and did up the interior. I kept this Fastback until late 2017 when I sold it and attended many Cape events with it, including two or three long trips to Knysna for the Knysna Classic Car Show. I found the Fastback to be more refined than the Series III Rapiers and a pleasure on long trips, but somehow, the styling lacked the wickedly individual styling of the Series III Rapiers, reminding me of a Plymouth Barracuda. There was something wrong with the steering geometry, for when turning very steeply, the car felt like a person whose knees had given in under him, this complaint has been confirmed by every Fastback owners I have ever met. It might be a result of the CKD assembly.

At the George show in February 2012, I noticed an usual colour Series III and spoke to the owner, an old man from East London who had driven the Rapier to George, hoping to find a buyer. Well, what can I say? There I was. I bought the Rapier and had it transported to Cape Town where I had to first give it a rather comprehensive respray as the old paint



was peeing off.

The car had a 1725cc engine with

an aluminum sump installed and had a slightly hotter cam, so I think it had taken part in rallies in earlier years. Because we are fortunate to be blessed with extraordinary scenery in the Cape, and as a result of its unusual colour combination, I decided to enter a photo of this car in SROC's 2013 photo competition and to my delight, it won first prize and I am still proudly wearing my SROC rugby jersey to this day.

This car ran like a bullet and I used it extensively for the long distance events like the National gathering of the two clubs at the Gariep Dam in 2014 and trips for the Knysna show. It cruising effortlessly at 70 mph on the way to the Nationals on a freezing morning through the Karoo. As I now had two series III Rapiers, I sold the red III to a spares salesman in East

London and for a while, my Rapier activities were reduced to tuning the cars, cleaning them for events etc, when I heard that a member of the Gauteng Sunbeam Club wanted to sell a rare Series IV that he had restored and had installed a 1725cc engine in it.

Once again the passion (weakness) overcame me and I bought the Series IV. Although that in the 1960's, South Africa, had a comprehensive Rootes CKD manufacturing capability, the CKD project for Rapiers was ended with the Series IIIA and no Series IV or V Rapiers were built here. The only two I know of is an imported restored Series V and the Series IV ex Zimbabwe car that the member was trying to sell.



I bought the Series IV and took it as it was still standing in the garage, not having been driven since the restoration, and promptly drove it down to Pringle Bay.

With my ever present problem of space in Pringle Bay and to assist with my cash flow, although the Moonstone Series III was absolutely perfect, I reluctantly sold it to a club member who still has it and maintains, enjoys and loves it.

Call me an idiot if you want, but I was not as enthusiastic with the Series IV as I was with Series III Rapiers, maybe the wrong engine, the Weber carb and the more modern, but less individual styling, so when I heard of a very original Series

IIIA in Zululand (Part of the KZN Province). I contacted the owner, a young man who had inherited the Rapier and was not really a classic car lover. I bought it and as I had by this



time also acquired a Series V Alpine and a so called "African Violet" RSA built Tiger, increasing my storage problem and my somewhat strange lack of enthusiasm for the Series IV, I sold it to a club member who still has it today.

The white/Pippin Red IIIA was mechanically in very good condition, but as always, had faded paint work and was very shabby inside. So it was given a quick blow over on the body and I had the interior seats, mats and door panels renewed.

I also entered this Series IIIA in the SROC competition and although it received some positive comments, did not win this time. The photos below show the redone interior and the photo entered in the competition.

In early 2017, the owner of the very



special Series V announced that as a result of illness, he was not allowed to drive anymore and put the Rapier up for sale. As this was probably the finest Rapier in South Africa, and probably the only Series V, I bought it and went and fetched it at his house in Knysna.

This car had been subjected to a comprehensive restoration and a huge



amount of engine modifications had also been installed. It had enormous power, one could not dare to push the pedal hard in first gear as it would almost instantaneously rocket to way beyond the digits on the rev counter.

I sold my Blue Fastback when in 2018 I heard of an automatic Fastback for sale at a very low price, I thought it might be useful to have a look at an automatic Rapier and at that ridiculous price, R17,000 (£918) it was a no brainer,



After the 2018 National event, I had sold my White/Pippin Red IIIA to a remote club member living in the Free State who has since done a lot of detailing on the car and it is regularly seen at shows in Welkom.

So I bought the auto Fastback it and transported it to the Cape. I did not do anything to the car, although it had no rust and it was complete and in reasonable condition it was not in the condition I would want a car in my collection to be.

