

# The B.M.C. Experience

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Issue 17: April to June 2016



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## Features

16 **Mates' Rates**  
Tassie Moke Californian

18 **The Quest For Knowledge**  
Info wanted on a P76 taxi

20 **Pete's Pride**



1925 Morris Cowley

24 **Capricorn Flyer**  
A70 road trip to Alice Springs

58 **Taming The Snowy**



Land Rovers and the Hydro

66 **She's A Beaut**



Aussie Moke Turns 50

72 **Surprise Package**



Rare Iridium green Mini LS.

83 **Temporary Measure**



Stop-gap MG TF

90 **Thoroughbred**



Austin-Healey 100S

## Cover Story

52 **Fire and Ice**



An ex-Snowy Mountains Authority Land Rover Firefly fire engine.

## Regulars

7 **Editorial**

8 **News**

10 **Reviews**

11 **Letters**

14 **The Specialists**  
Minis Plus in Bayswater, Vic

28 **Camp Quality esCarpade**

29 **Big Trips Maps**

A cool way to record your travels

31 **Eye Witness**

Photos from National Archives

32 **Events**

BMCLAHG lunch; Qld Morris Day; Pre-War MG Nat Rally; Moking in the Mountains; 11th Grand Day Out; Minis in The Gong; Australia Day CARnivale

40 **UK Scene**

New Year's Day; Bingley Hall; British Motor Museum opening.

42 **Club Profile**

The 1100 Club (UK)

80 **Crisis - Factory Closure**

Part 6 - The Sellout

96 **Back Issues**

97 **Shopping**

98 **Final Turn**

MG TF at Sandown, 1969

100 **Next Issue**

## Advertisers Listing:

Abbingham Spares.....	46	Mini Spares & Repairs.....	48
Aus Mini Spares.....	48	Minis Plus.....	50
Autopics.....	101	Minisport.....	48
Auto Electrics On Wheels...	44	Minisport-Oz.....	50
BCS Distributors.....	44	MG Automotive.....	46
BMCE Binders.....	47	MG Sportsparts.....	46
BMCE digital issues.....	9	MG Workshops.....	46
British Sporting Cars.....	45	Nostalgic Wireless.....	44
Camp Quality esCarpade....	28	Ralph Moore Auto Glass..	45
Carwood Refurbishing.....	44	ReadSpeed.....	50
Classic Fasteners.....	44	Real Automotive.....	46
Classic Motoring.....	48	Rhemac engines.....	44
Concourse Spares.....	46	Shannons Insurance.....	3
Graeme Lord.....	50	SU Midel.....	47
Link Automotive.....	50	Survivor Car Australia....	30
Lionel Otto Instruments....	44	The Healey Factory.....	45
Mini & Moke World.....	49	The Mini Exp. Reloaded...	79
Mini Automotive.....	48	Vintage Wiring Harness...	44
Mini Classic.....	46	Wilf Chambers Classic Brit..	2
Mini King.....	49	Wilf Chambers Classic Brit..	51

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Photo by John Tarran



# DRIVER'S SEAT

Watto at the wheel of our cover car: an ex-Snowy Mountains Land Rover Firefly.

It is clear that either the top levels of management at Australia Post have not the slightest bit of business acumen, or they are deliberately trying to close down the entire service.

Normal business common sense would dictate that if you are losing customers because you offer poor service at an expensive price, putting prices up and reducing the service is not going to attract new customers.

Yet, that is what Australia Post has recently done. The January round of price increases is nothing short of an unconscionable act that will be inflationary and put many small businesses, like ours, under worsening financial stress.

The net result is that we must increase our prices, where postage is a factor, but we have kept the increase to a minimum. A year's subscription of the printed magazine now costs \$42.

The good news for subscribers to the digital magazine is that there is no change in price, because there is no impact due to postage costs.

This means the savings for a digital subscription and for digital back issues are even greater than before.

But, if you do want a printed back issue, they are now \$15 including postage. Ironically, this is the price we were charging before we were able to reduce the price after a raft of cost savings. Those savings have now been completely negated by the latest postage increase.

For the moment Australia Post has not increased parcel prices, but they are likely to with the next round of rises within six months. In anticipation of this, we have increased the cost of postage for merchandise orders, that have to be sent by Australia Post, to \$15 per order.

However, we have already identified that close to 70% of our parcels can be sent

through Fastway couriers at much better rates. So, if you live in or close to a major city, and you don't use a post office box, we may be able to send your order via Fastway. In which case, the freight order remains at \$12. To see if you are eligible for this cheaper rate, call us before ordering.

If all this sounds petty or trivial, consider that last year alone we spent over \$12,000 on postage. An increase of around 30% without increasing our prices is simply not sustainable. By Australia Post's standards that still makes us a small customer. But if we are already looking at moving 70% of our postage away from AP, I am sure countless others are doing so as well.

So, spread the word about the digital magazine. The more digital subscriptions we can sell the less we have to worry about postage, and the more we can afford to provide in the digital platform.

Meanwhile, followers of our antics in the Shitbox Rally may be interested to read that this year I will be doing something very different - in going back to my rally roots and taking part in the esCarpade in support of Camp Quality.

You can read more about it on p28 and in upcoming issues. But this means the Mini Van will be getting a complete make-over, again, and will look very different this year.

Camp Quality is a fantastic organisation that puts the smiles back on the faces of kids living with cancer, through a camping and support programme.

This year we are aiming to raise at least \$10,000 for Camp Quality.

If you would like to help out by donating - and every donation helps, no matter how small - then please do so through our Everyday Hero website at:

<https://escarpade2016.everydayhero.com/au/bmc>

For now, I hope you enjoy this postage free digital issue of *BMCE*. *Watto*.

The  
**B.M.C.**  
*Experience*

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PO Box 186 Newcomb, Vic. 3219  
Ph: 03 5250 4842 Fax: 03 5250 4846  
email: [bmceexperience@gmail.com](mailto:bmceexperience@gmail.com)

**Editorial and advertising enquiries to:  
Publisher and Editor  
Craig Watson**

**Contributors to this issue:**

Craig Watson, Kay Drury, Patrick Quinn, Eric Bailey, Col Gardner, Steve Maher, Carle Gregory, Barry Kilah, Malcolm Robertson, Jeremy Braithwaite, George King, Jim Stafford, Eilish Watson, Phil Boye, Howard van Appeldoorn, Dave Wilkins, NAA, Vince Johnson, Autopics.

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## End Of An Era for Land Rover



The last Land Rover Discovery, regarded as a direct descendant of the original Land Rover, came off the Solihull production line on 29 January 2016.

A Defender 90 Heritage soft-top, it was the 2,016,933rd Series or Defender Land Rover built.

The occasion was marked by a celebration at the factory, with more than 700 current and former employees invited.

Among them was 55-year-old Tim Bickerton, who has 40 years' service with Land Rover, having started as an apprentice.

A cavalcade of historic Land Rovers, led by the last Defender,



registered H166 HUE, and the first pre-production Land Rover, HUE 166, toured the factory.

Land Rover was at pains to point out that two parts from the original 1948 model were still being fitted on the last soft-top Defenders - the hood cleats and the underbody support strut.



## Buyers at Risk Under New Laws

Jaguar Land Rover Australia (JLRA) has responded to the recent announcement that the Federal Government will introduce changes to the Motor Vehicle Standards Act which, among other things, will allow the private importation of vehicles up to 12 months old with fewer than 500km on the odometer.

"We share the extreme disappointment which has been expressed by the FCAI (Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries) and a number of other manufacturers in the wake of this announcement", said Mr. Matthew Wiesner, Managing Director of Jaguar Land Rover Australia.

"The Government is misguided if it believes that these changes will be a positive thing for the Australian new vehicle buyer. We are very concerned that the reality of the situation is that the consumer will in fact be exposed to considerable risk and be far worse off compared with the current system."

JLRA points out that near-new vehicles imported privately will not benefit from

warranty protection or service plans, even if offered in the country of origin, as they will not be recognised in Australia.

There is also a risk that the vehicle will not meet ADRs, which could affect the safety and resale value of the vehicle.

JLRA also shares the FCAI's expressed concern that a privately-imported vehicle will not have the protections afforded by Australian Consumer Law: "A new car purchased and delivered here is automatically covered by Australia's comprehensive consumer laws", said Mr. Wiesner.

"This means that a locally delivered new car owner has recourse in situations such as when his or her vehicle proves not to be fit for that person's needs. Unfortunately the owner of a privately imported car will not be eligible for any of this peace-of-mind security."



## Old Landies Get New Lease on Life

At the event celebrating the last Defender, Land Rover announced a new Land Rover Heritage Restoration programme.

A team of twelve experts will lead the project, which will begin with the restoration and sale of early Series Land Rovers.

Jaguar Land Rover Heritage Director Tim Hannig said: "Land Rover Heritage will be offering cars, services, parts and experiences for all owners and fans around the world. Our new restoration service and the sale of expertly-restored Series



I vehicles is just the start of making sure that classic Land Rovers are not only part of our past, but part of our future."

For enquiries about Land Rover's Heritage Restoration Programme, contact: [heritage@jaguarlandrover.com](mailto:heritage@jaguarlandrover.com)

## Paddy Honored by Queen



Patrick Barron Hopkirk, universally known as Paddy and most famous for his 1964 Monte Carlo Rally win at the wheel of a Mini Cooper S, has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

The award is partly in recognition for his contribution to motorsport, but equally for his role as founder and patron of charity SKIDZ, which offered automotive education services to young people.

Founded by Hopkirk in 1998 and partially funded through sales of his books and specialist Mini products, SKIDS went into liquidation in July last year. The charity provided courses in automotive maintenance specifically for disadvantaged youth through its motor training centre in High Wycombe.

The centre was recently taken over by Amersham and Wycombe College and, after a complete refurbishment, was relaunched on 5 February this year as the Auto Training Centre. Hopkirk was guest of honour at the relaunch and was pleased the centre

was continuing under its new ownership.

Meanwhile, on 19 January, Hopkirk was named as an ambassador for the Institute for Advanced Motorists and celebrated by undertaking the Mature Driver's Assessment.

The MDA is taken by drivers over the age of 70, to provide assurance on the road and to identify areas of concern in their driving habits. "I really enjoyed taking the MDA. Everyone needs to revisit their abilities, and to get that from someone who is both independent and sympathetic to the driver is very valuable", Hopkirk said.

With regard to his MBE, Hopkirk reportedly said: "First of all I'm not sure what it is exactly for. I'm just very honoured and I appreciate the people who have written [to nominate him]. I was very, very surprised. It just came out of the blue. They certainly managed to keep it quiet. Nobody knows about it, except the people that wrote the letters."

Although best known for his Monte Carlo win, Hopkirk also won numerous other rallies, including San Remo, Acropolis and Alpine events, as well as a then record five Circuits of Ireland.

Another Motorsport legend, John Surtees, also received a New Year's Honour being awarded a CBE for services to motorsport, on top of the OBE he already holds: also for services to motorsport.





Last issue we were pleased to acknowledge Australian driver Liam Sullivan as the 2015 champion in the Mighty Minis series in the UK.

Unfortunately, we were not aware at the time that the result was pending an appeal of disqualification from one of the rounds.

Liam lost his appeal and as a result was disqualified from the Castle Combe round, with the loss of all points from that round, as well as receiving 32 penalty points for each of the two races in that round.

The dispute centred around scrutineering seals on the differential casing being broken. Liam, and the driver of another car that was similarly disqualified, argued that the seals had not been fixed properly and that they had been torn off during racing. They argued that the scrutineer should still have carried out the inspection on the differentials, as there had been no opportunity for them to have tampered with the transmissions between the race and when the inspection was to have taken place.

However, the court of appeal upheld the decision of the scrutineer to have not inspected the transmissions on the basis that the seals had been broken.

According to Mighty Minis spokesperson Sara Pryce, "Nothing was found to be illegal as no inspection was carried out once the seals were found to be broken."

To paraphrase the court, the law is the law and under the letter of the law the two competitors were found to have had the seals broken on their differential cases.

As a result of the disqualification from the Castle Combe round, Steven Rideout was declared the 2015 champion of the series, whom we congratulate. Full points scores are available at [mightyminis.co.uk/results](http://mightyminis.co.uk/results)

Rallying and Mini legend Rauno Aaltonen has confirmed he is 99.9% certain to be in Australia in October for the Southern Cross Rally Festival, celebrating 50 years since the first Southern Cross Rally.

Rauno competed in the first Southern Cross in 1966, winning most of the special speed sections around Bethanga in NSW, only to have to retire from the event.

Rauno was a regular entrant in the SCR, winning it outright in a Datsun in 1977.

The Southern Cross Rally Festival will run from Melbourne to Sydney via many of the original roads from the early Southern Cross Rallies, from 24-29 October.

There will also be displays of competing cars at Motorclassica in Melbourne on the weekend of 21-23 October, and at Muscle Car Masters the following weekend.

The event is being organised by former SCR organisers, Dan



and Rosie White, and is a non-speed Touring Road Event - so drivers and navigators will **not** have to wear fire-retardant apparel, HANS devices or helmets.

The road part of the event will officially conclude in the Blue Mountains, with a presentation dinner being held on a Sydney Harbour Cruise.

Basic entry to the event, per crew, will be \$495.

More details are available from Dan and Rosie via email: [drive.country@bigpond.com](mailto:drive.country@bigpond.com)

## Final KEP Hillclimb



After 58 years, the Mattara Hillclimb in Newcastle's King Edward Park (KEP) has had its last running on 4-5 Oct 2015.

Organised by the MG Car Club of Newcastle, the event was held in perfect weather - a fitting send-off.

According to Hal Moloney; "The very last car to climb the hill was a very nervous Pat Goulding, who has climbed the hill 34 times, always in his Nota Sportsman...Pat always towed the Nota to KEP with his red Austin Atlantic."

Hal felt privileged to be able to compete on this auspicious occasion in his P76. "My times were slow as I was using up an old set of tyres that had more



slip than grip, which suited my driving style", he reported.

Writing in the event program, Phil Heafey, the Chairman of CAMS NSW Hillclimb Panel, said; "It is testament to the popularity of the Mattara Hillclimb in King Edward Park that entries filled up within a day and applications were over-subscribed almost by a factor of two. With the most challenging hillclimb course in Australia, the beautiful setting on the coast and the dedicated and knowledgeable support of the Hunter community it's not a surprise."

The hillclimb has been discontinued because a raised tourist walkway is being built in the park.



## Hay Mini Nationals

Thanks to the tireless work of Amanda Dwyer and Aaron Ruig, the Hay Mini Nationals has a completely revamped website, full of history, news, photos, videos and information about one of the best grass roots motorsport events in the country.

If you have never been to the Hay Mini Nationals and want to know what it's all about then check out the website - [haymininationals.com.au](http://haymininationals.com.au)

2017 will be the 50th Hay (notwithstanding one year having the motorkhana washed out) and will no doubt see huge celebrations. The website will of course keep everyone up to speed on what is happening then, but in the meantime, find out more about the 2016 event now, which will be on 10-13 June.

## British Pathe Gold

British Pathe newsreels were a staple diet at cinemas in the 1950s and 1960s. The website - [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com) - is a treasure trove of memories from the BMC period.

Here are just two, search for the headings:

### road manners



Discourteous driving is not a modern phenomenon. This film shows what not to do on British roads in 1964.

Virtually all the cars used in filming are from the BMC stable.

### Famous Car Races Again



Early MGA on test at a wet Silverstone, prior to competing at Le Mans in 1955.

## BATHURST 500

1963 - 1964 - 1965 - 1966 - 1967

By: Stephen C. Stathis



The latest from Bathurst historian and specialist publisher, Steve Stathis from Phase 3 Posters, this book covers the year 1963 to 1967 and features every car that raced at Mt Panorama on the October long weekend.

The book is essentially a collection of photographs, many of which have not been published previously, with extended captions. Full results as well as a brief explanation are included for each year.

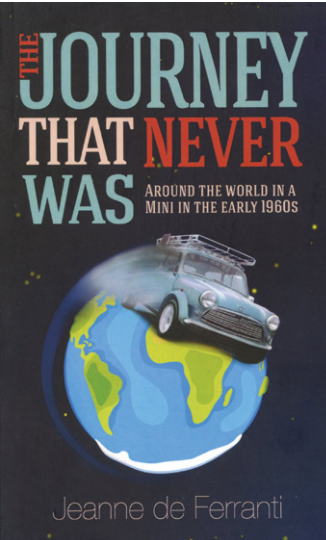
Steve has scoured the country to find photos from private collections, as well

as some from established professional collections, to ensure every car is covered.

This is the period when the Minis were at the top of their game, of course winning outright, with the first nine places, in 1966.

The book is currently only available in a limited-edition hard cover, of which only 250 copies have been printed. Once these have been sold, then a soft cover version may be available.

It is an excellent coffee table book, with the bonus of great historical photos & information.



On 5 September 1961 Jean de Ferranti and her friend Jane (apparently of no surname) left England aboard a Bristol Freighter aircraft on the first leg of their almost two year drive around the world in a Mini named Honey.

This is a very interesting read, but the reader is often left a bit puzzled, perhaps due to the vagaries of memory over time.

Nevertheless, the trip, which took them through France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, then by ship to the east coast of Australia, then New Zealand,

Mexico, USA and Canada, gives a glimpse into a world very different in many respects from today. The friendly and courteous way the girls are received in the Muslim countries is in stark contrast to today's news reports.

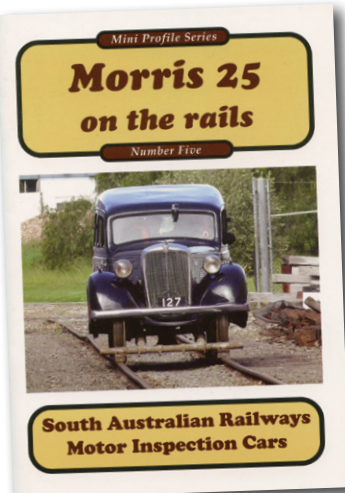
Jean clearly had little, if any, monetary concerns, which is another contrast to a lot of shoe-string budget world travel books.

The point of the title is that when she returned to England, her father, who was "publicity shy" insisted nothing be done to publicise it. The Mini was quietly taken away and never seen again, and Jean was "dispatched to London to find a job".

One disappointment with this privately-published book is the lack of photos and the poor quality of reproduction of those that are in it.

Another is the lack of story into the background of these intrepid young girls.

While much of the trip is intriguing and the book well worth a read, this is not the daring-do adventure book that would be expected from a drive around the world in the early 1960s.



This is exactly the book I wish was around when I was researching the Morris railway Motor Inspection Cars (MICs) a couple of years ago.

Morris and railway enthusiast and publisher Steve McNicol has done an extraordinary amount of research to uncover the entire history of these

fascinating vehicles from South Australia.

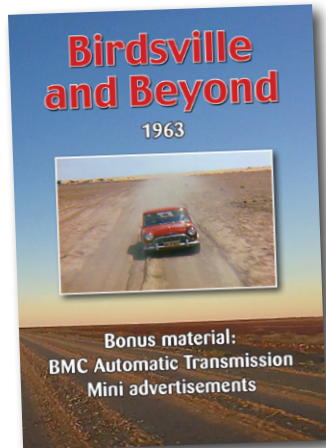
He also looks at the history of other MICs from brands such as Dort and Dodge, and has a list detailing all 31 MICs, (including 13 Morris and one Wosley) both broad gauge and narrow gauge, used by SAR between 1923 and 1963.

Steve has also looked at the history of the two existing narrow gauge examples, including their restoration and current use.

There is also a brief potted history of the Morris 25.

Although only a small 30-page soft-cover publication, it is well worth getting for anyone with an interest in Morris, railways or South Australian history.

Or even just if you enjoy reading about unusual uses for motor cars.



*Birdsville and Beyond* is a film made in 1963 in conjunction with *Modern Motor* magazine, featuring a Morris 850 (Mini) driving up the Birdsville Track, then down the Strzelecki Track - although the vast majority of the film is to do with the Birdsville Track.