After a few months of driving it, although it ran OK, it was like a tortoise with cramped feet and I simply could not get my mind around a Rapier with an automatic and in my opinion, the performance suffered as a result of only three forward gears. So I sold it for slightly more than what I had paid for it. I have heard that not only are the Automatic Fastbacks quite rare, but in the UK, they seem to be sought after. That boggles my mind

By 2019, I was under the impression that my Rapier days were coming to an end when the estate of a well known Club member, Barney Curtis, who had suddenly passed away in 2018 was selling his restored and modified to Holbay specs red Fastback.

Although not as positive on Fastbacks as on Series III Rapiers, this was beyond doubt an incredible example of a Fastback and I bought it



from the estate In the Summer 2019. I picked it up in Johannesburg and without even opening the bonnet, driving it down first to attend the Knysna Classic car show, then to Pringle Bay, a trip of 1,800 Km.

It had phenomenal performance and was a very fine car. However, When Covid hit us in 2020, my wife had been diagnosed with breast cancer and although found very early and removed, she was getting agitated by living far from medical facilities and we decided that we would start making plans to move nearer to medical facilities. So, my life underwent a change in direction, from a collector of cars to a net seller and I progressively got rid of my cars, the Alpine was sold, the green Series V Rapier was sold to a member of the New Zealand Sunbeam club in 2020

In June 2022, a few months before my 80th birthday, we moved into a retirement complex. I had managed to sell all my cars by this time and apart from my rare Fiat 2300S Ghia coupe, I had no more cars and had said goodbye to my Rapiers.

To prevent my brain from decaying, I took on the job as editor of the Gauteng Sunbeam Sports Car club. although based in the Cape and I suppose writing about Rootes Group cars made me itch again and after convincing my extremely reluctant wife that I needed some project to keep me busy, she agreed that I should look for some car project.

I suppose it would not be a surprise to see what I had decided on YES a late, UK built 1963 Series IIIA Rapier in Velvet Green/Sage Green. I have already overhauled the front steering ball joints and fixed any signs of rust on the body

PS: I have my eye on my next little



project after convincing my wife that I am bored.

Abie



One Experience off the Bucket List

Roger Thiedeman

Roger has been asking around to experience driving a Model T Ford, his wish came true



Attached are a few photos from my Model T Ford driving lesson near Ballarat on Monday.

It was a wonderful experience in magnificent weather and it didn't take me too long to get the hang of things, thanks to owner Geof Baulch's patient and enthusiastic instruction.

After the 90-minute session on public 'black-top' and gravel roads in the vicinity of his semi-rural property we returned for afternoon tea kindly provided by Geof's equally friendly wife Jo.

Following which, when I was ready to take my leave, Geof asked if I would like to go for another drive in the 'T'. But deciding not to overstay my welcome and not wanting to push my luck with the slightly heavier traffic in the late afternoon, as well as the dazzle of the setting sun.

I thanked Geof for the umpteenth time that day and headed off to my overnight motel accommodation. Seated in the back during my Tuition in the 'T' was Eddie Ford of *Restored Cars* magazine, who had 'brokered' my introduction to Geof.

Eddie came from his home, about an hour away, to take photos and gather information about Geof's car for a report he plans to publish in the next issue of the magazine. So that will be something to look forward to.

Cheers!

Roger



Back Story on Roger Rayson's Invicta



Roger Rayson's
Invicta



not issued until 1969, not that its important.

I sold the car to a VDC club member Bill Bennet in 1972 after I got married, whom is, I believe, the one who removed the body to build a four seater in its place. I lost track of things not long after this

as I was transferred to Queensland and I now live in Hervey Bay where I have resided for the last 33 years.

Unfortunately I don't have any photos of the Invicta on acquisition as they got lost after my father passed in 1980.

Attached is one during construction of the body and one of it competing in the acceleration and braking test at Kalorama. The Invicta was unbeaten in both this test and the 1/4 mile sprints during my ownership in club events. I am still into old cars but do not own one at present. Several worthwhile projects have come up recently but living 3.5 hours north of Brisbane means they are usually sold before I can get to see them. My greatest achievement was the total restoration and body build I did on a 1924 Darracq 15/40 sports purchased from Gavin Campbell of Avanti motors in Mentone. I sold this car to Warrick Hansted who lives in Baccus Marsh, I think, in



Hi, my name is David Gibson and I came across an article while browsing the Net. (*Country Motor issue 46*)

The vehicle featured in the article is a high chassis Invicta, chassis LC249, which my father purchased for me in 1964, when I was in my final year at school.

It was purchased from a motor garage in Northcote as a drivable chassis, with no body whatsoever. My father, Hartley Gibson and I proceeded to construct a body using fibreglass and metal sheet over a wooden frame.

The doors, however, were adapted from a 1938 Morris 8 found abandoned



in the late 70's who I believe still owns it. Several other cars have passed through my hands the



in a paddock in Parkdale. Upon completion of the body a plaque was attached under the drivers door stating "Coachbuilder H Gibson & Son, Melbourne Vic."

This body is the one depicted in the photo, sitting on a trailer, for sale at the Gisborne swap meet. The photos shown of the Darley sprints, from memory, could not have been 1967 as stated as the car is displaying its rally number for the 1970 Bicentennial rally from Sydney to Melbourne, which were



most recent being a 1980 mini Moke Californian and now I'm on the lookout again.

David



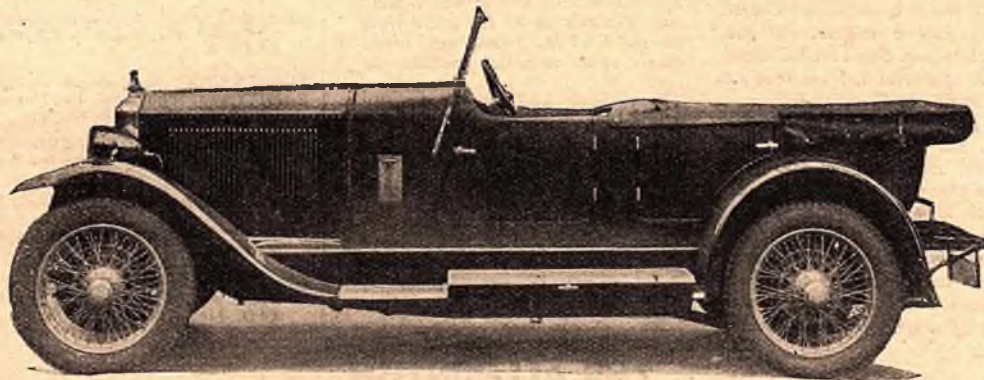
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G15

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Rheola Charity Carnival

The area of Rheola is about 30k from Wedderburn. What is generally a large open bare paddock (sports reserve) was filled with a huge amount of activity on Easter Monday. Cars and utes were parked for thousands of yards along the surrounding country road.

The 151st Rheola Charity Carnival was held on Monday 1st April 2024 and was supported by all local towns and communities. The charity event usually raises around \$60,000 for local hospitals and health facilities. Our local club always attends to add to the attractions of the event.

The event includes wood chopping, pony club trials, vintage tractor pull, stationary engines, foot races, sheep dog trials, novelty events, pipe band and Miss Rheola Carnival Girl.

Needless to say my interests were not in the rural activities but catching up with club members and checking out the 60 or so cars on display.

I did briefly watch a Lanz Bulldog being exercised in the vintage tractor pull. The driver managed only 80 metres dragging the sleigh. However I believe it was his young son who had a go in the same Lanz Bulldog and received a round of applause from on-lookers for managing to drag the sleigh 100 metres.

These thumping one cylinder monoliths are exceedingly noisy, no wonder so many old farmers have lost their hearing.

Most of the cars were recent classics, my Alvis was one of few older cars.

As rain was on the way I left before it became a problem of everyone dashing off



the property to keep dry.

It did start raining on the way home and one of my new wiper arms and blade disappeared passed my window. A brief search soon located them on the road. Refitting it will be a job I must do before I go out in the Alvis again.

David



1956 Ford Fairlane, 1951 Deutz F2M tractor, 1938 Indian EL, Ford Falcon Sports Coupe (2 door) & 1927 Chevrolet Coach owned by Murrey Keller

A Gathering at the Logan Pub



Most years I motor up the Wedderburn-Logan Road to see what cars attended the Logan Pub gathering of old cars

Usually I stop at Logan on the way home from Edington Sprints, however on this occasion they were on different days. As it was unfortunately I missed Edington as I had just been released from the Bendigo Hospital after having kidney stones removed.

I always hope to see cars that of interest to include in Country Motor. As 95% of the cars are hot rods, street machines or feral cars plus about 100 motorcycles I managed to find a only few cars that are suitable for the magazine.