Taken from an original 16mm colour print, there are a few scratches and dust marks,

particularly at the start, but they only add to the period charm of the film.

It was on the basis of this film that Evan Green and Scott Polkinghorn were asked to do the film of what became *Crossroads Alice*.

While the track has certainly improved by 1963 on what it was only ten years earlier, it is still a more rugged, sandy and desolate road than today's almost highway conditions.

Available around June, and only through this magazine, this DVD is a must for Mini fans, or any BMC enthusiast.

The DVD includes a film on the BMC/AP automatic transmission, with an enormous amount of footage taken inside the factory, showing production and testing techniques. There are also a number of Mini advertisements for a bit of extra interest.

## STAR LETTER - Gipsy Joker



I have a late 1958 Series 1 Austin Gipsy which I am restoring. I am also seeking some information about this vehicle as it has some modifications to it which are not standard and perhaps someone out there can identify the vehicle and who owned it previously.

On my way back to Queensland from the Austins Over Australia rally, in Devonport, Tasmania over the Easter weekend of 2015, I made a detour to Cooma and found out from the information centre where Flynn's wrecking yard was.

I found the wrecking yard and asked if they had any Austin A110, Wolseley 6/110 or VP 3 litre Princesses, of which they had none, but my eye fell on an Austin Gipsy standing under a tree, which looked in reasonable condition.

I asked the price, and said that I would think about it, which I did all the way home. A few days later I phoned and bought the Gipsy. In September I borrowed my son's Hilux 4x4 and a friend's trailer and collected the Gipsy: a return total of 2,800km.

I understand the Gipsy had been standing from about 1990 and lichen had grown on it and it looked in a sad state, but once I got it home and with a good pressure wash it looked a lot better.

The engine turned by hand so I cleaned the points and spark plugs, connected an electric fuel pump to the carburettor and cranked it over with a good battery.

## Doug Benckendorff – Buderim, Qld



After some time the engine fired up, but with a miss fire. Some oil down the carburettor and the engine started running beautifully.

The Gipsy has all of its original headlights, indicator lights and taillights and overall the vehicle has been well looked after.

The battery has been moved from under the driver's seat to under the bonnet on the left side, and a rather big battery isolator has been fitted just next to the battery tray. The isolator, as will be seen in the photo looks like an isolator that would be fitted to an electricity pole. The Gipsy has also been fitted with seat belts.

I am told that the Gipsy was not used on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, but was thought to have come from Victoria to be used on a resort in the Snowy Mountains by the name of "Complete Relaxation", but this resort never got off the ground and the developer went bust.

If anyone can perhaps shed some light on why these modifications would have been done or some history about this vehicle, it would be appreciated.

2016 will see the body come off and the rust repaired and the mechanicals overhauled.



## Seeing Double

In issue 16 of this great mag I read with interest the articles relating to *The Museum Trail*

and note that the lovely Triumph TR appears in the same photograph in the NAM of Tasmania and also at the NMM in Birdwood. My, that

car, or at least that photograph, certainly gets around!

**Ken Rickard - Geelong, Vic.**

*Yes, our mistake. It was in Tassie.*

## Death of an Austin 7



Hal Moloney sent in a story, written for him in 1987 by one Norm Bergstrom, about the wreck of the *R.M.S. Tahiti*, 700 nautical miles from New Zealand, on 15-17 August 1930.

Norm was a member of the crew on that fateful voyage and goes into great detail about the disaster.

Of particular interest to us is the last couple of paragraphs, regarding the fate of the 1928 Austin 7 that was the first car to drive to Cape York (see Issues 6 and 16).

"As for the Austin 7 that was on board *Tahiti*, well we were asked by Mr MacQuarrie to use two lifeboats with the front axle in one and the back in another so the Austin could be transferred across to the *Ventura*."

The Captain said that this was too risky with most cranes now not able to be used on *Tahiti* and refused the request. I believe that this car was on an around the world drive.

The Austin 7 on the *Tahiti* was accompanied by the drivers Hec MacQuarrie and Dick Matthews. Both men were safely transferred to the *Ventura*. The Austin went down with the *Tahiti*."

## Singapore Site Sighted



Here is a mystery photo I took when in Singapore, about 1983.

I believe it was somewhere along River Valley Rd, near Killinay Rd, west of Orchard Rd.

It was probably on the other side of the river, which I could not cross at the time.

Maybe someone can shed some light on it.

**Brad Robinson - Seaton, SA**

## Three Of A Kind



I thought that you may be interested in using the attached photo taken at Mornington racecourse on Sunday the 17th January during the RACV Great Australian Rally.

The photograph shows three classic Morris 850 Minis, which look similar in colour, with their proud owners.

The first, left to right, is a 1963 Mini (owned by me) with original paint work in Saxon Green: colour number 04810.

The second is a 1961 Mini with original paint work in Chartreuse: colour number 00439. It is owned by Angela Stevenson. I believe her car is very original and only had a roadworthy the day before.

The third is a 1963 Mini, owned by Tony Self, which has been repainted to its original colour of Saxon Green.

There is some shade difference between the two 1963 models, possibly due to fading of the original paint on the first car.

The weather was lovely, some 30° with the usual representation of BMC vehicles, although there did not seem as many cars on display as previous years.

The MG club was well represented. Other clubs on show were BMC-Leyland, Victorian Mini Club and the Moke club.

**Gary Simmons - via email.**

## Austin A90 Twin



I picked up the latest copy of *BMCE* (Issue 16) from my newsagent and was surprised to read Allan Crompton's story on the A90 Atlantic (p15).

I was born in Bathurst and also owned an A90 Atlantic - quite possibly the twin to Allan's.

It is possibly the convertible that Allan talked about, as the roof could be taken off, but I never did.

I was told that mechanical parts from the A70 would fit, which I found out to be true when I broke an axle (rhs) while backing out of a parking spot down at the railway coaling area.

Unfortunately, it was written off in Goulburn in 1964, when the insurance company refused to use second-hand parts.

At the time of owning it I was unaware of another in the area.



I enclose two photos of it, but apologise for the poor quality, as they weren't kept in an album.

I also drove other Austins before the A90: two A40 Somersets; A70, metallic green with white roof; A30 sedan; two A40 utes.

### A Question:

In 1966 I was posted to Sydney on the railways.

I was walking around the Easter Show and saw a vehicle parade, with mostly vintage cars.

There was also a Moke that had been worked on by Randwicks apprentices. It had panels front and rear, with a bonnet from an EJ/EH Holden.

I wonder if anyone knows whatever happened to it.

**Ronald Markwick - Seven Hills, NSW**

## Sabrina and the "other" Alan Jones



My copy of *The BMC Experience* Issue 16 arrived in the post today, so I dived right in! Of particular interest to me was Terry Cornelius' story of *Sabrina*.

Unfortunately, this also brought sad memories to mind of our mutual friend, Alan Jones.

I'm afraid I have to correct Terry on a couple of points, though. Firstly, "the other" Alan Jones (the 1980 World Champion Driver) won his first Formula One Grand Prix two years earlier, in 1977 at the Osterreichring, driving a Shadow-Cosworth.

I remember this because by happy coincidence, I was visiting our mutual friend, "the real" Alan on the very day that news of "the other Alan's" win was reported on the evening television news!

After dinner we listened to Peter Ustinov's "Grand Prix

of Gibraltar" on Alan's record player. A friend sadly missed by all Austin-Healey Club members in Australia.

The other point in dispute is Terry's statement that the Grand Prix following the tragedy was won by "the other" Alan Jones.

On 14 July 1979 the British Grand Prix was won by Jones' Williams team-mate Clay Reggazoni, providing constructor Frank Williams with his first Grand Prix victory.

Jones did start the British Grand Prix in pole position and went on to win the following three GPs in succession.

Thanks, Terry for an interesting article and I hope my corrections are taken in the spirit that they are intended.

And thanks Craig for another great issue of *BMCE*.

**Alwyn Keepence - Ipswich, Q**

## The Good, The Bad and The No Idea



Re: Allan Crompton and his barnyard find, the Austin A90 Atlantic (Issue 16) - great to see a lovely old car and one of my favourites will be preserved.

About the clear oil in the engine: most engines that have been idel for years or decades will show clean oil. It is the several litres of filthy sludge lying in the bottom of the sump that gets sucked into the oil pump that does the damage on start-up, unless cleaned out first.

The comment by Bob Cowan, about the OHC engines in the Wolseley 6/80 and 4/50 cars: it is thought that, as many thousands of valves were ordered, the harder grade of steel required for the exhaust valves became mixed with the lower grade required for the inlet valves.

That is why some inlet valves when ground down and used as exhaust valves behave perfectly - ie: poor quality control from an outside supplier, which tainted the reputation of these engines.

The 6/80 was more than a match for cars with bigger engines for years, until the Ford Zephears, Healeys and Jags came along.

A rack-and-pinion steering system would certainly have made it a much better handling car.

And yes, why they did not opt for an OHV motor in the Morris Oxford I do not know. They probably lost more sales than it would have cost to install a more modern engine.

**Peter Blyth - Williamstown, SA**

## Force 7 and Mirror Reflections

Eagerly awaiting the release of the P76, I bought a Dry Red V8 Super in 1974.

Initially, there were some problems. Leaking door seals (upgraded free of charge); Leaking valley cover gaskets (FOC); Soft rear springs (I had to pay for one spring, otherwise FOC); Clunking diff (I was told "That's just normal Borg Warner clunk"). At 80,000km the problem was solved by the diff stripping. I picked up a second-hand Valiant V8 diff from a wreckers, replaced it myself and from then on had a silent diff.

In 1975 a white Force 7 arrived for a short-term display at our local dealership. It was apparently being displayed around the country. Of course, I had to inspect the car from top to bottom.

I was very impressed and couldn't wait for them to go on sale.

Two items caught my eye:

1. The re-designed steering wheel. The original wheel was a very impractical design. The fresh-air vents blew straight onto the back of the banana-shaped spokes.

2. The Lukey external rear-view mirrors, left and right. These were operated by stepping motors and were good looking and functional.

I contacted Lukeys and bought two sets - one for my P76 and one for spare.

The set bought for the P76 has since lived several lives and now resides on my Riley Elf (featured in 2005 *Classic Mini*

*Calendar*)

The other set will suit my Wolseley Hornet (also in same calendar).

The Lukey mirror business was reliant upon the Force 7 being put on the market.

When Leyland closed, and following the untimely death of Len Lukey, truckloads of mirrors, and the equipment for making them, went to the tip.

I did manage to obtain a number of spare parts before they all disappeared. Amongst those spares was a set of stepping motor-operated West Coaster mirrors (hand-made in stainless steel) which I still have. I don't know what I am going to do with them.

Later that year I happened to be in Adelaide Motors spare parts department, buying CV joints for the Elf, when I became aware that they had two Force 7 steering wheels for disposal. I purchased one for \$15.

When I parted with the P76, the original steering wheel was reinstated. I still have the Force 7 steering wheel.

One further item of interest: My best mate worked for Joseph Lucas in Victoria and he told me about two 5lt Leyland V8 motors on test beds in Lucas' factory.

One was run at full throttle for 24 hours and self-destructed. The other was put through similar torture tests, but then Leyland announced their closure and the motor was sold for \$50, and finished up powering a ski boat.

**Chris Mayne - Claremont, Tas.**

## Triumphant Triumph



Regarding the MK11 Triumph rally car at the bottom of p22 of Issue 16.

I own a "copy" of the MK11 Triumph 2500 prototype Denny Hulme raced in the 1967 RAC Rally when he was the F1 world champ - hence No 1.

I purchased the car as-is and have only serviced it and given it a tune up.

I believe the correct colour is

dark blue and white not black and white, (builder said he only had black and white photos to go by). Nevertheless a good car to drive and for its age is fast and road legal.

According to the previous owner-builder it has been timed at 124mph (199kph) but I haven't tried it.

**Graeme Robertson - Invercargill, NZ**

## Morris Major Wagon



We are in the throes of packing to move house again and I just came across these two photos, which I took in Wagga Wagga in about 1981.

I can offer no information, other than I saw the car in a car park, took the photos and continued on with my work. I was in a hurry, so did not return to try to discover more.

The car looks very professionally converted, except for the rear side windows.

My guess is that it was a customer conversion, although it may have been a factory experiment.

Perhaps somebody out there knows more.

**Rod Forrest - via email.**

## Morris Minor Ute by the numbers

Issue 16 was a nother good read over the Christmas/New Year break.

Regarding the query from Mike Ainsworth as to the history of his Morris Minor.

Mr Ainsworth believes it to be a factory-fitted timber tray top. I cannot find any record of this. However, it could be a dealer-fitted tray.

Records are non-existent, other than total units manufactured, between 1955 and 1959.

However, for other years, these are the numbers of cab/chassis units built:

1953 - 60; 1954 - 460; 1960 - 211; 1961 - 164; 1962 - 133; 1963 - 20; 1964 - 23; 1965 - 12; 1966 - 8; 1967 - 36.

After 1967 there are no records of production.

If the cab/chassis was of Australian assembly the ID plate had the BMC rosette inside a map of Australia, and paint shade was named.

With UK assembly, the paint shade is given by a number.

The UK chassis number prefix code is given as:

### 1st letter - vehicle type

O = LCV; F = cars

### 2nd letter - type of body

E = van; F = pick-up; G = cab/chassis; H = mail van; J = telephone engineer's van.

### 3rd letter - colour

A = black; B = light grey; C = dark red; D = dark blue; E = mid green; F = beige; G = brown; H = CKD finish (primer); K = light

red; L = light blue; O = grey; P = ivory; R = white; S = mid grey; T = light green.

### 1st number - destination

1 = home market; 2 = RHD export; 3 = LHD export; 4 = North America; 5 = RHD CKD; 6 = LHD CKD.

### Bill Walters - Wendouree, Vic.

Further to this, the code that Mike Ainsworth gives for his vehicle is OF51, which is for an Australian-assembled Morris Minor 1000 Series III two-door utility - according to Peter Davis & Tony Cripps in *BMC-Leyland Australia Vehicle Reference 1950-1982*

As Bill Walters explains, O is for light commercial vehicles and F is for pick-up.

The third letter, paint colour, is left off. The first number, 5, is for RHD CKD, while the second number, 1, is for enamel paint.

The car number, 7/70290 2158 is broken down as:

7 - year of assembly: Dec 1958 to Nov 1959.

70290 is the UK-sourced chassis number from the CKD pack.

2158 is the Australian-assembly car number.

It may be that the vehicle was a factory-assembled utility and that the flat-top tray body was added by the dealer or at a later date. Unlike the unitary sedan bodies, the light commercials were on a chassis, with the cab separate from the rear portion of the body, so this type of change was quite feasible.

# THE SPECIALISTS

Minis Plus - Bayswater, Vic.

Words & photos by Craig Watson



Ben (centre) and Jess Remminga with Peter look forward to helping other Mini and Moke enthusiasts achieve what they really want from their cars.

Ben Remminga may appear to be the new kid on the block in the Mini specialist industry, but he's been working on Minis for over 20 years.

Ben did most of his apprenticeship with a company specialising in Mercedes Benz, then completed it with a company doing a lot of custom gas conversions on show and performance cars.

It was during his apprenticeship that Ben bought his first Mini, a 1978 Mini Van, which he still owns today. "It needs another restoration" he explained. "That was a car that I got from a very good friend of mine...in exchange for one second-hand car battery. It was just built out of bits of rubbish. The first motor was one of those where you checked the petrol and filled up the oil."

Keeping his Mini running on a shoestring budget stood Ben in good stead for his next challenge, keeping an entire fleet of old Minis going in a hire company in Tasmania.

Ben moved with his wife Jess and their kids to Poatina in Tasmania to run Ryans Mini Car Rentals on virtually a volunteer basis. The whole town of Poatina is run by the charity Fusion Australia, set up to care for young people in crisis.

Ben spent six years running the hire car business, which he described as a rewarding but difficult time. "We were supported by our local church and by donations. Pay-wise, it's really tough but we had some good community support."

"That was a very interesting time; full-time working on Minis, and getting the rental car thing happening. It was a major amount of work to keep the cars on the road."



Ben with one of the Moke bumpers.

"We learned a lot down there and I learned a lot...like building engines and gearboxes to cope with being thrashed. Some things you do, you don't do for a performance engine, for example, to make them last."

While in Tassie, Ben also did a Diploma of Electrical Engineering. Returning to Melbourne in 2005, he designed and coordinated the manufacture of componentry for Telstra and the Australian military.

Although well paid, and doing varied work, it was a highly stressful job. After a few years Ben began to long for getting back to more hands-on work. He cut the engineering work back to part-time and worked part-time as a groundsman at a school. "I just wanted to get out of the high-pressure environment", he explained.

Throughout this time Ben was also doing part-time work on Minis from his home. "Just through word of mouth, people asking me to do this or that for them, kept me busy. At the same time I was talking with Lindsay (Siebler), because I would buy a lot of my parts from him, and he was indicating that he wanted to sell and move on and do other stuff. So, we came to a mutual agreement on the business and I bought it over. Jess and I took over ownership on 1 July 2014."

Having spent many years building an enviable reputation, Lindsay wanted to protect that reputation when he sold his business. For his part, Ben is determined to continue the traditions established by Lindsay, while putting his own stamp on the business as well.

Ben spent a few months working with Lindsay before the change-over, as he explained. "I came over a little bit beforehand and observed and learnt how he ran things, and then Lindsay has stayed on as consultant for, well it was supposed to be for a short time, but he's still in and out and we see him quite regularly."





Ben recently offered to replace the floor on Watto's rally Mini for the esCarpade.

In fact, to maintain the continuity Lindsay still does some work for Ben. "Some of the specialist stuff he's been doing for years for people, like wedging cranks and machining, and some of the really specialist bits and pieces he still does through us. So, they bring their work to us and we make sure it gets to Lindsay and then back to us."

"Lindsay was very good to us", Ben continued. "I can't speak highly enough of the assistance he's given with the change over of the business and he's really looked after us well."

But putting their own mark on the business is important for Ben and Jess, and they are constantly looking for niche products to add to the shop. To that end they have already introduced new products, where they found demand but either a lack of supply, or in some cases inconsistent or poor quality from other suppliers.

With his mechanical and engineering background, Ben has worked in conjunction with a local manufacturer to produce Moke Californian front and rear bumper bars. At the moment he only has those for the post-1979 Facelift models, but he is happy to do the earlier type, and standard Moke bumpers, if enough interest is shown.

Importantly, unlike some similar imported bumpers, these are made of the highest-quality thick-walled steel and are Mandrel-bent to maintain the correct radiuses. The bumpers come unpainted, but are coated to prevent rust (they need to be properly washed off before painting), so you can paint them to suit your tastes.

At the other end of the scale, Ben has organised the manufacture of stainless steel wheel nuts for the Moke's Sunrasia wheels – with the correct pitch for the taper – and for the ROH Contesta wheels for the Mini.



"I'm like everyone else", he explained. "On my own cars I got sick of the chrome flaking off, even when being as careful as you can be. And then the replacement price was hefty, so we've got the Contesta wheel nuts, again in high quality stainless steel. So, they're not going to rust or corrode and if they do get knocked about on a rattle gun, or whatever, you can just file and polish them and they're like new again."

The wheel nuts are competitively priced, at under \$5 each, but Ben said customers mentioning this article will be able to take advantage of a further discount.

Other products are currently being locally made, while more new items are on the agenda.

Ben also supplies parts from a number of UK companies, and points out certain advantages of dealing locally, rather than buying directly from overseas.

"We very regularly get airfreight, so it's not uncommon for people to say, 'I want x, y or z'; we add it to our airfreight order and there might be a one or two-week turn-around to receive them in. Then we worry about all the import duties, the credit card fees, taxation and anything else. We worry about all and any warranty issues and then go from there."

That's an important point to consider when buying from overseas. If you do have a problem, even if the manufacturer will cover the part under warranty, you have to get it back to them and the cost of that can sometimes be prohibitive. Buying from Ben, or indeed any Australian supplier, means you have a local person to take care of any warranty issues.

"There are a few situations where people

say, 'oh, I can get that cheaper overseas', but they don't take into consideration that when their bank or PayPal does the currency conversion, it's often not the best conversion rate, and then they have to pay freight on individual items and sometimes other costs", Ben explained.

"And with a lot of the fast-moving stuff, we've got it on-shelf, too. If you need your bushes and mounts and bits and pieces, they're here and you can pick them up on Friday and work on your car on Saturday", he added.

Ben has also maintained the business link with the BMW MINI, with many new and used parts available.

Ben said that having Jess and their kids involved in the business is important. "To do something like this on your own and to do it with an unhappy family just doesn't work. You've got to have a happy family. Jess has been right there alongside me for the whole process, which is great. My kids are often in and around, helping."

Ben also fairly recently employed Peter Noorbergen to help with the shop. Peter's a Moke enthusiast with long experience in retail and wholesale operations, and is helping to reorganize the shop and stock areas to be more user friendly to people without a mechanical background.

So, while Ben hasn't had the business very long, he is certainly attuned to what Mini and Moke enthusiasts want, has the background to ensure the best parts are available and the mind-set to ensure the business continues to grow.

**Minis Plus is in Bayswater, Victoria.**

**Ph: 03 9729 1323**

**www.minis.com.au**

**Email: minis@minis.com.au**



# Mates' Rates



Words and photos by Craig Watson

Tim Lamb works as a fisheries scientist with the Australian Antarctic Division. Maybe that's why he enjoys a sun-loving Moke so much.

"I have been down to the Antarctic," he said, "but I try not to. It's too cold. The fishing boats that we work with go down there for anything up to five months, so I try and avoid that."

Tim has actually been a lover of Minis and Mokes as long as he can remember. "Minis have been in my family since I was a child. My mum had a Mini and it seemed kind of like a natural thing when I wanted to get a car. I bought my first two Minis for \$180 and made one good one out of them."

"Then I got into some 'bad company' at uni – my mate had a Moke and that was the end of that. I've had Mokes, and Minis, pretty much continuously since my first car."

Prior to this Moke, Tim had another

that wasn't the picture of reliability he hoped for. "You'd break down once a week, and it would be something weird, and something serious. I only got towed home once, but you'd never know and you'd get in it to do a long trip and say, 'do you reckon we'll make it? Probably not!'," he laughed.

That Moke came to a sad demise one day around Christmas, 1999. "I was hit head-on by a girl that was on drugs. I was pretty badly smacked around. I had a badly broken leg and was on crutches for nearly a year; and the car was bent like a banana, about two foot shorter on one side."

The only upside was that Tim now has the rear end of that Moke as a trailer, but he retained a positive attitude. "It took me a little while before I got back into the Mokes. I was going to buy a big car – a Range Rover or something like that. But then I decided that Minis were alright. I had a Mini Van for a while after that, which was good because I could put the crutches

in the back and fit them between the seats."

"Then the Moke came up so I sold the Mini Van to get the money to buy the Moke. I bought it from a mate, who bought it from another mate, who bought it from another mate; and he bought it from the original owner. I went with him to check it out when it was for sale from the original owner. At the time I said, 'if you don't buy it, I will!'. It took me a while, but I did eventually buy it."

Some years ago Tim put quite a bit of money into the Moke, to ensure it would be reliable for as long as possible. It received an 1100S motor, bored out to 1310cc, and a fully rebuilt gearbox. "I've got Moulton Smooth-a-ride suspension in it and that transformed it", he explained. "It was really good. It's sagged a bit over the time. It's not as good now, but when I put it in it was great."

"Brakes: It's got Metro four-pot callipers and ventilated discs on the front. When I did it I said I'm not putting rubbish brakes







in it, I don't want to spend half my life fixing brakes. If you really stomp on them and pull back on the steering wheel they work really well. I just about stood it on its nose one day at an intersection."

The Moke also has an after-market rear seat that Tim believes was designed for a Suzuki Sierra. It folds down and also folds forward to leave 80% of the load bay free.

In 2006, Tim and wife Carolyn drove the Moke to Shepparton for the first National Moke Muster, but said with two kids it has become too difficult to do any long trips in it. The kids love the Moke, though, and are always wanting rides to school or around town in it.

### Other British Links

Tim still loves Minis and about ten years ago bought a very early Morris Mini Traveller, with the internal fuel tank. These were only available between March 1960 and October 1961, and these days are very few and far between.

"There is a legend that it may have been one of the cars that the British Consul General had in Canberra. But there's no proof one way or the other if it was or not", Tim revealed.

"It lived all its life in Canberra and then moved up to Sydney. Then I bought it and shipped it down here. I've had it running and driven it briefly, but it wasn't running when I got it. The aim is to get it as original as I can with a few minor modifications for safety and a little bit more performance. I've got period tuning parts I want to fit; a 997 Cooper cam, that sort of thing, to give it a little bit more go. So it will at least keep up with a 998 Mini."

There is also a Morris J van in the shed. "I bought it about four or five years ago. I'd wanted one for ages, then this one

came up. It was on eBay and the guy had a starting price of \$800 on it. It was in Launceston and the guy wasn't interested in helping anyone ship it across to the mainland, which meant it was effectively only available to someone in Tassie. So, I put \$800 on it and won, and then I had to do something with it. So, I wasn't really ready for it and I didn't really want it at the time. It's just been sitting in the corner of the shed ever since, really."

Tim's also a bike enthusiast, having owned bikes when he was a teenager. "I decided to get a road bike in my late 20s. I couldn't get a modern bike. I couldn't bring myself to do it. It had to be something old and British, so I ended up with the little BSA C11G. It never went and when I got it home I discovered it wasn't nearly as complete as the fella had made out. So, it's in the same state as when I got it."

"Then I bought the Triumph a few years later. It was done up when I got it. It's been really good, it goes really well. It's had a lot of engine work done on it. It's a 650 twin; quite a small bike by modern standards, but it was a big bike in 1969. It's got plenty of power; I don't think anyone needs any more power than that. And it's really nice to ride. The trouble with it is they rattle so much you spend all your time fixing them."

"I actually took it off the road because I ran out of time with the kids, the house renovations and things, and I just didn't have time to do the constant upkeep and maintenance on it that it needs every day. You take it for a one-hour ride; you do sort of 45 minutes of fixing it before and after. They're a bit fragile."

So, at the moment only the Moke is going. But as he enjoys it so much, perhaps that's not such a bad thing, for now. 🇬🇧



Early Mini Traveller has mysterious past.



Internal tank makes the Mini a real rarity.



Morris J van and British bikes.



It may not go, but it looks the goods!



Tim concentrating at the wheel.



Seats retrimmed to match paintwork.



Every Moke should have an interior light.

# The Quest For Knowledge

Words and photos by Craig Watson



Greg Bryant is looking for more information about the history of his P76 taxi from Melbourne.

Greg, from Sydney, bought the car from Victoria in mid-2014, pretty much in the condition you see it, apart from the taxi signs. "When I bought the car it had the receipts for \$3,100 for the reconditioned motor. The manifolds still had the paint on them. The guy that I bought it off had just got it running. Then he found that the float in the carby had ruptured. So, they never even ran the motor in."

Greg supplied the details from the compliance plate to James Mentiplay in WA, holder of the P76 register, who told him the car was originally a taxi with Adelphi Taxis in Footscray.

In *Leyland P76 – The Definitive Guide*, Hal Moloney lists the company as Delphic, and says they had five V8 and two six-cylinder P76 cabs.

The problem is that neither Greg nor this magazine have been able to dig up any

information on either company name, and the Footscray Historical Society can't shed any more light on it.

Only around 30 or 40 P76 taxis have been identified, of which few others, if any, are known to still exist, so they're a rare enough beast.

Based on the Deluxe model, with bench front seat and column-shift automatic, they were available with either six-cylinder or V8 engines.

When Greg found out his car was a taxi he searched high and low for information on the company, without success. So, he made up some generic taxi signs, on magnets, to put on the car at shows. The taxi roof light is genuine enough, but Greg made up a roof bar to bolt it too, and a couple of spotlights, so he didn't have to make any holes in the roof.

"There are crows feet in the paint on the roof. It looks like a bit of subsidence in the paint, so it clearly had something on the roof at some stage", Greg said.

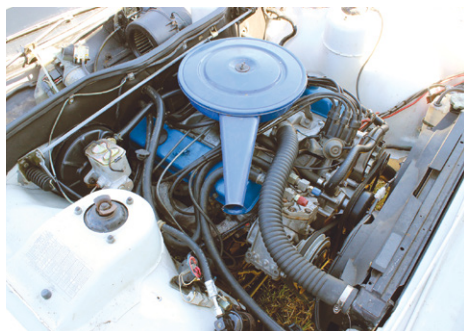
He also managed to get a taxi meter

and Philips two-way Radiotelephone, and temporarily puts them in the car for displays, but he has no way of knowing if these are correct for the car or not.

The car came with an alarm system fitted, including a toggle panic switch on the steering column, as well as instructions for the "taxi alarm", which sounds the horn and flashes the lights in an emergency.

Greg said the driver's handbook that came with the car has the original owners name, care-of F.J. Hart. "I don't know if that was the business name and Delphic or Adelphi was the trading name. I've tried chasing the information under that FJ Hart but nothing ever comes up with that either", Greg admitted.

It also came with a letter from a Martin Meaders to the State Insurance Office (SIO), saying; "Dear Sirs. This is to certify that Mr WJ Murphy of ... Blackburn Sth has been the sole driver of Leyland P76 V8, reg number LYB 880, from 23-11-74 to 23-12-82. This was registered as a company car in the name of FJ Hart, insured with the





The compliance plate lists the details for Greg's car as 076E452C44, where:

- 076** - Leyland P76
- E** - Automatic car after April 1974
- 4** - Four doors
- S** - sedan body
- 2** - Trim Level (Deluxe)
- C** - Three-speed column-shift auto
- 44** - 4.4lt V8 engine

Seating capacity is **6**, indicating bench front seat. The car was assembled between 27 and 31 May 1974

VACC. Yours faithfully, Mr K Hart"

Greg drove the car to Adelaide last year for the P76 Nationals, where it received a fair amount of interest. "The idea was to make it look like the taxi, just for shows and everything, for that little extra that it brings to the P76. It might be that someone's not even interested in a P76, but they see the taxi and they come over and have a look. Obviously it would be better to have the details correct, though."

"I would like to get any information on the company, and the P76s they used. I would love to find a photo, ideally a colour photo so I can see if it's a blue roof, what the signs look like on the car. We just don't know what they should have looked like."

This is Greg's fourth P76, but he wasn't always a fan, as he admitted. "My grandfather bought one brand new. He was waiting on a wagon, because he was a carpenter - Bitter Apricot wagon with the Parchment interior - but then when he heard Leyland were closing he went and enquired and that was it; it was either County Cream, Country Cream or Country Cream. The only colour he didn't want was Country Cream."

"He wasn't really a car man. A car was just for getting to work, but all that changed when he got the P76. All the family noticed he got very protective. He wouldn't leave it at shopping centres. They used to look after me in the afternoons when I was younger and I remember going to the

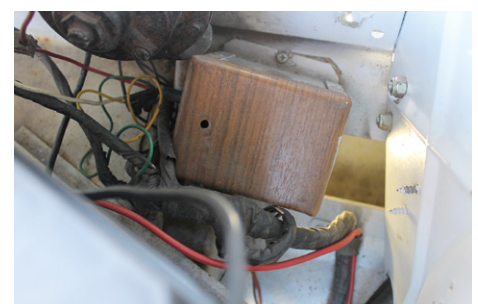
shopping centre and I thought there was something about this car, because people would come and talk to him about it."

"My dad never liked it originally, then he drove it once and he loved it. He ended up buying one about 1977, his first one. When I was young I used to cop a lot of the grilling from the school kids for getting dropped off in a P76. Then I learnt to drive on one, Dad's one. I bought a few Japanese cars and I thought, 'these are terrible to drive'. I thought, the P76 was V8, but it was lighter to drive, a nicer car."

Greg bought his first P76, an Executive, when he was 21, but it has never been on the road in the time he's owned it. "It's sort of been finished once, sprayed, but I wasn't happy with it, so I started again."

He bought a Gambier Turquoise Super that was on the road, and also still has his grandfather's car, but later wanted to get a Deluxe as well. That's when this car turned up on a sales website. "I think in the details he didn't have anything that it was even a company car", Greg said. "I just bought it because it was a Deluxe and I was looking for a Deluxe, to have the full set."

Greg said that his grandfather's car is his favourite of his collection, because it was the start of the P76 enthusiasm in the family and has only done 100,000km, but the taxi would be a close second. "If we could find out more about its history, how much work it may or may not have done, that would be great."



Emergency alarm box in the engine bay.



# PETE'S PRIDE

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

**Peter Brown's 1925 Morris Cowley is used regularly, and looks it, but he's as proud as Punch with the car.**







"She's never let me down, always got me home on her own four wheels", Peter Brown announced proudly. "I drove her on the Golden Oldies tour that finished in Shepparton and when I was packing up to leave this fella asked me where the trailer was? I told him this car's going home the same way it got here; on its four wheels. And we made it back from Shepparton in daylight."

Peter's 1925 "Bullnose" Morris Cowley is certainly not a trailer queen. It's a bit rough around the edges and has clearly seen a lot of miles, but it is mechanically spot-on and is clearly his pride and joy.

Peter's got a real passion for the products of BMC and Leyland, having owned them for many years. A potato and cattle farmer all his life – his family has lived on the same property near Daylesford, Vic, since the 1880s – he currently also owns five Leyland tractors, a couple of Nuffields, an Austin truck, Morris MO Oxford, and a 1928 "Flat Nose" Cowley that he's built up as a "special". "The big plan with that is to eventually build a copy of me dad's first ute, but until then I'll have some fun with it", he explained.

"Dad's first car was a Morris Cowley, just like that one (flat nose). Uncle Reg got it, built it into a ute and that was the start of it. Dad did go into Vauxhalls briefly, but when the Austin A70s come out he got one of those. From then on we went right through with them."

"When Judy and I were first married we had two others. I had a bullnose, just an

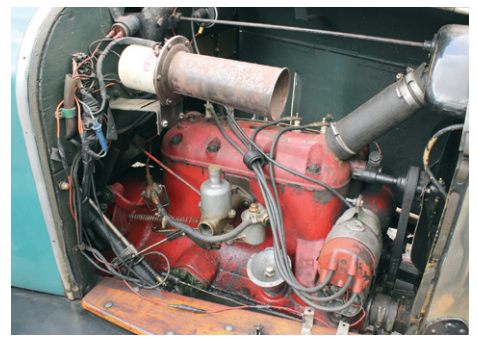
awful old wreck, and I had a really good square radiator one. But we were milking cows and busy and didn't have time to do anything with them, so I sold them, but the square radiator one was a good one. The bullnose, we got her going and all, and had her in the new year's eve parade and things like that, but then I sold it. I know where the square radiator one is, it's at Mt Beauty, but the bullnose I think she just got dismantled and threw away."

Peter said he also had an Austin Freeway when they were new. "That was by far and away the best car I ever owned; never let me down. In fact in all the years of driving Morris and Austins I never once came home on the back of a tow truck; always on its own four wheels."

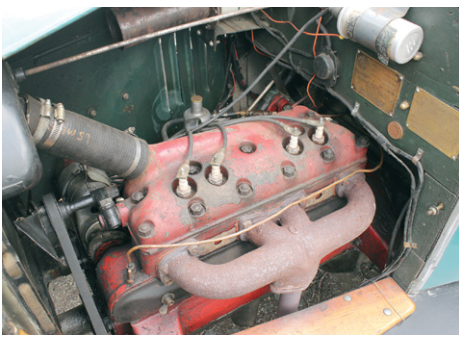
The Freeway was traded in on a new six-cylinder P76. "That was another good car. That's done over 500,000km. Trevor's got that now." Trevor is Peter's son, who has also inherited the love of Austin and Leyland cars. We will look at his collection in a later issue.

Peter recently bought a modern Falcon as his daily driver, but said he isn't as happy with it as he was with his BMC-Leyland family. "I never had a breakdown, until I bought that Falcon out there – three times that's broken down. I bought it second-hand, but still, you don't expect that from nearly a new car."

Although he's had Morris and Austins for so many years, Peter's only owned the Bullnose Cowley for about ten. "We went up to Echuca to the big Morris National rally



Fuel tap on gravity-fed fuel tank.



Speedo drive on front-left wheel.



and the bloke had it on the notice board for sale. I asked him a lot of questions about it. Everyone said I was mad because I bought it without seeing it. Trevor and I went down to Lilydale and got it. The bloke had answered every question truthfully, so you couldn't say anything against him."

The car came with a big box of paperwork, including a driver's handbook, a copy of the original workshop manual and loads of letters between past owners and repairers.

Peter was therefore able to piece most of the car's history together. "The fella who bought it new, up in Sydney, he was a commercial traveller, travelling for Tarzan's Grip. That's why the wheels are that colour. I couldn't tell you his name, though it'd be written down there. His family kept it; I've been told 50 years, I've been told 60, so somewhere around 55 years. Then John Tilbrook got it, from Canberra. I'd never met him; there was plenty of letters in the box of stuff all about him and sending to England for parts. He had it for many years and then it got sold and come to Melbourne. I think it had two owners in Melbourne before I got it."

The car is still basically as Peter bought it, although it has had some work done. "The paint was a bit poor. Very shiny, but, you know, scratches and knocks and chips. I've had to put a new clutch in her. I've put rings in the motor, and then there were troubles with the valves. I had the motor to bits twice over that. Two of the valves the stems were too long and that's what was causing all the trouble; you couldn't get

enough clearance on two of the tappets, and she was spitting out through the carby. I just filed the stems off and shortened them up and away she goes."

"A friend of mine over at Taradale, pretty much my age, said 'your car needs painting. I'll paint it for you for nothing if you buy the paint and materials'. It took me two years to make up my mind, because everyone was saying don't be a fool, he'll ruin it. So, eventually, we took it to Australia Day and on the way home we dropped her in at Taradale and left her there and never went back for 18 days. It was weather like this: terrible, hot. He rang up and said 'the good news is she's finished and she looks beautiful.' I went over and look I nearly cried. The wheels were painted. Everything was done. He was such a fussy man on detail."

The classic car fraternity is filled with people helping each other out. When Peter helped out a friend, Clair Cooley, with the engine for her MO Oxford, she presented him with a brass-bodied SU carburettor for the Cowley. "I nearly collapsed, because you just can't get them, not them brass ones. I was just so pleased and overwhelmed. I'd been trying to get one for ages. You can get SU carbies, plenty, but not of the type for that car. It used to have the Smiths five-jet on it. It never run as well until I put that SU on it. Oh, the difference that made."

Peter drives the car regularly, about twice a month, and isn't afraid to take it on an occasional dirt road. It's on historic registration, but because of the amount of use it has electric flashing indicators, though there are still no seatbelts.

Peter drove the car to Canberra for the Morris Centenary in 2013 and was hoping he might meet the car's previous owner, John Tilbrook. "By God, I didn't have to wait. Within five minutes, even though she'd been repainted, he picked her. He was just that pleased. He owned her for 15 years. He was rapt that she'd been looked after."



Peter's 1928 Cowley "Special".



# Road Trip

2009

# Capricorn Flyer

Words and photos by Eric Bailey

When Eric Bailey set out from Rockhampton for Alice Springs, in a car he'd never seen before, he thought the trip would take him ten days - barring any breakdowns.

After some deliberation and a little negotiation, I had purchased Ian Ripley's Austin A70 ute. I had seen it for sale in the *Austin Times*, and was now to pick it up from Rockhampton and bring it out to Alice Springs; having moved from Inverell, NSW, about twelve months earlier for work as part of my plan to ward off retirement.

The first part of the journey was simple; fly from Alice Springs to Brisbane, then, with my eldest son Col, by Mazda ute up the Bruce Highway arriving at Ian's in Rockhampton about 4.30pm on Tuesday afternoon.