I am not a revving fan of feral cars, several were present at the gathering. Simon, from Maldon, 1938 Buick 8 cylinder Sloper was amongst the group. Being a rare sloper I believe the interesting Aussie Holden bodied Buick deserves to be restored as it was when new. A unique model that would be far more appreciated if it was in great condition.

A some what butchered vintage Yellow Cab, or as modernist would state its been re-purposed, albeit rather unsympathetically.



WALTER WILSON'S 'LITTLE WILLIE'

2023 marked not only the Centenary of MG but also 100 years since the establishment of the Tank Museum at Bovington in the UK. It was a visit by Rudyard Kipling to the tank graveyard at Bovington in 1923 that set in motion the foundation of a central museum for the vehicles that helped to end what was then called the "War to End all Wars"

There is a strong M.G. connection here. Dublin born Walter Gordon Wilson 1874-1957, was one of the most innovative and influential inventors of his time. He invented the Wilson Pre-Selective, self-changing, epicyclic gearbox, patented in 1919. The reader will be aware that the pre-selector boxes manufactured by E.N.V. Engineering Co. Ltd. London, were fitted quite extensively in the 1930's to M.G.s and to a number of other sporting British marques. Indeed, the writer's A.E.C. school bus painted a sporting primrose yellow and driven by a

man with a muscular left leg, still utilised a modern version of a Wilson gearbox in the 1950s. A competent vehicle, and thankfully not a Leyland, it was all part of my early education!!

With Sir William Tritton, Wilson is credited with developing the first tanks of World War One, "Mother" and "Little Willie". The latter has been restored and is on display at Bovington.

The tank evolved from the design of gun tractors. In 1915 during the development and continued refinement of the tank, it was feared that the huge amount of steel being ordered for the project would compromise secrecy, so it was explained that the material was needed to build water tanks for the British expedition to Mesopotamia, hence the name "tank"

The first rather unsuccessful combat offensive with tanks took place in 1916 during the Battle of the Somme (where

Graeme Jackson

the writer's 23 year old Australian great uncle George was killed) However, during the next years of war the 2000 British tanks in service had a devastating impact on the German troops morale and Tritton's and Wilson's invention can rightly be considered a crucial factor in the war's outcome.

Not many Irish men have had their "Little Willies" preserved and put on public display as a museum piece, but Walter Gordon Wilson is honoured in that way!

Ed: When I was about eleven years old (1957) I was in the final year of Ferndown Primary School which visited the Bovington Tank Museum. I still have the catalogue from which 'Little Willie' is described below.

LITTLE WILLIE



'Little Willie' was built in September, 1915, and its first trials were witnessed by His Majesty King George V on Thetford Heath, Norfolk, in the same month. It was designed by Sir William Tritton and built by Messrs. William Foster & Co. Produced under the auspices of the Naval Committee, the engine, gearbox and differential of the pre-war Foster Daimler tractor were adopted.

As a first attempt, it was strikingly successful, but its balance proved rather defective, and it lacked the obstacle-crossing capacity of 'Big Willie', the next prototype. The design was therefore abandoned, but 'Little Willie' was put to good use as a training tank at Hatfield, where it went in June, 1916. It is now preserved in the Museum, but unfortunately its steering tail has been removed and cannot be traced.

The vehicle was powered by a 105 h.p. 6-cylinder sleeve-valve engine, weighed 28 tons, was 26½ ft. long, and had a speed of 3½ m.p.h. It was completely enclosed, with a door in the rear of the hull.

A steering tail was trailed behind the tank, consisting of a pair of wheels 4 ft. 6 ins. in diameter, which were kept in contact with the ground by springs. For a slight turn the tail was swung to one side by means of wire ropes operated by hand by the driver. For sharper turns the steering tail was lifted hydraulically, and the tank was steered on its secondary gearboxes as described in 'Early Tank Steering'

This story was taken from the VSCC's April 'Newsletter'

Bits & Pieces

Garage Sales

Every year Wedderburn has a Gold Jamboree weekend and garage sales on the Saturday. There is usually well over 20 sales to visit if you are keen. This year several were out of town and these I thought might have the sort of junk I am interested in. The strategy paid off. In Fentons Creek, about 20k out of town, the folk had lots of interesting bits. I spent \$30 and acquired a Dawn 3 vice and a Dawn G clamp. The other G clamp was made by John Bunclé & Sons of North Melbourne. I am sure many people who use tools or farm equipment may have heard of them. I hadn't.