As is customary with Austineers and other auto buffs, we started with a bit of a chat. I had not met Ian before, hadn't even spoken to him, and there I was picking up a car I had bought sight unseen. All our communication had been by email, so it was nice to put a face to the name. The garage was eventually opened to reveal what I had come for: a gleaming blue and black 1950 Austin A70 Hampshire Utility.

This story actually started when I was a child in Tamworth, NSW, when I was smitten with a splendid Austin A70 that delivered our family's new AWA Radiogram - the very best available I was told, but really I could not have cared less, my eye was taken with the vehicle it was delivered in. I was impressed, and so commenced a love affair with the motor car and with Austin in particular.



Eric Bailey having arrived in Alice Springs after only four days on the road, covering around 3,000km in a 1950 A70

So here I was, many years later, about to take delivery of a similar vehicle. I already had a 1957 Austin A95 Westminster Sedan and a 1957 Austin A95 Countryman back home in Inverell, which were awaiting my return from The Alice for their restorations.

But I needed something to keep me interested while in the Red Centre; hence my decision to buy the A70 - and what better way to get it there than to drive it.

The A70 presented as well as I had hoped. It really looked good and well cared for, and for a vehicle that had sat in waiting for a lengthy period, it seemed eager to start and get on the road. A little bit of choke, one press of the starter, and it came alive. No smoke; no strange noises; just a steady rumble to accompany Ian as

he explained the whys and wherefores of everything, including the two tree stumps he kindly deposited in the back to hold it down.

During our email conversations, Ian suggested that I should talk to the previous owner, Jim Burton, as I was trying to get as much background information as possible. It turned out that he was the Jim Burton I worked with at the Rockhampton Police Station in my younger days.

Jim's uncle, Rod Burton, had bought the ute new from Friendly Motors Mackay in December 1950.

It had been the workhorse for Rod, who was a fencing contractor and drove it from his home at Mornish, near Rockhampton, to Darwin and back working at various



The A70 as it was retrieved from the shed on Jim Burton's uncle Don's farm.





Ready to leave Rockhampton for its new home in The Alice.

properties and stations along the way. The rear suspension had been beefed up to carry quantities of great big logs, so it was not about to break.

But the ute did break an axle in 1976 and was left in a paddock on Rod's farm. Some time later it was towed to Rod's brother's farm and put in a shed, where it stayed until being liberated by Jim in 1990.

When Jim got the ute it was painted in premium grade house paint. After a thorough restoration over a few years, the ute was back on the road in its shiny new paint.

Jim sold the vehicle to Ian Ripley in about 2000.

Ian and Jim were concerned that I intended to drive the ute back to Alice Springs. I had no qualms about it. If it was as good as they had said, it would be no problem.

Besides, I had been playing with all sorts of veteran, vintage and classic vehicles since my early twenties, so was accustomed to a sometimes slow and uncomfortable ride and not overly concerned about sometimes unreliable motor cars.

I decided the journey would be broken into short runs of about 300 to 400km per day and would take maybe ten days or so to cover the 2,500 to 3,000 kilometre trip from Rockhampton to Alice. That is, of course, not counting for problems or breakdowns; of which I had decided there would be none.

I didn't fancy my chances of procuring an A70 windscreen in the back of beyond,

nor for that matter fitting one. A protector of sorts was therefore a most important item. I decided to make one from Perspex, using some rubber to hold it off the windscreen and double sided tape to hold it all together.

Colum shifts were not new to me but there had been a little time between our acquaintances.

After stocking up with all the must-have supplies, food and water for the ten-day trip, and a hold up waiting for a new set of points to arrive at the local Repco shop – where I also bought a small trolley jack, just in case – I was finally away late on Thursday morning.

The run out of Rocky was straight forward and without problem, for me anyway. I think my speed caused a little consternation for those who had tighter deadlines than me, but I didn't care. I was in my ute and I was enjoying myself immensely as I monitored the traffic, the space in front of me and the gauges. 30mph was reached with little effort and saw me on the outskirts of Rocky and onto the Capricorn Highway in no time at all. Upon leaving the built-up area I increased speed to 45mph.

I had driven this road many times in the past, usually at a great rate of knots and overtaking everything in sight. This time was a little more sedate.

The seating allows for no adjustment, other than the adjustments made by the body to accommodate a firm bench seat and a backrest that comes up to the shoulder blades and then is no more.

The pedals are where they are and the steering wheel commands centre stage in front of you without adjustment, allowing for a broad "10 to 2" grip. You accommodate yourself as best you can between these appliances and hang on.

The hanging on is essential as there are no seatbelts, the front shock absorbers behaving as only lever-action shocks do.

The seventeen-inch wheels with narrow cross-ply tyres followed every deviation in the road surface, so with this delightful meandering along my lane of the road I set myself for an interesting trip. By the time I reached Duaringa, some 69km from Rockhampton, I had been overtaken by 187 vehicles – I was keeping count.

I was planning to drive in about two-hour stages, with a short break at each stop. I wanted to monitor oil pressure and water temperature during the drive and check variations, if any, during each stop and on restarting. Both were doing well and I was already feeling quite confident that Ian (and Jim) have provided me with a very good motor car.

On reaching Duaringa I pulled over and conducted the usual visual checks: tyres, oil level and colour, oil leaks and radiator.

Two winds on the starter and we were off again. The temperature had risen a bit while standing but dropped quickly back once moving again. I was smiling broadly and taking my eyes off the gauges to look at the countryside and wave to passing fellow travellers.

I arrived in Emerald at 3.30pm, having completed 220km. Once again I did all my



Interior is still as basic as ever, but nicely restored.



"Outback-proof" rear suspension.



Not much has changed in Alpha in the past 40 years or so.



Only about a day's driving to go.

checks and as before all was well. I would head for Bogantungan and beyond; maybe I could make Alpha before nightfall. If not, it didn't matter; I would toss the swag out and settle down for the night.

I did the 160km to Alpha in just over 2½ hours. I needed to refuel and call home. Julia would want to know how things are going.

Having played football in this part of the world in my early twenties, I decided to have a look around. Not much has changed in Alpha in the past 40 years.

After one beer and a chat to a few of the locals about my Ute, I was still wide awake so decided to head out of town and stop when I got tired.

I finally stopped 150 km up the road at Barcardine. A lovely little roadside stop just on the outskirts of town that had all the facilities I needed – a patch of grass for my swag, six or seven grey nomads for company and a modern and clean amenities block.

After being rudely awoken at first light by the sound of a landing aircraft – it turned out that my lovely roadside camp was directly under the flight path of the Barcardine Airport – I was up and checking over the A70. Incredibly, it had used no oil or water since leaving Rockhampton, and the oil was still a lovely colour.

I had stopped counting those that passed me on the road. They have changed from coal-dusted white utilities to road trains and 4WDs towing "flats on wheels", both of which hold as much interest for me as a rave party.

I saw lots of very big, dead kangaroos. I was thinking that if there were this many very big, dead kangaroos on the road,



Barkly Homestead's oasis on the highway.

there must be lots more very big, live kangaroos hopping around the bush at night.

I had seen scores of live Emus in the paddocks beside the road south of Barcardine. I also encountered a rather big black pig trotting beside the road. I thought for a moment that I would at last overtake something, but as I approached he decided to drag me off, rushing up the road ahead of me, before crossing in front of me and careering off into the bush.

Longreach was my next stop, then I proceeded on to Winton and Kynuna, where I topped up with Petrol again. I was now well ahead of my schedule and the A70 was performing extremely well. I was travelling at between 45 and 50 mph with stable oil pressure and water temperature. There were no strange noises and I was enjoying the drive and being on my own. I thought being without music or conversation might be an issue for me, but it had not been the case. I just poked along thinking my own thoughts and enjoying not having work to think about.

My intent was to stop at Cloncurry for the night. I was thinking that a bed and a hot shower would be a good option, but that was not to be. The place was booked out. It was Friday night and the Curry Muster (or something of the sort) was on and you couldn't get a bed for love nor money.

A bit further on was Mt Isa. After a short phone call home, I headed out of town a short way to camp for the night. I thought

I joined six or so campers and caravans at a rest stop in the dark, but in the morning there were in fact some 20 to 30 spread out over an area about the size of two football fields.

As the sun rose I headed up the Barkly Highway. This was the most concerning part of the trip. There was Camooweal and the Barkly Homestead; and there was nothing. If something broke out here, I would be in a spot of bother.

It turned out I was worried about nothing. Oil pressure remained stable; water temperature rose only marginally; and directional stability with the narrow wheels and tyres was no more a problem than it had been.

The only worrying things about this part of the trip were the cost of fuel at Barkly Roadhouse (\$1.72 per litre) and a flat tyre that held me up, 50km from Tennant Creek on Saturday afternoon.

At Barkly Homestead Roadhouse I happily accepted a donated ice-cream offered by a stranger, who thought I deserved something for driving an Austin all the way from Rockhampton to Alice. He waved me off and wished me good luck.

The flat rear tyre shouldn't have been a problem. Those familiar with the Austin A70 will be aware of the "Stevenson telescopic jacking device". In conjunction with the advice contained in the "Austin A70 Running and Maintenance Instruction", one can jack up the car and effect a change of wheel.



Early morning starts ensured a good distance covered each day.



Almost home and plenty of time to stop for some photos of the ute at the Devil's Marbles.

I had the jack, I had the book and I had the wheel brace. I did the right thing and reading the instruction proceeded to jack up the car according to instruction. There was one slight problem. Nobody told the verge of the roadway to read the instructions and that the verge had its part to play if the car was to rise. All I managed to do was implant the Stevenson telescopic jack to its fullest extension into the sand that had been masquerading as a stable road verge.

Retrieving the Stevenson telescopic jack and replacing the hinged metal flap, I got the trolley jack out – the one I bought on a whim from Repco – demolished a cardboard carton, that had up until then been my food larder, and placed both strategically under the rear axle and pumped.

The jack refused every attempt by the quicksand to swallow it and provided sufficient height to remove and replace the errant wheel. In no time at all I was on my way again.

You will notice that I have not mentioned the flies. There is no polite way of detailing the many ways flies conjure up to delay and obstruct what is meant to be a simple operation. I will only say the six million of them were not on my side.

I arrived in Tennant Creek without further ado, having convinced all but a few of the unpaying passengers that my Austin was not a bushfly's omnibus.

I fuelled up, had dinner and settled into



Despite much of the road being quite flat, there's still plenty to see.

a motel for the night. Next morning, being Sunday, I had arranged for the tyre to be fixed by the local after-hours tyre bloke. \$80 later and one new tube – the last remaining 17" tube in Christendom – and I was out of Tennant Creek by 8.45am.

I stopped for a short stay at the Devil's Marbles, once again to check oil and water and to take a photo of the A70 in front of some of these spectacular stones. They appear pretty much out of nowhere and are really quite spectacular.

I got my photo, and in turn was photographed once more. I had by this time lost count of the number of times the A70 and I were photographed and quizzed about us and our journey. Following this photo shoot I moved on towards Ti Tree and another step closer to home.

Ti Tree is a quaint little place in the middle of nowhere. It consists of an Aboriginal Community, a Store, Roadhouse, Police Station, lots of rubbish and lots of dogs.

At Ti Tree I met a couple of blokes who were mad car buffs, visiting Australia from Italy with four other friends. After a long chat I was allowed to continue my journey.

They were an absolutely lovely group of young people who were rapt in what they had seen of Australia and in how they had been treated wherever they visited.

The run from Ti Tree to Alice Springs was uneventful. I continued on my merry way feeling more than a little pleased with myself, the A70 and our achievement.

At 3.30 pm I entered the outskirts of Alice Springs. I had originally planned on a trip that would take me up to ten days and here I was completing it in four – who would have believed that you could drive a 69-year-old car upwards of 3,000 km from Rockhampton to Alice Springs without a problem. What a brilliant vehicle and a credit to Ian Ripley and Jim Burton. I could not have asked for better.

I was warmly welcomed by Julia and our youngest son and his family who were visiting. I arrived home with very little washing, lots of left over provisions, 20lt of Rockhampton water, 15lt of oil (I had considered changing the oil on the way), all the spares I started with and a great deal more respect for the people who designed and built the Austin A70. 📷



The A70 Hampshire ute at its new home in Darwin.



## 22-29 October 2016 Bateman's Bay to Griffith via Phillip Island

This year I will be going back to my roots, in a way, as I take part in the Camp Quality esCarpade, from Bateman's Bay to Griffith, via Phillip Island.

The first charity rally I did, back in 1993 with a mate Michael, was the second Camp Quality Caper. Another five Capers followed, before I took an extended break until our first Shitbox Rally in 2013.

As a result of that first Caper I got involved as a companion with Camp Quality for three years, and the charity has always remained close to my heart.

Having done three Shitbox Rallies and, eventually, achieving what we set out to do - completing an event without any mechanical woes (see Issue 14 for details) - and raising over \$35,000 for the Cancer Council, it is time to look at something different.

The Shitbox Rally is a great event, but, in all honesty, we have now done so much work and spent so much money on the Mini that it is no longer really a suitable car for an event of that name.

The alternatives were to find a different vehicle for the same rally, or find a different rally we can do in the same car.

Some of the great advantages with

doing the Camp Quality event are: Every dollar we raise goes toward running camps and support programmes for kids living with cancer; there are fewer cars (around 75) and people, so we get to know them more easily; the daily distances are less, making it easier on the cars, even though there is more dirt driving overall; we get to visit schools and pass on the message about Camp Quality while having fun on the rally; and we have a lay-day in the middle of the event, to take it easy and have a rest, or work on the car if it needs it (which it probably will).

Management of Camp Quality is funded through corporate sponsorship, so money we raise is directed where it is most needed - to helping raise the spirits of kids living with cancer.

That's an important aspect of the charity and we hope all our readers will get behind us in our fundraising efforts.

To donate, please go to our Everyday Hero fundraising page at: <https://escarpade2016.everydayhero.com/au/bmc>

As Brett is unable to do the rally this year, my long-time mate, Craig Illing has decided to join me in the Mini.

Craig is part owner of Kingston Cars in Cheltenham, is a talented mechanic and has been involved with Mokes for nearly as long as I have. He's also nutty as a fruitcake, like me - I hope the rally can handle the two of us.

We already have our first three sponsors on-board. Ben at Minis Plus in Bayswater has kindly offered to replace the floor in the Mini - a major job that had me a little daunted by the complexity of it.

The Australian Austin A30 Car Club Inc has donated \$200 and Graeme Cox from TIS Electrics has pledged considerable support again.

Please feel free to call me for any more information about the esCarpade, or Camp Quality, on: 0427 537 443.



• Ian Mitchell



Our Moke on our first Caper in 1993.



Mini on hoist at Minis Plus for new floor.



The damaged section of floor cut out.

# Big Trips Sewn Up

Words and photos by Craig Watson



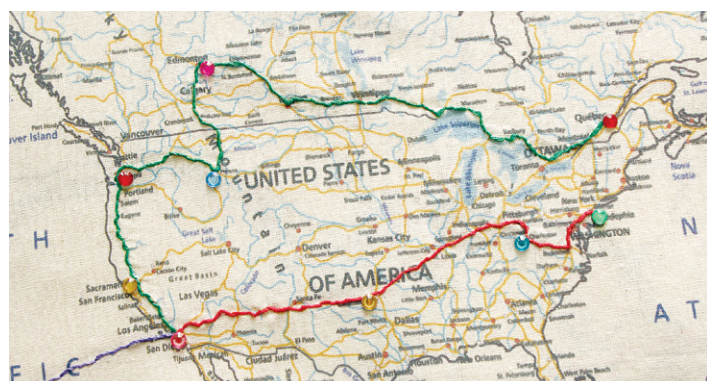
Maree & Lisa have found a niche in the map market.



Artist Maree is also making nifty caravan brooches.



Paralympian Lisa with her first map of many travels.



North American map is their latest release.

You've just returned from a big trip and the memories of where you went are still fresh, but you want some way to preserve those memories in a style that you will be happy to show people in years to come.

Paper maps are, frankly, and despite their practicality on the trip, boring and not the sort of thing worth hanging on your wall to show off to visitors. Why not some sort of fabric map that can be personalised and shown off as a work of art?

That's the dilemma that Lisa Chaffey faced when she wanted to record her worldly adventures.

Lisa was an accomplished wheelchair basketballer: a silver medalist at the 2004 Paralympics in Athens and competed in world championships in UK and Japan.

"We did quite a lot of US tours and quite a bit of Europe tours as well", she explains. "Since retiring in 2004 I've become an international classifier, which is the person who puts the players into the different levels of disability. So, I've done a lot of Canada and most of the Asian region and through sport I've also worked in East Timor and Fiji in sport development."

"I had been looking for a map for a very, very long time, then in April 2015 I finally found a nice one. I had to sit down with my passports and Google Maps and work out

where I'd been, and sew on all the routes. Then, every friend that came to my house asked me to sew one for them and I said, 'no, one's enough!'"

"So, I created some kits. From that, Ree and I decided we could actually market them and then we could market more than just the world maps; there's quite a lot of grey nomads out there that might like to show their trips. So, that's where it came from."

Ree is Lisa's mum, Maree O'Donnell, who is an experienced artist and designed the map of Australia that the pair now have printed in Australia. They buy in the world maps, but the North American map they have just released is also printed locally.

The great thing with these maps is that they come as a complete kit, with five colours of cotton, five colour pens (in case you're just not into sewing), and an embroiderer's pen (to mark where you've been so you can sew over it, and then it vanishes after a few days). You also get a needle, needle threader, some self-adhesive rhinestones (for marking major points of interest) and a set of easy to follow instructions, all packaged up in a cool little box.

The Aussie map includes an image of a car and caravan, but if there is enough interest they will do the map without it.

Being printed on cotton fabric the finished map looks great as a wall hanging, framed, or made into a pillow case, table cloth, quilt, or whatever else you can imagine.

"One woman used a different colour cotton for each of her three children, so she could keep track of them as they travelled around the world", Maree explains.

The Australian map would be ideal for many of the road trips we feature in this magazine. In fact, I've got hold of one and am going to do my Mini and Moke adventures. I might have to buy some more cotton, though.

The Aussie map kit sells for \$65, while the North American and World maps, being larger, are \$75 – all prices include postage.

To buy the maps, or to get more info, they are on [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) and Facebook – search for **travelembroidery** – or you can email [mareeodonnell@gmail.com](mailto:mareeodonnell@gmail.com) or call Maree on 0433 297 730 



# SURVIVOR Car AUSTRALIA

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– Chris Tikellis (Editor)

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# Eye Witness to History

Compiled by Col Gardner

The National Archives of Australia holds a huge number of images that document Australia's history and development.

Some of these photographs can place BMC/Leyland vehicles and their antecedents at work and leisure in contemporary historical urban and rural settings.



The caption tells us that this photograph was taken on the Alpine Rally in 1926; a rally that was centred around Omeo and Mt Hotham in the Victorian high country and, indeed, is still conducted all these years later. The gentleman with the dangling cigarette is said to be refuelling the baby Austin (Chummy). If the can does contain petrol, you have to wonder about the wisdom of the operation... The other vehicles in the picture are identified as a bullnose Morris and a Daimler. (NAA barcode 3122233)



An Austin A30 with SA number plate gets a check-over at Katherine, NT, on the 1954 Redex Round Australia Trial. Note the flymesh draped over the windscreen, and the oil stains on the rear wheel seem a bit worrying. There are some interesting period advertisements on the General Store: Shell with ICA; AWA Radiola radios; H V McKay Massey Harris farm machinery. Remember when oil was sold by the pint bottle from the rack? And is that a Morris Z utility just visible behind the A30? (NAA barcode 11139607)



# Annual BMC-LAHG Lunch

19 September 2015 Words and photos by Steve Maher



The chance to meet the men and women from BMC-Leyland Australia is indeed a cherished opportunity and luckily for us that it comes around once a year.

For 2015 the day was changed to a Saturday. The lunch always begins with a car display on the roof carpark of the Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. This year the focus was on the Austin 1800 and the Morris Mini Deluxe, both celebrating their 50th anniversary.

22 cars were on display in the sunshine with examples of the anniversary cars from Karen Austin (1968 Austin 1800 Mk1 sedan), Tony Cripps (1970 Austin 1800 Mk2 sedan) and Geoff Eastwood (1965 Morris Mini Deluxe).

Much interest was shown by the car club people and BMC-Leyland ex-employees for Jason Birmingham's recently restored 1974 Leyland Marina 6cyl sedan. Apart from the fantastic workmanship in the restoration, which included using later Mk2 and Mk3 English Marina parts, Jason has also developed his own fuel injection system for the E6 engine – that is a work of art.

After the show it was downstairs for lunch, where once again Will Hagon acted as Master of Ceremonies; introducing all the relevant people, joined together with little stories that kept the diners entertained.


A new book was released at the lunch and Group President Greg Kean gave an introduction to the book, titled *BMC-*

*Leyland Australia Vehicle Reference 1950-1982* and co written by Peter J Davis and Tony Cripps. This book covers everything about deciphering the ID plates on all Australian made BMC-Leyland vehicles. A great reference piece.

Tony Cripps gave a talk on the Austin 1800 to celebrate its 50th anniversary, then special guest speaker Terry McDermott from Leyland's Truck and Bus Division gave a talk on the PMC160 bus body. This was designed to fit a number of different bus chassis and was very advanced in body strength and safety for its day.

His talk included a video on the development of the bus body using a Leyland chassis and running gear through outback NSW and QLD and included in-house testing of the body rollover strength. Revolutionary for its time and designed right here in Australia. Another example of the sad loss to Australian manufacturing.

The occasion of the lunch was also used to mark the 70th birthday of both BMC-Leyland Advance Model Group Engineer Barry Anderson and Heritage Group stalwart Kay De Luca. Attending these events are always a worthwhile activity. I don't know of any other occasion where you have the opportunity to sit down and have lunch with the men and women who designed and built your car.

Car club members and BMC-Leyland enthusiasts are welcome to attend. 





# 22nd Qld Morris Day



18 October 2015

Words by Carle Gregory.

Photos by Barry Kilah.



Our 22nd annual display day started with cars arriving steadily from around 8am onwards.

We had four groups this year, at Ormiston State School, being: Minors, Minis, Morris non-Minors, and Other BMC, with People's Choice for each group to be won.

The Bayside Vehicle Restorers Club also paid us a visit on their run, to add more variety to the display.

The Morris Minors totalled 40 on the day; a little under our usual 50+ but the other groups made up for it, to make an impressive 70+ cars on display.

Among these some rarities could be found like a New Zealand car or two and a very rare (in Australia) Marina Sun-Tor camper conversion, decked out with period picnic accessories.

There was also a fairly rare 1934 Morris 10/4 four-door Tourer still with its original Olympic tyres.

Across from the Minors where the Minis, with a good selection of types turning up, mainly from the Mini Car Club of QLD.

Our day is open to ANY Morris in ANY condition and a couple of people took advantage of this and bought their Morris on trailers.

While people sat in the shade and had their morning cuppa, apart from the cars to look at and drool over they had stalls and live entertainment to occupy them until lunch was ready.

After this it was time to go home after a great day.

Many thanks to Meguiars and Liquid Moly for the help in putting this day on.



# Pre-War MG National Rally

Bathurst, NSW 13-15 November 2015 Words by Malcolm Robertson

Photos by Jeremy Braithwaite & Malcolm Robertson, or as noted.



Once every two years, the Australian Pre-War MG owners hold their National Rally in a picturesque country town. Kicking off in 2005, the first four events were at Beechworth in Victoria, then for two events it moved to Bathurst in NSW.

At the most recent meeting, organised by Tim Shellshear and Rob Dunsterville, owners, back-up teams and supporters from all corners of Australia and overseas converged on Bathurst to enjoy the hospitality of this historic inland city, well-used to the sound and fragrances of race-bred engines and smokey exhausts.

Pre-War of course means pre-World War 2. Commercial production of cars ceased in 1939 in Britain as factories geared up to support the military effort. So, 1939 draws a useful line in the sand for modern day MG enthusiasts as it neatly separates a wealth of fascinating, different and historically exciting MG models from their post-war cousins and descendants.

Between 1923, when the first handful of MG cars were built, to the start of the War and the temporary end of car production, is a fascinating and exciting period in the MG Car Company's history.

As development progressed and the midnight oil was burned in the little factory

in Abingdon, new models appeared in rapid succession. Specialised versions for racing and rallying were created, while family cars and sports cars were also offered.

Today you need to be something of an armchair expert to be able to tell a K3 from a J4, or maybe a modified NA, or to separate the SA from the VA or WA.

Add to this the Australian coachbuilding industry, which was at its height in the 1930s, producing bodies for MGs, and other makes of imported chassis, quite different from those on the cars in their home countries.

Such is the variety of cars, coachwork and models that it is no wonder MG owners and the public alike are mesmerised, and often confused, by them. And mesmerised they were at Bathurst, with over 70 Pre-War MGs registered for the three-day weekend of activities.

Australia is home to about 400 Pre-War MGs. Some have been here since new; some have migrated over the years with their owners, or been recently imported.

Australia was often the last resting place for race cars that had outlived their competitiveness in England and Europe. Many rare racing models were shipped to Australia, where they often raced





Photo by Matthew Magilton



competitively for a further ten or more years before being "retired".

Several of these old racers were on display in Bathurst; perhaps the highlight being a 1933 MG J3, freshly restored by Queenslander Ross Kelly and a team of colleagues to its original condition, when first raced by the legendary Derry George.

Pre-War MGs in Australia fall into four categories. First are the true vintage MGs – those built before the end of 1930 and based on the Bullnose Morris. Julie Craig's well-campaigned 1925 14-28 was the only example of these cars at Bathurst.

Secondly come what are known as the Triple-M models, making up the bulk of Pre-war MGs. These are the overhead camshaft four- and six-cylinder cars variously marketed as Midgets, Magnas and Magnettes – hence the Triple-M designation. There was a mouth-watering selection of these cars at Bathurst, including M-, C-, F-, J-, K-, L-, N- and P-types, and one fabulous racing Q-type.

The third category comprises the big Pre-War saloons which were introduced in 1935 and sold new as the 1½ litre VA, the 2 Lt SA and the 2.6 Lt WA. Sixteen of these "SVW" cars were at Bathurst: the largest gathering ever in Australia.

The final Pre-War MG category covers the first of the well-loved T-series MGs, the TA and the TB, although the Post-war TC is always smiled kindly upon by Pre-War owners, as there was very little difference between the TB and the TC. There was a strong showing of all three models at Bathurst 2015.

The weekend's festivities consisted of a welcome noggin and natter at the National Motor Racing Museum; a display day in historic Russell St, against a backdrop of Bathurst's beautiful civic buildings; the mandatory lap or two of the Mount Panorama racing circuit (where Pre-War MGs notched up so many successes in those far off romantic days when men were men, the track was dirt and there were no safety barriers); several well-proportioned dinners; and a drive in the country for lunch at a winery.

The weekend concluded with the presentation of a cheque for \$5,000 to the children's ward at Bathurst Base Hospital as a way of saying thank you from the Pre-War MG owners to Bathurst for hosting two of the group's biennial weekends.

The next biennial Pre-War MG meeting has just been announced to be at Yamba, NSW in October 2017. 



Photo by Colin Poore





# Moking in the Mountains Tour

14-20 November 2015

Words by Howard van Appledorn.

Photos by various.



Howard (left) and Tony.

I was coming to Australia anyway in November and heard about the Moking In The Mountains Tour and thought too good an opportunity to miss - seven days touring the great Snowy Mountains in Mokes. Perfect.

I was escorted by Sheila and our daughter Sarah to the meeting point at the Service Centre in Chisholm ACT. I didn't want to be late and actually was the first to arrive. Soon there were nine Mokes, and later in the week we had ten. It was nice to see Les and Marg Jordan again; the only people in the group I had met before.

The seven days were wonderful touring the High Country, where even this late in the year it got very cold at times. The views on many of the roads were very beautiful and the roads very smooth.

I noticed that during the week every opportunity to do "show parking" and make a picture of all the Mokes together was taken. I can tell you that is an international habit.

We got to see many important areas from the Snowy Scheme. On the first day, Saturday, we visited the Snowy Mountains Hydro Visitors Centre, where we saw a very interesting film about the Snowy Mountains project. On Monday we visited the historic Geehi Hut; Tuesday looked through the Murray 1 Power Station Visitors Centre.

On Wednesday we crossed the top of the Tooma Dam and visited Cabramurra – the


highest permanently inhabited town in Australia at 1,488 meters high. We stopped at the Visitors Centre for coffee and the spectacular views.

We also had a couple of chances to take some of the Alpine walks. The first one, on the second day, was more a goat trail than a pathway. It was indeed very strenuous but invigorating with great views over the Alpine area and Kosciuszko National Park.

At the museum in Corryong I got to learn about the Man From Snowy River. With the Mokes all lined up outside the visitors centre in Corryong, we caught the attention of the local newspaper photographer. That is how we landed on the front page of the Corryong Courier.

Most evenings we had traditional Aussie BBQs for dinner, and on one night I got to try "Skippy on A Stick" and I have to say it was very tasty.

The last town we visited was Tumut, where we got to see the Mini collection of Doug Martin (see Issue 5).

I want to say a big thankyou to everyone. It has been the most memorable trip I have ever made to Australia. Thanks to Tony, Roger, Les, Marg, David, Steve, Peter, Chris, Sharon, Wayne, Jeanette, Grant, Stuart, Merrin, Keith, Ian and Linda. A special thanks to Roger for telling me about the trip and making all the reservations for me, and to Tony for letting me drive his Moke for some of the trip. 





# 11th Grand Day Out

Proudly presented by the Victorian Mini Club Inc.

6 December 2015 Words by Watto. Photos by Elish Watson, Jim Stafford & George King.



So nice to have an annual event without the stress of polishing the car or worrying about what people will think of your pride and joy if its not all bling.

Obviously, about 200 owners and their guests agree, as this year we had a terrific turn out of cars from a wide variety of brands under the BMC-Leyland umbrella.

Over half the cars were Minis, which is always gratifying but never surprising, but we also had good numbers of P76s – as usual making this day their annual Show 'n' Shine as well – and Mokes.

We also had our new project ADO19 Austin Ant on display, which attracted a lot of interest and curiosity.

Other clubs setting up camp this year included the Austins and the new BMC-Leyland Car Club.

As usual, there was only one competitive element to the day, the annual self-proclaimed National Rocker Cover Racing Championship.

This year it was hotly contested, but was not without controversy, with a racer that was eliminated in its first round being given a run against the "odd man out", then winning that round and advancing into the final – to finish in a drawn championship. The winners were Bruce Kerr and Russell Allen, who could not be separated after four runs.

Meanwhile, there were traders around the perimeter of the venue doing their best to relieve shoppers of any excess weight in their wallets, as well as our usual hot food vendor and coffee provider.

The day concluded with our usual FREE mega raffle, with over 20 prizes being snapped up.

All in all, another great day. Start planning now for this year's event, which will be on 4 December. We would love to see even more clubs making this an official event, loads more cars – there is space for hundreds of cars – and plenty of room for more Rocker Covers.





# Minis In The Gong Show

17 January 2016

Words by Phil Boye

Photos by Craig Watson & Phil Boye



The city of Wollongong turned on a perfect sunny south coast day for the 2016 Minis in the Gong Show and Shine. Now in it's fifth year, the event is held on the grassy parade grounds of the Australian Motorlife Musuem in Kembla Grange just south of Wollongong and this year saw a record number of 78 Minis on display.

Show day sees an early start for a number of volunteers who arrive at Motorlife to setup the various gazebos, tables and BBQ ready for the days activities. Watto from *BMC Experience*, who made the long trek up from Geelong in his Mini Van and trailer the day before, also arrived early to set up his stall of books, DVD's and other goodies.

The show attracts not only a good number of local Minis but also many from further afield, including Canberra, Bathurst in the west and the North Coast.

A number of Clubs and online groups such as Minis on the Mountain, Mini Car Club NSW, ACT Mini Car Club and Ausmini had arranged meeting points for a morning cruise to the show. By 9:15am large groups of Minis began to arrive. Before long the grounds were filled with an interesting mix of our favourite cars.


As usual the show attracted an interesting variety of cars. There were fine examples of stock models, including original Morris

850, Mini De Luxe and Mini K, Cooper S, Clubman, Clubman GT and Leyland Minis, the Mini Sunshine and Mini S.

There were also examples of imported models such as the Mini Pickup and late model UK-built Rover Minis. The show also attracted a number fine examples of the Mini Moke and BMW MINI. A very original example of the Mini's big brother, the Morris 1100, was also in attendance.

Also of interest were a number of highly modified Minis including a Clubman GT copy with a twin cam BMW fuel injected head, a turbo charged Mini and a Mini Van, a stunning Moke painted completely in Matt Black and another with army camouflage theme.

The show's prize categories are quite simple. The *People's Choice* trophy is voted on by all in attendance and this year was won by an immaculate Clubman GT replica, a restoration of which had only just been completed.

The *Car of the Year* is only voted on by the owners of cars in attendance. This year it was won by a very nicely built Broadspeed replica. Apparently this car was built by a group of TAFE students back in the early nineties and attracted a lot of attention at the show. 

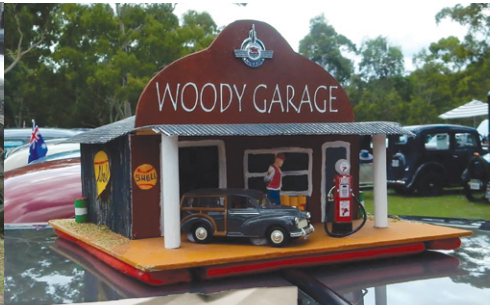


# NSW Australia Day CARnivale

Parramatta, NSW.

26 January 2016

Words & Photos by Steve Maher.



The CARnivale classic vehicle display has been running now since 1986 and has become associated with Australia Day, as one of the major drawcards to Australia Day celebrations in Sydney.

For many years it was held in the centre of Sydney, taking up almost the entire length of Macquarie St. Due to major works being undertaken in the city this year, Macquarie St could not be blocked off for the day so the organisers gained the support of Parramatta City Council and moved the event to Parramatta Park.

It was here that the CARnivale became one of the main attractions at Parramatta's Australia Day celebrations.

The weather had not been kind to Sydney over the week leading up to Australia Day. Constant rain had left areas of Parramatta Park waterlogged. Some areas had to be roped off, as cars may have become bogged in the grass.

The weather was a little unpredictable on the Tuesday morning, with overcast skies and at least one

heavy shower, but after that it fined up and the crowd filed in.

CARnivale is right up there with Shannons Sydney Classic and All British Day for classic car attendance; not as large as the others, but due to its tie-in with Australia Day a very high number of spectators are on hand.

The number of classic cars, trucks, fire engines, race cars and bikes of all varieties was estimated at between 500 and 700. A good percentage of those were from the BMC-Leyland stable.

Leyland P76s, Marinas and Minis were in good numbers, and of course plenty from Austin, Morris, Jaguar, Rover, Vanden Plas and Triumph, to name a few.

The highlight for me was the group of eight Morris J vans. Most people wouldn't have seen this many together since the 1960s, but there they were in various liveries, including NRMA and Yellow Express. There was even a very low, matte-black Rat Rod J van.

You get to see some amazing things at CARnivale.



It's always a bit depressing writing the UK Scene pages for the first issue of the year, thinking of most of the readers basking in the Australian sunshine while we suffer whatever the elements feel like throwing at us in the UK. I can just hope that reporting our Summer events helps to cheer you up when it's winter there!

## Brooklands New Year's Day Meet: 1 January 2016

We didn't wait long for our first outing of the year, limiting ourselves to just a couple of drinks to welcome the New Year in, and getting up early on New Year's Day.

It's becoming traditional for classic car enthusiasts to hold meets all over the country to celebrate the New Year, so we headed to our nearest at Brooklands.

Although we usually go to the Brooklands Austin Morris Day and Mini Day each year, we'd not tried the New Year event before, and were quite surprised at the size of the queue to get in.

This year there were a record-breaking 1,568 classic and some modern specialist cars parked up on the site, with around 7,000 people attending during the day. This was an incredible 40% up on last year's attendance.

It made a change to see cars from a wider range of manufacturers than we normally see at the Austin Morris Day.

However this meet was not so much a show, as a chance to get out and drive the cars to a great location and meet and chat with other like-minded enthusiasts.



## Bingley Hall Mini Fair: 31 January 2016

The British Mini Club's annual event at Bingley Hall, Staffordshire, took place on the last Sunday in January. As always the main activity at this show is shopping, with people getting the chance to see and buy whatever they need for their winter projects.

Bingley is an agricultural showground, with vast warehouse-type exhibition halls. One of the halls is totally given over to auto-jumble.

The main hall is probably two-thirds traders and one-third display cars and show'n'shine. There is a balcony around the top of the main hall where clubs can have their club stands, accessed by a very steep ramp outside.

Because it's a winter show and quite a long drive from us, we normally drive up on the Saturday and stay overnight for this one, and the hotel where we stay is always packed full of Mini fans, making it as much a social occasion, with a chance to meet a lot of people not seen since the last summer show the previous year.

One of the highlights of the show was the display of convertible Wolseley Hornets, converted by Crayford in 1966 for a competition where Heinz food company gave away 57 of them as prizes. This year they are celebrating their 50th anniversary and the Crayford Convertible Car Club is planning several special show appearances in 2016 to mark the occasion.





## British Motor Museum Opening: 12-13 February 2016



On 13 February the former Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon was re-opened under its new name British Motor Museum.

For some time we had been eagerly awaiting the opening of the new Collections Centre on the site. This is a 4,500m<sup>2</sup> building, housing around 150 vehicles from the reserve collection of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust, and 100 cars from the Jaguar Heritage Trust.

Costing around £4 million, the project took advantage of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and funding from Jaguar Land Rover, the Garfield Weston Foundation, as well as both Trusts.

The Collections Centre was completed last November, by which time the Museum had received another grant of £1.1 million for refurbishment of the existing museum. In order to undertake the work required, the site was closed for three months.

On entering the museum grounds it was evident that a lot of work had been undertaken, not only on the original building itself, but on the entrance road and grounds. Some of the groundwork was still in progress, but new landscaping promises to make the site very attractive once nature takes its course.

The main building itself has a new entrance towards the left hand side of the building to allow the displays inside to be more spread out.

I went along to the preview day on 12 November, where BMIHT Chairman, Bob Dover, and Member of Parliament and classic car enthusiast Gavin Williamson opened the Museum, talking about the work that had been done and the importance of the Museum to British motoring, hence its new name, the British Motor Museum.

Inside the main museum it feels much lighter and brighter, with the emphasis on vehicle displays rather than the packed



lines of vehicles it had previously in order to fit everything in.

Cars are now arranged in groups, such as: Motor Sport; Sports Cars; Prototypes; so you won't necessarily see all the cars of one make/model in the same area as it mostly was before.

In the collections centre the cars are much more closely parked, rather than displayed, some in rows three-deep. It's great to see so many of the cars that we hadn't been able to see before, rather than knowing they were stored away elsewhere out of public view.

As a Mini fan, the highlight for me was seeing the Motor Sport section, with the three Monte-Carlo winning Minis on a new display stand, with my favourite Mini only a few feet away: Daniel and Bunty Richmond's UHR 850; the 1959 Austin Seven with a Downton conversion.

Missing from the displays in the main museum itself were the first and last Minis, which I found surprising.

The first production Morris Mini, 621 AOK, had been in Munich at a BMW MINI exhibition for the previous year. So too had 33 EJB, the 1964 Monte Carlo winner, but it was back home and on display.

I later saw X411JOP, the last production Mini, hiding away in the new Collections Centre, and 621 AOK in the Workshop.