John Bunclé was born in Edinburgh (Scotland) on 12th October 1822. He died in Melbourne on 26th December 1889.

He served apprenticeships in engineering and pianoforte-making. He worked for several firms designing steam engines and locomotives; was chief draftsman and designer at London and Northwestern Railway workshops, Crewe, Cheshire for six years; Vulcan

foundry 1845-52 and arrived Melbourne 1852.

John worked at Langlands foundry 1853; then his own business from 1853, doing a variety of tradesmen's jobs, later settling to engineering and contracting interests.

Gradually he turned to designing and construction of agricultural implements and machinery with which his name is chiefly associated. He took an active part in founding the Hotham School of Design and taught mechanical drawing in its early years. He served as president, Melbourne Chamber of Manufactures. He served two terms as mayor of Hotham (North Melbourne).

John Bunclé established an engineering firm in Melbourne in 1853, supplying the ironwork for several large bridges for Melbourne and other parts of Victoria.



The agricultural implements and machinery he invented were significant in the evolution of 'extensive' farming techniques in the nineteenth century.

Bunclé registered many patents for improvements to chaff cutters and other agricultural equipment.

The business was variously known as John Bunclé & Son or Bunclé Engineering and situated in North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. In 1951 the business merged with Commando Industries Ltd to form John Bunclé-Commando Ltd

*David
PS: Our son Colin bought them
from me to restore.*

Sad Humber

Some issues back I mentioned that a Humber Super Snipe was languishing in a paddock near the highway outside Wedderburn. It disappeared, so I hoped an enthusiast took it away. But no. At a garage sale nearby I found it in a property, once again languishing in the weather and used to store junk. As it is the car is very rusty and no doubt some parts could be rescued for a project.

Crossley Marine Engine

I liked the story on Freestone & Webb. I have only seen one Weyman body and thought it a rickety thing that looked cheap.

I ran a small ship called Trocus that had a Crossley engine. The engine was first introduced in mid 30s at 550 hp @ 250 rpm.

Trocus was built 1954 and the engine was rated at 650 hp @ 325 rpm. They had a history of burning pistons so we always kept the revolutions below 550 and never had any problems. Light ship she could do 13.5 knots at full load it was about 9 knots.

More Tool Talk - Jim Oliver

You fired me up a bit with my tools. I did another look at my lifetime tool kit.

I have started (when I have time) to clean and sort them all out a bit. Goodness knows how I used to carry the tool box around! I had everything in it. All my spanners, sockets etc all Sidechrome. Plus all of the little extras and homemade stuff for special use. Those were the days.

The only non-Sidechrome things were special pliers etc, all expensive, Still, they are all still here 70 years later.



Pictured are: United U
Elliott-Lucas Electoy, Cannock,
England

Vanadin Super, Knipex Germany
No 44
Vanadium-Extra, Belzer 2460,
Germany

You fired me up to sort out my old tools a bits. They are now all (most of them) back in the old tool box. Not one metric spanner or socket amongst them!

I did the last 3 years or so of my apprentice at Riverside Motors a Ford dealership in Yarra Bank Road, now The Cassino. There were three main Ford dealers in Melbourne then. Us, Melford's and

Bayford Motors. Best job I ever had.

We (the good ones me included) were often sent to the Ford School in Geelong for any updates on the new Fords, I went to the first school there when the first Automatic hit the road.

They were a great week. Stayed in a hotel with all extras included. I did many such schools. We were each awarded a certificate if we passed the test.

Them were the days!

That's all. Rikki and I used to go the Rheola Fair. Always had a good time.

Carry on.

Jim



After 28 years of ownership I have decided to sell my Lambda Saloon, known as "The Suitcase", as I now have three mobile Lancias and one has to go. This car is one of very few Lambda Weymann saloons in the world and is identical to the car used by Vincenzo Lancia, as displayed in the Biscaretti Museum in Turin. I took this car to Italy for the Fobello Rally in 1996. All the components of the car are original Lancia including the instruments, other than the clock which has been replaced by a more useful temperature gauge.

Over the years I have repaired or replaced all the major mechanical components so that the car is now in good condition. The 8th series motor was fully reconditioned by Don Wright, is fitted with slipper bearings, modern oil and air filters and is running

smoothly and quietly (for a Lambda) on the Bosch magneto, giving a good performance and maintaining excellent oil pressure. The camshaft has been modified to provide quieter and smoother operation of the valves and slightly improved performance.