A recent acquisition for the museum, the 1965 Mini Traveller previously owned by Lord Mountbatten, was on display on the mezzanine level of the main museum.

If you're coming to England make sure you pay a visit to the museum. It is well worth it and, with the changes, new displays and the Collections Centre, even if you've been before there is lots new to discover.

More information at the new website: [www.britishmotormuseum.co.uk](http://www.britishmotormuseum.co.uk)



# Club Profile

## The 1100 Club (UK)

by Dave Wilkins

### Promoting and Preserving the Car that Floats on Fluid

A depressing article in a UK magazine provided the spark to start the only global car club dedicated to preserving BMC's ADO16.

In 1982, *Practical Classics* magazine ran a buying piece about the BMC 1100/1300 range that was....shall we say....not encouraging. It was entitled 'BMC's Best-Selling Rot Box' and suggested that a very large wallet would be required to fund the welding that would be necessary...

"It's not often that a 'buying feature' car is shown in the scrapyard, but that's exactly where most examples of this month's car are bound", the magazine reported.

It was clear that something needed to be done, and quickly, to ensure that the legacy of the BMC 1100/1300 was preserved. It was very much at that key point where the number of cars was rapidly diminishing, largely due to rust taking hold and rendering more and more of them beyond straightforward repair, but at the same time there were enough of them around for people not to notice the reducing numbers.

In addition, they were not exactly desirable sports cars either - in most cases just the family workhorse or runaround. Fortunately two men, Dave Withington and Alistair Carter, did notice and in testament to their forward thinking and vision, in 1985 the 1100 Club was born.

At this point, perhaps we should pause and consider the ADO16, as BMC referred internally to the 1100/1300 range. Running from 1962 to 1974, the car sported a range of different badges, from the 'bog

standard' Austin and Morris models to the more 'exotic' Wolseley, Riley, MG and Vanden Plas. Between 1962 and 1971, the ADO16 was the best-selling car in Britain (with the exception of just one year) and almost 2.2 million of them were sold in all, across the world.

The ADO16 helped to break new ground in small car design and manufacture in a whole variety of ways, including its smooth and comfortable Hydrolastic suspension, transverse engine, front wheel drive and surprisingly spacious cabin. In the words of *Autocar* magazine in August 1962, "The staff of this journal have never before been so unanimously enthusiastic about the overall qualities of a car."

So, back to 2016 and clearly the 1100 Club has much to promote! The club has gone from strength to strength since its launch in 1985. It currently boasts around 500 members in the UK and abroad - less than there were in the 1990s, it's true, but this reflects the reducing number of examples of the marque.

*Idle Chatter*, the bi-monthly journal of the 1100 Club, has been highly commended for two years in a row in the Classic and Sportscar Club Awards at the NEC Classic Car Show. Now comprising some forty full-colour pages, articles range from regular running reports and area updates to detailed discussions of specific models and complex technical features. Oh, and can you guess the meaning of the magazine's title?

The club has a busy website with a member-only area containing every *Idle Chatter* ever published, as well a range of technical documents and useful data. There is a searchable database of all



The club has published its own book on the history of the ADO16

previously published technical articles from *Idle Chatter* and another to search for parts by number.

The club also has an ever-increasing presence on social media, with a very active Facebook page and Twitter feed.

In 2012, the club embarked on a major project to document as much information about the ADO16 range as possible in the form of a book, published as *The Story of the BMC 1100*. The book has now had several reprints and has sold over 600 copies across an amazing range of countries from Australia to Trinidad and Tobago!

The book is still available to purchase via the club website, and contains exclusive reminiscences from some of the factory personnel involved, together with detailed specifications, colour charts, engine and chassis number information and other essential ADO16 trivia.

The 1100 Club strongly believes that the whole point of classic car ownership is to get out and use the cars for what they were designed. Therefore it has organised two successful driving tours: Land's End to John O'Groats in 2012 (during which all of the participating cars made it from one to the other, attracting coverage on ITV News in the process with a stop-off at the Longbridge factory during the ADO16's



Winner of Best Small Club Stand at NEC Classic Car Show 2015





Visiting towns and beaches in Normandy - 2014.



Unique "skeleton" 1300 Estate is proudly owned by the club.

anniversary year) and the D-Day Tour in 2014 – crossing to France and visiting the fascinating and sobering Normandy beaches. A driving tour to Ireland is planned for August 2016.

Show and rally events also form part of the 1100 Club's calendar, with a spring show and fun run, an autumn gathering and a full weekend's National Rally in between. Previous National Rally venues have included the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, Capel Manor in Essex, the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon and, in 2015, the Acton Scott Historic Working Farm in Shropshire.

Free Crypton tuning was available to members, and a busy technical seminar considered the internals of suspension displacers and the reconditioning of steering racks. Members celebrated the 30th anniversary of the 1100 Club with bubbly and a commemorative cake showing the first and most recent issues of Idle Chatter!

The 2016 National Rally takes place over the weekend of 13 and 14 August, at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre near Aylesbury. As usual, there will be the AGM, concours judging, an evening social event with entertainment, and spares and regalia on sale throughout the event.

The 1100 Club also maintains a presence at a wide range of other shows across the country, both large and small. It is always represented at the Bromley Pageant of Motoring (the largest one day classic car show in Europe) and at the annual classic car show at the NEC Birmingham – where in 2015 the club took home the award for Best Small Car Club Stand.



Technical seminar at 2015 National rally.

Regular area meetings take place in various areas of the country, and a network of area contacts is available to assist fellow members, within the UK and in a number of other countries spanning both hemispheres.

The club keeps a close eye on the spares situation; a key element of keeping the ADO16 range on the road. In recent years, the club has taken part in the remanufacture of pitch springs, front wings, original specification exhaust systems and various rubbers and seals.

It is also taking a key role in inter-club discussions surrounding the possible rebuilding of Hydrolastic suspension displacers. Members can source prompt technical and spares advice from designated club officers, including the aptly named 'Spannerman', who also regularly contributes to the club magazine.

The 1100 Club owns and maintains the original cutaway Austin Countryman estate car, known affectionately as the 'Skeleton'. The car was used at the 1966 Geneva Motor Show and then again at Earl's Court, and was originally fitted with three-phase motors to operate the seats and one-piece tailgate automatically!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, the 1100 Club plays a vital role in



both raising the profile of the ADO16 and also in facilitating its preservation by keeping members' enthusiasm and passion alive. It's an extremely friendly club and members go to great lengths to help each other out. Ultimately it is the building and maintaining of that 1100/1300 community that leads to all of the other aspects fitting together, and this the 1100 Club does very well.

Membership costs £29.50 for a UK annual subscription, £42 for Europe and £49 for the rest of the world. In addition, overseas members are able to join on a web-only basis, accessing the magazines as PDF files via the website and paying considerably less, as much of the standard overseas subscription charge covers postage. You can also like us on Facebook and follow @the1100club on Twitter.

Join us to help keep alive the cars that float on fluid!

[www.the1100club.com](http://www.the1100club.com) 



Lands End to John O'Groats was a popular run.

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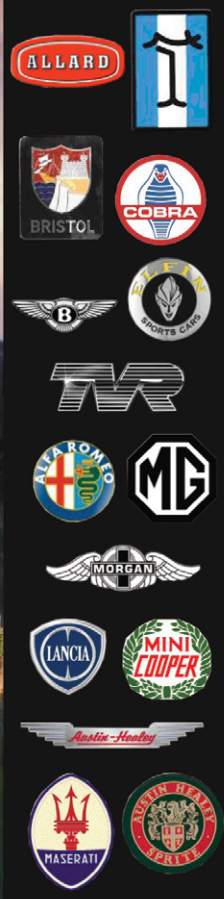
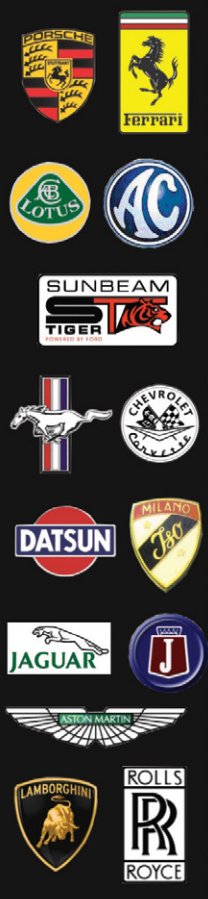
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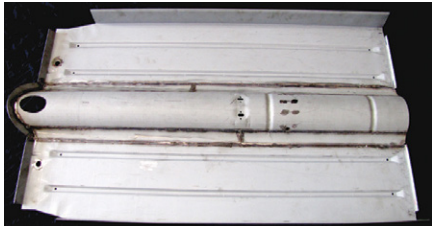


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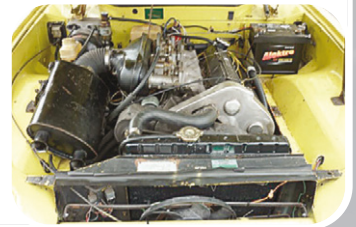
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# Fire & Ice

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

Father and son John and John Tarran share a passion for preserving old Land Rovers, and now own one of the rarest: a genuine ex-Snowy Mountains Firefly.

FIRE ARMOUR LIMITED. **FIREFLY** 5 GEORGE STREET LONDON W.1.







Ruins of the Hotel Kosciusko a year after the fateful fire.

At about 3:45 on a cold April morning in 1951 an explosion erupted from the electricity switchboard room of the Kosciusko Hotel, atop the Snowy Mountains.

The hotel was situated in the snowfields about halfway between Jindabyne and Charlotte's Pass, about 12km from Perisher Valley. It was well located to provide accommodation for some of the senior men working on the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, universally known as The Snowy.

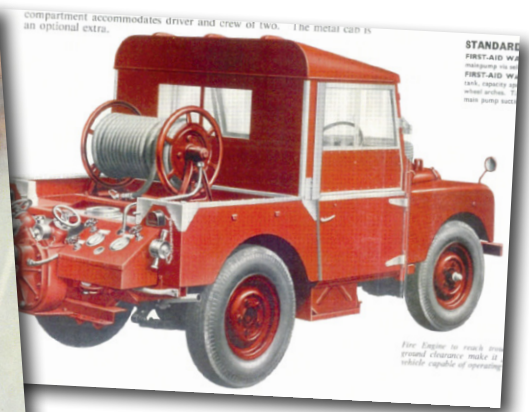
But the hotel's timber construction meant that the fire quickly took hold, while its isolation meant there was little that could be done to bring the fire under control.

The fire quickly spread to the nearby four-story workers' quarters. Within a few hours both buildings were reduced to smouldering ruins.

Thankfully, nobody was killed in the inferno, but one man, Edward Hutchison, the hotel's engineer, was later taken to hospital with burns to his arms and face, from trying to fight the fire.

Around 70 guests and 80 staff members stood shivering, mostly in only their nightclothes, in the light drizzle that was falling. It was later in the day before all had been ferried to Cooma on busses.

The fire highlighted the need for a small, first-response fire unit that could at least hold a fire at bay until larger fire tankers could get to the scene. The Kosciusko Hotel was in a relatively accessible area, but for many of the isolated workers camps and



Brochure pic of 80" factory fire tender.

tenders were put to, or how successful they were, but clearly the SMA was happy enough with them. They were replaced, reportedly in May 1955, with the 86" version – available from the factory between 1954 and 1956.

Of the four 80" models, one is known to have been wrecked at Emerald in Victoria, another is believed to have been stripped, and the remaining two are reportedly in the hands of private collectors.

Precious little is known about the 86" models used by the SMA, other than they existed, but if any of our readers has one or can provide more information, we would very much like to hear from you.

Although Pressed Metal Corp in Enfield had been assembling Land Rovers since around the end of 1956, all the fire tenders had been imported Completely Built Up (CBU).

Suffice to say that clearly the SMA continued to be happy with its Land Rover fire engines, for by 1960 it was looking at replacing them with the latest units.

### Angus Firefly

However, by this time Land Rover was no longer making fire engines, as it was found that virtually every fire chief wanted the vehicles specified to his requirements, Land Rover was unable to provide a standard specification for all customers and it was not viable for the factory to be producing one-off units to individual customer requirements.

Instead, from the introduction of the Series II Land Rovers, in 1958, they palmed off production of the fire units

temporary townships of the hydro scheme, only a fire unit with all-terrain capability would do the job.

By this time, the Land Rover was the backbone of the transport fleet for The Snowy, with already around 100 in use (see next story). Ideally, a small fire unit mounted on a Land Rover would be just what was needed.

### Land Rover Fire Engines

Land Rover was one step ahead of The Snowy's fire service and already had such a unit available. A small fire tender had been developed at the factory on the original 80" Series 1 Landy, available from July or August 1949, according to James Taylor in *Original Land-Rover Series I*.

Four such units were ordered through NSW Rover agents Grenville Motors and arrived completely built-up from the factory for delivery to the Snowy Mountains Authority (SMA) on 26 May 1953, according to existing company records.

While they arrived already set up as fire engines, they apparently had all their hoses and fittings added in Australia, to meet NSW requirements – no doubt due to the provision of equipment standards under the Bush Fires Act of 1949.

We have not been able to find any information on how much use these fire



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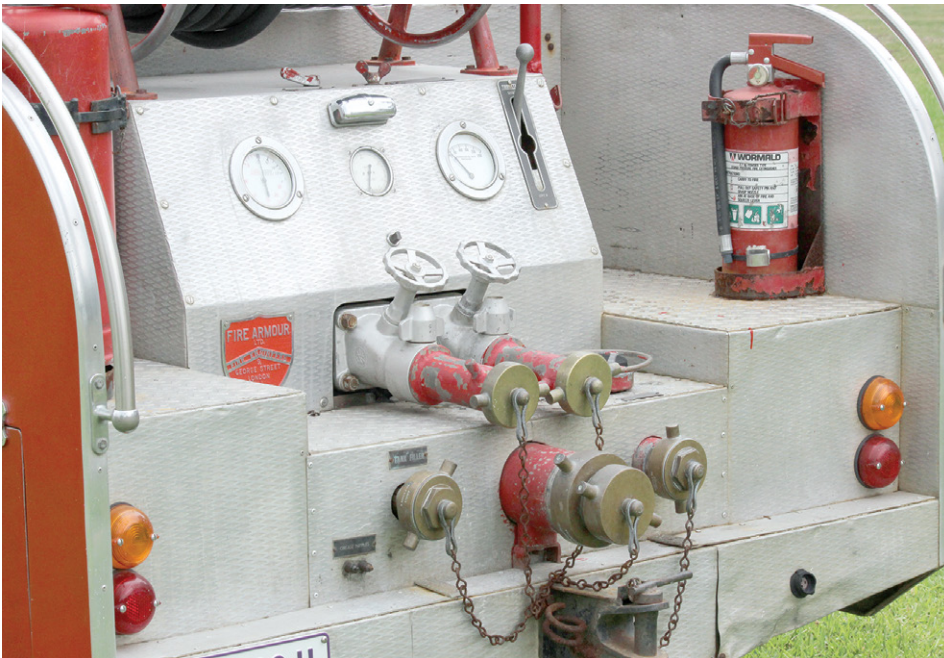
One of the Firefly Land Rovers at Cooma depot - note conventional SMA Fire Service truck beside it.



Radiator with wide fan and second fanbelt to avoid cooling system failure.



Oil cooler was fitted to fire engines due to the likelihood of static operation.



Later units had protective bars over gauges.

## Into The Snowy

Being quite different from the factory-produced fire engines, a new product and built by a third-party, it is understandable that the people at The Snowy would be wary and want to try one out before putting in a larger order.

While we have no proof that's what happened, it would be a logical sequence of events; as evidenced by the fact one Firefly, on chassis number 152001861, was imported and supplied to the SMA on 10 May 1960.

Obviously the Snowy men were happy with it, as a further four Fireflies arrived in November 1961 – being chassis numbers 152103709 through to 152103712.

Again, little is known about the history of most of these units while with SMA, other than they were stationed at Cabramurra, Cooma, Jindabyne, Talbingo and Khancoban.

One was sold in 1987, with a second in 1988. According to David Hewitt, a Land Rover enthusiast who worked at Cabramurra, one of those was restored and spent time as a fire tender at Lake Crackenback. It is now reportedly in South Australia. The other had apparently been stripped, and "finished its life as a pump on an irrigation farm".

Two more were sold at auction on 2 December 1989. These were chassis numbers 152001861, which had only 10,650 miles on the clock, and 152103711, with a mere 8,670 miles.

There is a logical reason for these fire engines remaining in service for so long, when the earlier models had each been replaced after only two and five years respectively.

to authorised third-party businesses that were able to provide the individual service that the fire brigades wanted.

One of the most successful and best known of these was Angus Fire Armour. The Angus company had been manufacturing fire hoses and other equipment since late in the 18th century and released its first Land Rover based fire engine in 1960, marketed as the Firefly.

The Angus Firefly Land Rovers were considerably different from the factory produced Series I fire engines.

Firstly, being built on the 109" Series II chassis meant more space for equipment.

The factory vehicles had a water pump mounted on the rear tow plate – a Pegson 200 gallons per minute (910 lt per min) pump on the 80" and a similar KSB pump on the post-1954 86".

The Firefly has a 400 gpm (1820 lpm) Coventry Climax Godiva pump mounted within the rear cargo space.

The factory-built units had a meagre 40 gal (180lt) water tank, with a small reel hose, which was used for first aid fire fighting – water for the main fire hoses generally being drawn from a dam, fire hydrant or tanker truck.

The Firefly could be specified with a

90 gal (410lt), water tank, which made it marginally better for first response work, but still required an external water source for much more than a rubbish bin fire.

The Firefly also had a transverse locker for storing hoses and other equipment, across the full width of the rear tray with an access door at each side of the vehicle, as well as two side lockers at the very back of the tray.

The tray also had space for additional fire extinguishers and could accommodate two people standing in the back – although Snowy safety regulations would normally have precluded anyone from travelling in the back of the truck.

Racks above the load tray and the cabin provided space for two 10' (3m) suction hoses and a ladder. As with the earlier units, the hoses would all have been fitted in Sydney.

Under the bonnet was mostly standard, apart from a larger radiator fan and an oil cooler to provide better cooling for the engine.

The rear springs were uprated slightly, being from the long wheelbase station wagon. Even so, with 400 lt of water on board, in an un-baffled tank, would have made road handling and driving over rough ground a very interesting exercise.



Hose reel for first response work only.

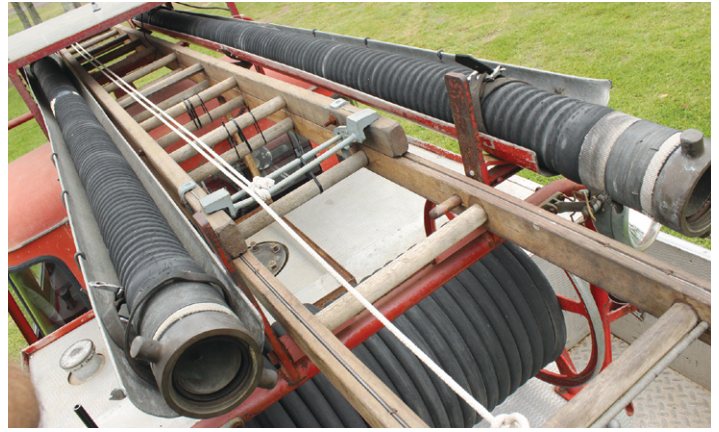


Sirens don't appear to have been on the later SMA units, but electric bells were.





Interior was mostly standard - note padding on lower rail.



Original ladder was probably aluminium.

In the early days of the Snowy scheme there were few roads and those that did exist were very crude (see next story). By the 1960s the main roads had been completed and the fire engines would not have suffered from the conditions nearly as badly as their predecessors.

The low milages on the vehicles give no indication of the amount of fire-fighting work carried out by these units. A major bushfire in the Kosciusko National Park in 1965 threatened Tumut, but we have no way of knowing if the Land Rovers were involved.

However, a search through the *Canberra Times* revealed one fire that definitely attracted the use of at least two of the Fireflies, as they are specifically mentioned in the story.

On 1 February 1968 a fire broke out behind the Cooma Prison Farm on the outskirts of the town. 150 prison inmates joined 3,000 volunteers and members of the Cooma and Snowy fire services to extinguish the blaze before it spread. At least two Land Rovers were among the units that responded.

We have no idea about the fate of the fifth Firefly, but as usual would be happy to hear from anyone with information.

### Into Retirement

Chassis 152103711 was bought by David Hewitt and at the time of writing is on long-term loan to the Snowy Scheme Museum in Adaminaby.

Our feature Firefly is chassis 152001861 – the first delivered to the SMA, on 10 May 1960, and spending most of its time based between Cabramurra and Khancoban.



Plug for handheld spotlight fitted in Oz.

It was assembled at Rover's Solihull plant on 11 January 1960, according to the Heritage Certificate from Gaydon, and dispatched to Angus Fire Armour Ltd in London on 15 January.

It was the other Firefly sold on 2 December 1989, being bought jointly by mates Anthony Maeder and Tony Cope.

Anthony lived in Melbourne at the time and loaned the vehicle to ULR Land Rover, for display in its showroom. It was started and driven a short distance each Saturday to ensure everything was working as it should.

He moved to Queensland some time later, taking the Firefly with him. In 2005 he agreed to sell it to Alex Morton from Sydney. Despite its low mileage the paint was faded in places, particularly on the cabin roof. Alex intended to restore it but, thankfully, never quite got around to it.

Late in 2015 Alex decided to sell the Landy and that's where current owners, father and son duo John and John Tarran came into the picture.

"I'd known about it for a long time, through Anthony Maeder and through the Land Rover workshop where I worked", John jnr explained. "I thought it was a reasonable price, but being such a big vehicle I didn't think I'd have anywhere to put it. It was advertised for maybe ten or eleven months and as it turns out I think he was just talking people out of it. He's a lovely guy and he wanted it to go to the right person."

"Then after a while he rang me and said circumstances had changed and he said that I could buy it. I think a lot of people looked at it and went, 'wow that is big, where am I going to put it?'"

John admits it wasn't the fact of it being a Firefly that attracted him to it,

## Mini Firefly

While the Land Rover-based Firefly was a well-respected and successful unit, Angus also released shortly afterwards a Firefly based on the Mini Pick Up.

It is not known how many Mini Fireflies Angus built – indeed it is not known how many Fireflies they built in total on any platform – but at least one was used by Bexley Hospital in Kent, and still exists in a private collection in the US.

### THE MIGHTY MINI

**This new Firefly machine is a compact and capable fire-fighting unit . . .**



It is with a feeling of deep satisfaction that Angus Fire Armour introduce the wonderful FIREFLY Mini Fire Engine. Constructed on the well tried Mini 1000 van and powered by the BMC four-cylinder petrol engine developing 49 BHP at 5300 rpm, this robust light fire appliance is capable of getting to the very seat of a fire regardless of narrow and congested roads or restricted means of access.

Storage combines simplicity with fire-fighting efficiency. A 30-gallon water tank and hose reel with 100 ft of 1 1/2" diameter rubber hose terminating in a Fire Armour FOGNOZEL is supported by a Hocking TV Portable Pump which is also capable of delivering 40 gallons of water per minute at 50 lbs. per square inch using a 1/2" hose when disconnected to work from open water.

Open lockers for hose and branchpipes, etc., are provided—one on each side of the appliance—and the side provides accommodation for the driver and officer-in-charge. A canopy, ladder gantries and other extension ladder can be supplied as optional extras.

Our photographs clearly illustrate the general layout of the FIREFLY Mini, showing clearly location of water tank, pump, hose reel and short extension ladder. The two open lockers are clearly visible on each side, immediately forward of the 30-gallon water tank.

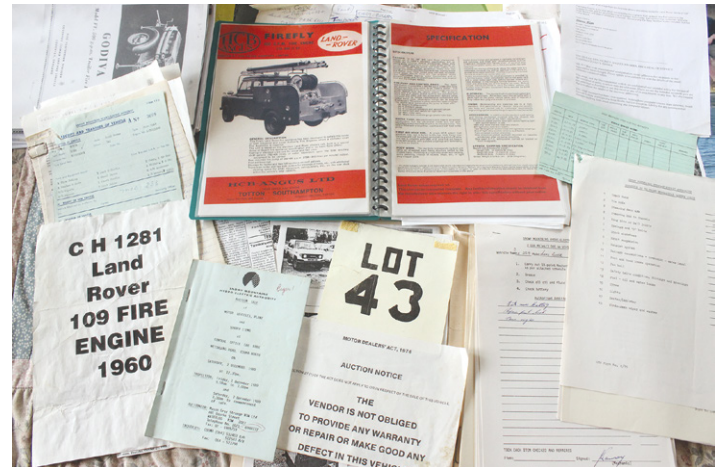
Finished in Fire Brigade Red the FIREFLY Mini represents a compact and neat fire-fighting unit.

**VERSATILE,  
ROBUST,  
POWERFUL,  
— AND SO  
EASY TO  
MANOEUVRE**



Below: With the canopy fitted





1861 came with a mountain of paperwork.

but its originality and superb mechanical condition. "It's hard to explain, that I'm not into fire engines, but I love original Land Rovers...I've had plenty of dodgy ones, and this is just glorious to drive. I mean, it is a fire engine and that's why it hasn't done many miles and its upkeep has been exceptional. It's had some pretty good owners who have looked after it, but as far as Land Rovers go it is superb. To me the interest is in how tight and beautiful it is, and being a fire engine is a bonus."

The Landy came with a thick folder of paperwork, including its entire service history from the SMA. "Mechanically, the only thing I've done to it is a new rocker cover gasket", John explained, "and that is it. Mind you, I've only done 1,500 miles in it, if that. It's still got the original clutch in it too. The floor has to come out to get to the gearbox, and it's never been out. It

has had a few back axles and diffs, looking through the papers. – because it carries nearly 400lt of water and I think when they were bouncing it off-road that's when it was blowing diffs and axles. It's had a lot of sets of springs in it, too."

Interestingly, it does not have the special mud-excluding plates behind the wheels that were fitted to most of the Snowy Land Rovers. That is probably partly because of its limited use and partly because by the time it was in service the permanent road network was virtually complete.

However, it does have the other little modification of the metal straps over the hubcaps to prevent them being knocked off in the bush.

The vehicle is also fitted with three seat belts, and a thickly padded protector along the full width of the bottom dash rail, to

prevent knee injuries. Ironically, it has also been fitted with an ashtray, which has a no-smoking sticker on it.

Although its two-way radio was removed before being sold at auction, it still retains its electric bell and siren, as well as a wooden logbook pocket inside the driver's door.

A rare model; in superb, unmolested condition; with unique history and links to this country's greatest engineering achievement.


What more could you want? 



Photo courtesy John Tarran

The previous owners with 1861 (L to R) Alex Morton, Anthony Maeder & Tony Cope

## Father and Son



Father and son, both John, Tarran have been Land Rover enthusiasts since John Snr bought a new Series III in 1976 to tow his boat. That was sold to buy a County, which is still in the family.

John Jnr restored a 1948 model when he was a teenager and after high school went to work at a local Land Rover specialist – staying there for 16 years. These days he is the Service Manager at Cardiff Isuzu, but is as enthusiastic for Land Rovers as ever.

He currently has around a dozen Landies, but said; "We're good buyers, but we're not good sellers. We've

probably only ever sold two. And my everyday run-around is a 2003 TD5 that I bought as a bit of a wreck, but I love it."

Most of his Landies are unrestored, which is what he likes about the Firefly. "I absolutely love the fact that it's still got its original key and the service number from The Snowy is stamped into the keyring. It also came with its original tool roll, which is pretty cool.

His dad and mum, Rosemary, remain keen on Land Rovers and recently bought one of the limited edition, end-of-line Defender Heritage models.



Original tool roll and tools.



Original key and ID tag.

# Taming The Snowy



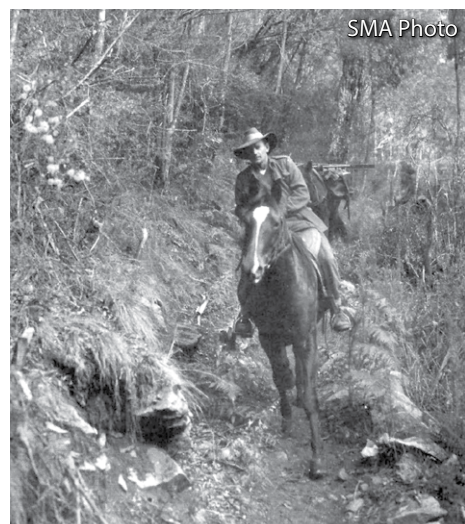
Words by Craig Watson.

Photos courtesy of National Archives of Australia and Land Rover Australia or as noted.

If one car can claim to have tamed and opened up The Snowy Mountains, it is the Land Rover.

It was good timing that the launch of Australia's largest ever engineering project, at the alpine township of Adaminaby on a cold and windy morning on 17 October 1949, was a little over a year after the launch of the Land Rover.

The hydro-electric scheme was to be built in some of Australia's most rugged



In the earliest days of The Snowy the only access to many areas was on horseback.

and inaccessible country, where there were few rough tracks and even fewer made roads.

The first surveys were carried out on horseback, but the sheer distances involved meant motorised transport would be required as soon as possible.

Initially, the SMA used war surplus Willys Jeeps which, although capable and able to meet many of the requirements, were found to be fragile in the extreme conditions of the Snowy Mountains.

The first Land Rovers arrived in the Cooma area, supplied via the local dealership P.D. Murphy to a couple of farmers, in early 1949.

Not surprisingly, Bill Hudson, the SMA Commissioner, got to know some of these farmers, who bestowed the virtues of



By 1953 many roads were in the process of being widened for heavy vehicles.

the Land Rover to him. Hudson ordered an immediate trial of the Land Rover for Snowy surveyors and engineers.

The first three of these arrived in The Snowy on 16 November – only one month after the Scheme's official start – and were allocated to surveyors. Between 1950 and 1952 some 96 Land Rovers were in use on the Scheme.

## Backbone of the Fleet

The vehicles were extremely successful and quickly became the backbone of the Snowy Mountains transport fleet, being used by every department, from engineers and hydrologists to the pay clerks and medical officers. In 1953 alone a further 132 Land Rovers were purchased, according to the sales records of Grenville Motors, which thankfully have survived.

Grenville Motors, a division of Larke, Neave & Carter, was the NSW master distributor for Rover cars, and supplied all the Land Rovers to the SMA, through their entire time on the Scheme.

Many Land Rovers were assembled or partly assembled by Grenville Motors, from Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits as well as other interstate master distributors, but as build quality varied from state to state, Rover (UK) contracted Pressed Metal Corporation (see next issue), another LNC company, to assemble CKD Land Rovers from late 1956 or early 1957.



SMA Commissioner William Hudson (in hat) and Field Construction Engineer George Henderson with a Jeep and Land Rover in November 1949.

Photo from National Archives of Australia: A11016, 351. Barcode 4240478

By 1958, The Snowy maintained around 300 Land Rovers, representing by far the largest single make of vehicle on its nearly 1,000-vehicle fleet, most of which were locally assembled.

Bert Knowles worked on The Snowy as officer-in-charge of the main workshops in Cooma. Writing in Noel Gough's tome, *Mud Sweat and Snow*, Knowles, who had worked in Rover's Experimental Department during the development of the Land Rover, said; "The total number of Land Rovers purchased by the Authority from November 1949 to December 1966 was 715 vehicles. The total number of Land Rovers operating in the Authority's fleet at any one time was over 300, which by any standard is large and they certainly played a very important part in the development and construction of the Snowy Mountains scheme."

Originally, all were 80" basic versions with full-length canvas hoods, but as longer wheelbase versions and metal hard-top canopies became available a wide range of models was bought.

### Special versions

There were also a number of special purpose Land Rovers that were imported Completely Built Up (CBU) for use on The Snowy, and some that were locally modified by the SMA workshops in Cooma.



Poor quality Internet photo of the SMA's Forest Rover. What is its origin?

According to Land Rover enthusiast, researcher and former owner of the featured Firefly (previous story), Anthony Maeder; "In June 1950 a vehicle equipped with a Lincoln Arc Welding unit and DC generator was obtained, followed by a second unit in October and another in March 1953."

In October 1948, according to James Taylor in *Original Land Rover Series I*, Land Rover had released a special Station Wagon model, with a coachbuilt aluminium over timber frame body by Tickford.

Rover felt that as its history lay with more luxuriously appointed executive cars, so too there would be a market for a similarly appointed luxury version of



The "African Queen" tunnel inspection car. NAA: A11016, 11647 B/c 7907038

the Land Rover. However, the Tickford-bodied Station Wagon proved expensive and was discontinued in mid-1951, with only 651 sold.

However, three were bought for the SMA, primarily for the use of the Commissioner and visiting dignitaries, but occasionally by senior engineering or administration staff.

Around eight factory-built fire engines and five Firefly models, as described in the previous story, were also used between 1953 and 1989.

There was also at least one fire tender on a Land Rover tray-top utility, converted at the SMA workshops in Cooma.

One particularly unusual vehicle appears to have been a copy of the 109" Forest Rover, but was locally made. It is not known if SMA mechanics had seen a Forest Rover and copied it, or perhaps had seen a brochure, but the similarities were uncanny. Where the UK version, built by Roadless Traction Limited, featured Studebaker axles and GKN-Kirkstall planetary reduction hubs,

## The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme

The Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, most commonly known simply as The Snowy, was the largest and most complicated engineering project ever undertaken in Australia and one of the largest in the world.

In 1969 it was recognised as one of the engineering marvels of the world and in 1997 was listed by the American Society of Civil Engineers as an International Historic Engineering Landmark.

In 1944 a government study evaluated Australia's growth needs following the end of the Second World War.

Established on 1 August 1949, by then Prime Minister Ben Chifley, The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, usually referred to, including in many official capacities, as the SMA, undertook to control the flow of the Snowy, Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers to provide hydro-electric power for ACT, NSW and Victoria, as well as

irrigation for the drought-prone food belt of the Riverina regions.

It took 25 years to complete, coming in on time and under budget (at a cost of \$820 million) and includes 225km of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts, sixteen major dams, seven power stations and a major pumping station.

It was also responsible for the upgrading of many roads and tracks in the region, including, from scratch, the construction of The Alpine Way, from Jindabyne to Khancoban, via Thredbo, Tom Groggin and Geehi.

Over 100,000 people from more than 30 countries worked on the project, with a labour force of around 7,300 at its peak. 90% of the project is underground.

The Snowy became a defining moment in Australia's history, both for its pioneering engineering and as a multi-cultural melting pot, and helped establish Australia's truly diverse culture.



Engineers' conference near site of Tumut Pond dam, 1952. Two Land Rover station wagons are in the centre. NAA: A1200, L14570 Barcode 11258083.

the local version appears to have only used standard Land Rover axles and hubs. Only two poor quality photos of this vehicle are known to exist, so we would like to hear from anybody who can provide more details on this vehicle.

Another unusual model was "The African Queen" – a long-wheelbase version that was converted to run on rails, with the steering wheel removed and a large metal canopy fitted, for the purpose of tunnel inspection and maintenance. Again, not much is known about this little oddity.

There were also a number of Land Rovers converted locally for use as ambulances – at least three being based at Cabramurra in 1958, so it is presumed there would have been similar numbers at other major depots.

The success of the Land Rovers in The Snowy encouraged their use by other bodies working there, but not part of the Snowy Scheme itself, including NSW Police, Electricity Commission, Forestry Commission, local councils and rural fire brigades. On top of that, many of the private contracting companies that were building the dams, tunnels and power stations used Land Rovers.

### Safety First

William Hudson was very concerned that

the people driving any vehicles for The Snowy be properly qualified. He knew that the conditions, particularly in those early days, required more than the average skills in order to negotiate the slowly developing highways and primitive byways, let alone cross-country.

To this end, aided and abetted by the chief of the Transport section, former British Army officer Lou McCausland who, according to one writer, was "a paragon of efficiency", Hudson insisted that strict levels of proficiency be obtained before any person could drive any of The Snowy vehicles.

Quoted in *Wheels* magazine, in April 1958, Regional Transport Officer at Cabramurra, Bill Shaw, said; "We give every driver who comes to the Snowy a thorough test before we let him take charge of a vehicle. Then he is licensed to drive only a certain type of machine. If he wants to earn more money he must qualify for a heavier vehicle, after first completing another driving course. It's the only way out, really, because we can only afford to have fully qualified and really capable specialists at the wheel of a vehicle in this type of country."

"The conditions for road travel were extremely handicapped by the rough terrain", Noel Gough recalled, "and in winter



Even the Land Rovers got bogged. NAA: A11016, 9045 B/c 7639381

by hazardous conditions that most of the drivers had never before experienced."

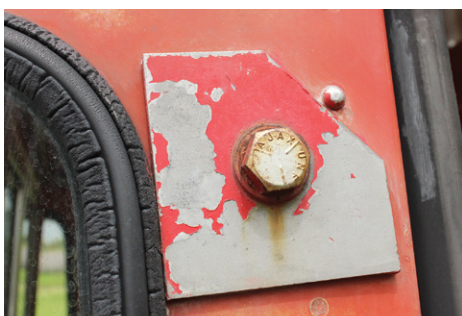
"The Land Rovers operated throughout the mountain regions over country with no roads or tracks and I don't think any vehicle would have operated under harder conditions", Knowles wrote. "This included crossing swollen rivers with water flowing to bonnet height and through the cabin with the driving wheels battling rock strewn river beds...As one would expect, operating under our conditions we had many minor and a few very serious vehicle accidents, some involving our Land Rovers."

"One item of concern was that in the frontal impact accidents the driver and passenger were sustaining serious leg and pelvic area injuries. Another was that people were being thrown out in 'roll over' accidents."

"These two problems turned the Authority's attention to the wearing of seat belts. The Snowy Mountains Authority was the first organisation in Australia to fit seat belts to all its vehicles, including personnel carriers and buses, and to make the compulsory wearing of seat belts a condition of employment", Knowles explained.

The seat belts were the idea of Knowles, having seen the seat from Donald Campbell's Bluebird land speed record car, with its safety harness, while on a trip back to England. He recommended the use of seat belts to Hudson, who ensured they were fitted to every vehicle in the Snowy fleet.

Hudson stipulated that all job seekers had to sign an agreement to follow the safety standards introduced by the Authority, before they could be employed. When it came to the wearing of seat belts,



A bit rough in fitting, but SMA was first Australian body to make seatbelts compulsory.

Strap stopped hubcap being knocked off.



Photo by Brian Heal

**“When the unstoppable was stopped.”**

failure to do so after one warning would bring dismissal. As a result, serious injuries in crashes were dramatically reduced.

### **Making Rover Listen**

One problem that did occur early on resulted in the death of a driver after he lost control of his Land Rover on a very steep hill. Knowles was involved in the investigation and found that the brake linings had completely worn away. The vehicle had received all of its required regular services and in fact had had its brakes relined less than a month earlier.

It was eventually discovered that the slurry of mud and snow that was encountered on a daily basis, often with vehicles travelling with their wheels fully submerged in the goo, was extremely abrasive – to the point that it was wearing away a set of brake linings in as little as a month on some Land Rovers.

The problem was reported to Grenville Motors and a full written report sent to Rover in the UK, but getting them to listen was not easy, as Knowles continued. “We found in those days that the major manufacturers of vehicles and equipment in Britain did not pay sufficient attention to reports of technical defects. The Rover company was very slow to move.”

“Sir William Hudson was a man of action. He was also a man who had great feeling for his men and there was no way he was going to risk another fatality in a Land Rover. He took very justified and drastic action and grounded the whole fleet of



**Happy Jacks township, 1956. NAA: A11016, 8519 B/c 7538688**

over 300 Land Rovers, which really got some attention in England.”