The original radiator maintains a good working temperature and the water pump has been modified to prevent leakage. The gear box has all new bearings, the tail shaft has a modern splined rear section, the differential has new bearings including taper bearings on the pinion plus much improved seals on the axles. The front suspension is in good condition.

The body was made in the Lancia factory under licence to Weymann, this features flexible joints which prevent damage to the structure over rough terrain. There are two fold-out

occasional seats behind the front seat. After 96 years the body is not in perfect condition but is very usable and comfortable and has delighted many brides on their wedding day.

As the car is on a club permit it will be sold unregistered as required. A Victorian Road Worthy Certificate can be provided if required. The special tools required for the front suspension will be supplied plus wheel removal tool and a hub puller.

Chassis number 19725

Engine number 10419

Club Permit 6097

Price \$75,000.

Enquiries to Russell Meehan at 0427 172 860 or

russ.meehan@bigpond.com

Bits & Pieces cont:



From Colorado (USA)

Great issue, I appreciate it. Thought you would find this interesting.

You have a great shot of the Ford building in 1935. (see issue 57)

Here is what it looks like today. I will contact that local Ford club to see if they do any events there and have any photos. Steve Kennedy

Denver, Colorado

My 1936 Ford, 1959 MK IX Jaguar



Alvis In Australia

After a 50-year gestation period and several attempts by a number of potential Authors, a definitive history of Alvis cars in Australia is finally coming together.

With the support of the combined Alvis car Clubs, their members and many others, a valiant effort by Chester

McKaige and assistance from Dale Parsell we are very close to having a manuscript worthy of publication.

We now know that approximately 850 cars came to Australia and around 400 exist in one form or another (although some are only chassis and bits).

We would like to hear from anyone who may have details or photographs of Alvises that they think may be unknown to

the Alvis fraternity, especially identifiable (owner/ chassis number) historic photos.

If you have information that you think might be of interest, please contact me via dparssl@ozemail.com.au. Dale



Sunbeams in South Africa

The Sunbeam Sports Car Club of South Africa

Abe Fullard provided this photo of a row of Sunbeams was taken in 2005, taken at the AGM. Unfortunately the good days don't always last, as we all have experienced in various car clubs. Members drop out or pass, others move house or sell their cars. The club has declined to a far smaller group now.



HOWARD KELPIE

In issue 57 I mentioned that when I was in my teens I worked on a chook farm and used a little Howard tractor with tiller steering. Flicking through my reference books I came across a picture of the little tractor. The one I used had a mower deck underneath.

The tractor was a Howard Kelpie made in Australia in the 1950s. However the design originated from the Beaver Tractor

Co Inc, Stratford, Connecticut, USA. The engine was made by American Beaver of Wisconsin.

Howard manufactured the engine in Australia during WWII for driving lighting plants for the Armed Forces. The engine continues to be made on the US where it is known as a BKN.

Due to the simplicity of operation and maintenance they were very popular in this country.



Motoring Book

Australian Motoring Events 1903 - 1930

A Tribute to Harry James



Australian Motoring Events 1903-1930



Terry Parker

'Australian Motoring Events 1903-1930' starts out by covering the Dunlop Trials organized by Harry James from 1905 and proposals for others which didn't happen.

Then, State by State, the story of the first gatherings which led to the formation of the respective auto clubs is outlined, with trials modelled on the incredible Dunlop events following their establishment.

The more significant events in each State for cars and motorcycles, with lists of

entrants and vehicles and many photographs form the body of the hard cover 180-page book.

The early events served to demonstrate the relative merits of the entrants and the trade was quick to see the potential for their business. Some of the competitors prominent in the events became well-known, with some names remembered frequently in Club bars today.

The Press gradually lost interest in reporting the details and by around 1930

the authorities had come to realize that the events were no longer needed to compare the relative merits of the makes. They had become speed events where the skill of the driver determined the outcome.

Off-road events on purpose-built circuits replaced the trials which had created so much interest in the earlier years.

A small run is in print at a concessional price of \$100 plus post is available from: tparker@bigpond.net.au. 08 83313445.'

AUSTRALIAN MOTORING EVENTS 1903-1930

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Madameville Athelina Verpellet during her Australian tour in 1926. Her tour stimulated the interest motor vehicles in all States, the sale of a number of motor tricycles and at least one Scorpion steam car.

Enlarge on your computer to read