This was indeed taken very seriously by Rover, who sent out one of its main “fix-it” engineers, Ray Hancock – who had been through his apprenticeship with Knowles in Solihull.

Knowles and Hancock worked feverishly on the problem and soon came up with a solution – fitting special plates behind the wheels, which prevented the abrasive slurry from getting into the brake drums. This solved the problem and the Land Rovers were soon all fitted with the plates and back in service.

### **Tall Tales and True**

Understandably, almost everyone who worked on The Snowy in the first decade has a Land Rover tale to tell. Many of these are recounted in Noel Gough’s book Mud Sweat and Snow.

One story I have heard is that because the engineers would take any Land Rover that was available, they carried a short piece of wire around them to hot-wire the Landies, so they didn’t have to worry about finding the right keys all the time.

However, due to the wrath of “Spittin’ Mick” McCausland that would be

incurred by anyone not following proper procedures, it is probably a myth.

Peter Brewis, Transport Supervisor at Talbingo and Khancoban, said; “I’ve never heard of it, but it might have happened.”

The tale may have been born from a story by Noel Gough, but it also illustrates what could befall anyone who tried to bend the rules. “I was heading from Jindabyne to Tumut Pond...and as I couldn’t find the bloody keys when I was ready to leave, I had hot wired the Land Rover by connecting a short length of wire between the exposed terminals on the dashboard. These terminals were probably installed by the Land Rover people for just such an emergency.”

“The transport fellow was really unimpressed with this starting and running arrangement and jumped up and down...and started accusing me of theft of a Snowy vehicle...I very sarcastically announced, ‘If I was going to steal this bloody vehicle, the last place I would head for would be Tumut Pond. It would be Merimbula (on the coast) for me!’”



**“For eight months of the year four-wheel-drive is never disengaged.”**

**NAA: A11016, 510 B/c 4240705**

### **A Matter Of Identity**

Transport chief Lou McCausland used his Army background to good effect, ensuring everything ran like clockwork. As important as a strict maintenance routine, was always knowing where a vehicle was based and which department it belonged to.

McCausland instigated a series of identification plates, like Army tactical formation (TAC) plates.

These consisted of colours to identify the main transport depot the vehicle was usually stationed at and letters to identify the responsible department.

#### **The allocated colours were:**

- Red Cooma (HQ)
- Blue Talbingo / Cabramurra
- Blue Upper & Lower Tumut
- Green Island Bend / Jindabyne
- Yellow Khancoban

#### **Letters were:**

- A Administration
- E Electrical
- FC Field Construction
- I Investigations (drillers, survey, etc)
- PR Public Relations
- S Stores
- SS Scientific Services





Landrovers crossing the Eucumbene River near Adaminaby Portal site camp.  
Photo from National Archives of Australia: A11016, 497. Barcode 4240556



Khancoban Back Creek, The Alpine Way  
NAA: A11016, 16329 B/c 6849036

## Not Perfect

The perfect vehicle has never been built, and no matter how suited to a task a vehicle is, there will always be things it can't do and there will always arise problems that have to be rectified. As long as such faults are corrected in later production models, as happened with the Land Rovers, then the cars will continue to improve.

So extreme were the conditions in The Snowy, particularly in the extended winters in the first decade, that even the Land Rovers sometimes cried "enough".

Many stories are told by people who got bogged in Land Rovers that couldn't be extracted, even with the capstan winch that was on the front of most of them. Noel Gough related one such incident, after he and a party from the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission had got stuck

at the bottom of a steep track. "I took off alone in the Land Rover, 'bush bashing' to work back up the hill which I managed until a stump removed the brake tubing, making it too difficult to continue."

Gough continued on foot until picked up by another party that had come to see where the others had got to. "I remember advising Cooma of the latitude and longitude of the abandoned Land Rover, but I never found out if they recovered it", he admitted.

In another incident, he recounted how two hydrologists had walked through a blizzard toward their parked Land Rover. "What a sight greeted them. The Land Rover was covered by snow up over the mudguards and although these vehicles were considered unstoppable, this was one occasion when the unstoppable was stopped."



Light Transport Pool, Cabramurra - Aug 1955. Not a Toyota in sight. SMA photo.

## Australia's Toughest Car Test

In April 1958 *Wheels* magazine ran an article on what it described as Australia's Toughest Car Test, after Alan Gibbons had been sent to The Snowy to try out one of its Land Rovers.

Gibbons pointed out that the vehicle was chosen at random from around 60 that were currently on-hand in the car pool at Cabramurra, and mentioned that the usual tools of the car tester had been left behind.

"This is a practical test; in a vehicle which lays no claim to fast quarter miles, to 60 m.p.h. in any record number of seconds, or to any fantastic petrol consumption. This vehicle was built simply for a lifetime of hard work under atrocious conditions – and that's exactly how we tested it."

The test involved Bill Shaw driving down slippery, muddy tracks on grades of up to 1 in 3, through swollen, flowing rivers, up narrow winding switch-backs, over recently graded mud roads and through bulldozer tracks that; "had dug down close to two feet into the mud".

"Gripping the slimy surface, the bar-tread tyres dug deep into the softness and we emerged with the little car plastered with mud from base to breakfast", Gibbons wrote.

And this was in high summer.

"You ought to see what these vehicles go through in wintertime", Shaw was quoted. "For eight months of the year they are travelling through snow and slush constantly, and four-wheel drive is never disengaged."

## Standard Fare

Gibbons pointed out that, other than those modified for special jobs, the Land Rovers on The Snowy were pretty standard. Apart from the bar-tread tyres and bonnet-mounted spare wheel, which were both normal options in Australia, he mentioned fog lamps, a Lucas hand-held "flame thrower" spotlight, two-way radio and two electric demisters on the windscreen.

He would not have seen the mud-excluding plates behind the wheels, or probably even noticed another clever, yet simple, modification. All Snowy Land Rovers had metal straps pop-riveted to



The Alpine Way under construction.  
Photo source unknown.



Cooma-Jindabyne road near Berridale  
NAA: A11016, 91 B/c 4240230



Drivers had to pass rigorous tests before advancing to the next level of licence.  
Note: LR Station Waggon in Class D.

the little wheel hubcaps and bolted to the drive flanges, to prevent the caps being knocked off in the bush, which would have allowed mud into the bearings and brakes.

"Otherwise", Gibbons assured his readers, "the vehicle was a standard Model 88 Land Rover in every way."

### Where did they go?

As with most government vehicles, the Snowy Land Rovers were all sold off through regular auctions. In the early days, when conditions were at their worst, vehicles were sold off after only two years, regardless of their mileage. As conditions improved and the general wear and tear was reduced, they were kept longer. Even as early as April 1959, the Land Rovers for sale varied between three and six years' old.

With road conditions improving and less requirement for rugged go-anywhere vehicles most of the Land Rovers had been replaced by 1967, some with Toyota Land Cruisers (see page 65). Only the Firefly fire

engines remained, with the last two finally being auctioned off in 1989, after 28 and 29 years' faithful service.

Even in the late 1960s, old Land Rovers were just that; good solid workhorses with a job to do and certainly not considered a collectible historic vehicle. Many were sold to farmers or adventurers, while some were even sold to contractors working on The Snowy – going on to give a second lifetime's work in the mountains.

As a result, few remain today in an unmolested state, with the SMA insignia on their doors and the little telltales in place. Some have been meticulously restored by owners who have traced their vehicles' histories. There are plenty purporting to be from The Snowy that have no provenance, that may or may not be. All we can say is if buying an ex-Snowy Land Rover, do your homework. Luckily, the sales records from Grenville Motors have survived. An enquiry to the Snowy sub-forum, under Land Rover History, at [www.aulro.com](http://www.aulro.com) would be a good place to start.

### A Lasting Legacy

The important role played by the tough little Land Rovers on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme is hard to overstate. Peter Brewis said; "We couldn't have built the Snowy without them."

Hydrologist Danny Collman reported; "I did about a quarter of a million miles in Land Rovers. They were good vehicles, too...they were very capable. You could go places in those."

Bert Knowles said; "Coming from the 'Mother Country', my opinion may be slightly prejudiced, but I would say that under the extreme conditions encountered on the Scheme, the Authority's construction program was greatly enhanced by Land Rover's reliability."

This sentiment was echoed by Sir William Hudson himself, quoted in *Wheels* in April 1958: "Without Land Rovers we would never have been able to keep to schedule on this project. Instead, we are now months ahead on every working."

### Snowy Scheme Museum

Thankfully, there is a museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Snowy Mountains Hydro, the people who worked there and the vehicles. Set in some of the old Snowy buildings in the centre of Adaminaby township, the museum is open on weekends and by appointment and, when I visited in late 2015, had two genuine ex-Snowy Land Rovers on display.

One was a very tired-looking 86" hard-top, which is unrestored and has the remnants of the SMA roundels on the doors. The other is the only other

known Firefly to still exist in an unrestored and complete condition.

It was on-loan from David Hewitt, who bought it from the Snowy auction in December 1989.

The museum also has a Rover P5 used by Bill Hudson, and later Bert Knowles, and a number of other interesting vehicles.

If you are passing through Adaminaby, it is worth making arrangements to visit the museum. See the museum's website at [www.snowyschememuseum.com.au](http://www.snowyschememuseum.com.au) for more details.



A wide range of Snowy vehicles.



Ex-Hudson/Knowles Rover P5



Ex-SMA 86" has had a hard life.



Firefly - Chassis 152103711

## Other BMC-Leyland Connections



A batch of 22 Morris 850s was bought by SMA in 1963, as reported in *The B.M.C. Rosette* in September (above right), and were still in use at least as late as 1965, above. Photo from National Archives of Australia: A1500, K12815. Barcode 11963021.

While the Land Rover made up almost a third of all the vehicles used on The Snowy, obviously there were many others. But BMC-Leyland had many other connections on the Scheme as well. On balance vehicles from the BMC-Leyland groups of companies, even though at the time the two remained separate entities, made up the majority of the Snowy fleet, from the smallest to the largest.

Other brands and models should be given due credit as well.

Dodge supplied the Power Wagons and war-surplus weapons carriers that provided all-wheel-drive capabilities in something with more carrying capacity than the Land Rovers, and were well respected for their role.

William Hudson's first Commissioner's car was a Chevrolet. From about 1964, when the roads around the Snowy were virtually complete, five Rover P5 cars were bought as executive transport. Bert Knowles later bought one and had it painted light blue, so that he "wouldn't be



A Mighty Antar roadtrain heads up Sharp Street in Cooma - 1956. Photo - NAA: A1106, 4436. B/c 6814451

mistaken for the Associate Commissioner" as he drove around the Snowy area.

There were also a small number of Jeeps, as Bert Knowles recalled. "The American contractors used these vehicles on the Snowy Scheme, but they did not compare with the Land Rover." There was a small number of International 4WD vehicles used later on as well.

Holden utilities were used from time to time, and possibly an occasional sedan, and an occasional Ford Falcon for administrative duties.

As roads improved across the Scheme other vehicles were used. The PR Department at one point even opting for VW Beetles.

The Snowy was, of course, essentially a construction project and we won't go into the long list of construction vehicles, from diggers to bulldozers and heavy haulage equipment. Many of those were owned by the private construction companies contracted to work on the Scheme, so don't count as SMA-owned vehicles anyway.

But the Scheme did use a good number of trucks for haulage, from light to very heavy and from Leyland, International, Kenworth, Bedford and others.

Naturally, companies were keen to be associated with The Snowy and BMC made a number of attempts. A Gypsy was provided to The Snowy for a six-month trial, but it did not provide any real advantage over the Land Rover and was not adopted – Bert Knowles calling it a complete failure.

However, BMC did supply the smallest



cars used on the Scheme; a batch of 22 Morris 850s was purchased in 1963. BMC made a big deal of this purchase in *The BMC Rosette*, featuring one of the Minis in a snow-covered scene on its front page. The cars were mostly used in summer and below the snow-line, for general administrative duties and as pilot vehicles for bigger transports.

Apparently there was also a batch of Morris 1100s used, but I have not been able to find any concrete evidence of those.

The biggest road vehicles used on The Snowy also have a BMC-Leyland connection. Three of the famous Mighty Antar, originally designed as a tank transporter, were bought in 1953 to haul heavy construction equipment, and later the power generators, etc into the power station sites.

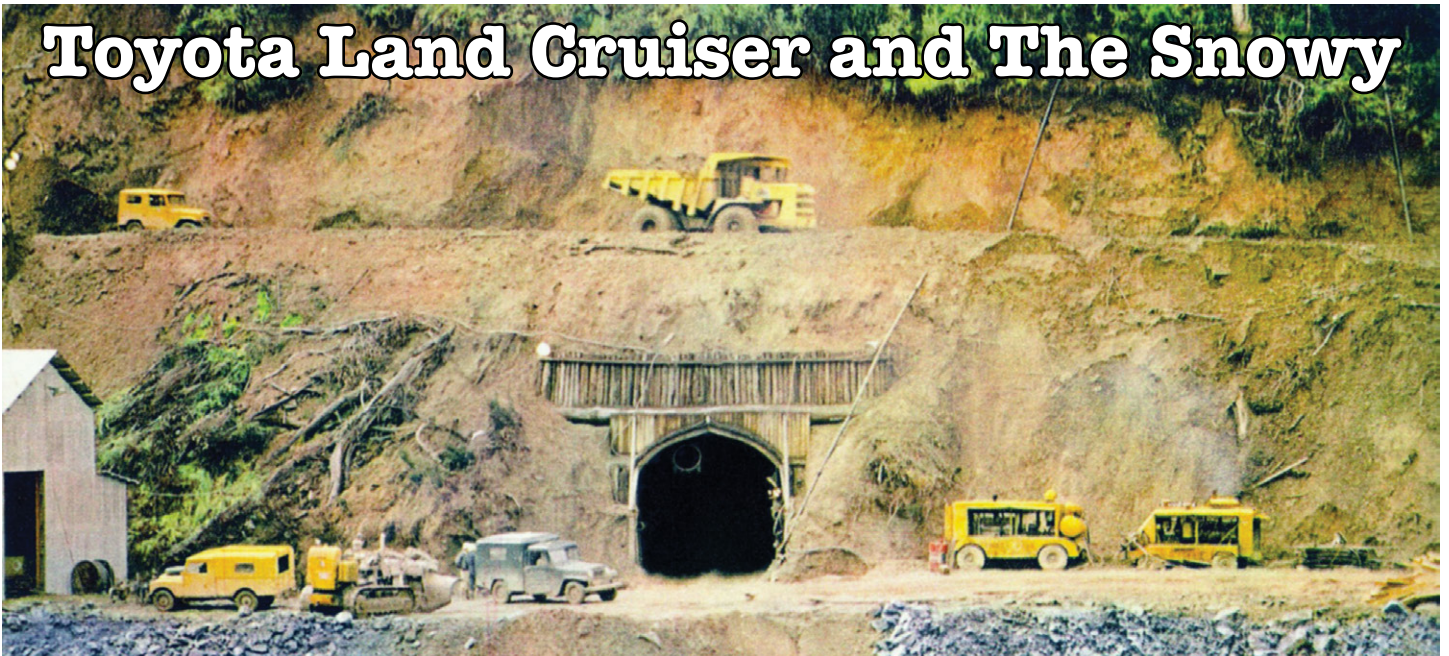
Able to be coupled together to form massive road trains, the Mighty Antar was a joint project between Thornycroft and Rover – both of which would become Leyland-owned companies in the 1960s. Antar road trains became a common site among the Snowy Mountains as the construction phase of the Scheme moved toward completion.

"Each truck pulled 13 tons of ballast", Knowles recalled, "and depending on the gradient, travelled at speeds ranging from 4mph to 18mph. The unladen weight of the roadtrain was 104 tons; fully loaded, it could weigh up to 226 tons. At a cost of £20,000 each, the purchase of the Mighty Antars was not a cheap process, but the 20 years of service the trucks gave to Australia repaid the initial outlay many times over, hauling 20,000 tons of plant and equipment to otherwise inaccessible dam and power sites."

There was one other vehicle that is worth looking at, as much for what it didn't do, as what it did – the Toyota Land Cruiser.



# Toyota Land Cruiser and The Snowy



The Geehi adit portal of the Snowy-Geehi transmountain tunnel, 1961. This was the second contract awarded to Thiess Brothers. The photo clearly shows a Thiess-owned Land Rover (lower left). SMA Photo.

Much has been written about the the Toyota Land Cruiser on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, some of it exaggerated, so it is worth looking at the facts.

Thiess Brothers was the first Australian company awarded a major contract on The Snowy, in 1958: the Tooma-Tumut tunnel. Having completed that job successfully, they won two other major contracts on the Scheme.

After seeing a privately-imported Land Cruiser being used at the Tumut Ponds site, Leslie Thiess went to Japan and obtained the rights as the sole Australian importer of Toyota commercial vehicles. At the time, Japanese makers were finding it difficult to enter the Australian market, largely due to post-war prejudice, so having an Australian importer was of great benefit.

Thiess originally imported thirteen Land

Cruisers in late 1958, most of which worked on the Tooma-Tumut tunnel and later Thiess contracts.

Although offered to the SMA, the Land Cruiser was initially rejected because of its three-speed transmission and lack of low-range capability - although it was acknowledged that its six-cylinder engine gave it superior on-road performance to the Land Rover's four-cylinder.

However, by 1960 the Snowy's 1,600km road network was complete and there was little need for the arduous off-road capability that the Land Rover had met so well in the early days.

The first Land Cruiser purchased by the SMA was in 1967 for works supervisor and safety officer Les White. By 1999 some 80 Land Cruisers, Prados and RAV4 were in use on The Snowy.

As Bert Knowles recalled; "we reached a situation where there was an approximate 75% on-road operation with some areas remaining where 4x4 vehicles were required. The Toyota Land Cruiser became available and offered design features which far outclassed the Land Rover. It had sedan car cabin refinements, fast highway performance and good 4x4 ability... They were very good for light work."

There is no doubt that the Land Cruiser was very successful in the role for which it was obtained.

The Land Cruiser has been described by some, dare we say misinformed, people as "The Car That Built The Snowy", but the honour of being literally the car that tamed the Snowy Mountains rightly belongs to the Land Rover, particularly the rugged, plucky little 80" Series I models.

## Land Rover's Tentative Return

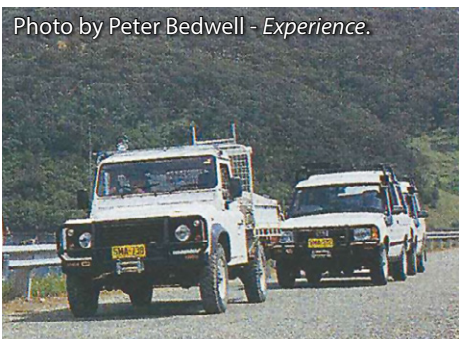


Photo by Peter Bedwell - Experience.

Land Rover made a small return in 1997.

Some long-term workers on The Snowy retained fond memories of the Land Rovers, well after they had all been replaced.

John Bartell, a hydrologist based at Cabramurra was one Land Rover enthusiast who lobbied for the brand's return to The Snowy. Greg Riddell, manager of

the SMA fleet in the 1990s, confirmed it was members of the inspection team at Cabramurra who were responsible for the return of the Land Rover.

In 1997 the Scheme bought a Defender 110 and four Discoverys - two three-door and two five-door models.

The Defender was used for a variety of tasks, including towing a large flat-bottomed barge that was used as a floating worksite on the dams, according to Peter Bedwell in a 1997 issue of Land Rover's *Experience* magazine.

The Discoverys were used by maintenance and inspection engineers. "The key requirement that led to their adoption was the ability to turn around in the restricted space of the tunnels that are a major feature of the scheme", Bedwell explained. "True four-wheel-drive ability is



Photo by Peter Bedwell - Experience.

One of the three-door Discos in 1997.

also important. The Discoverys will cover between 25,000 to 30,000 kilometres a year and around 75 per cent of that distance will be off-road."

These days the vast majority of work for the now corporatised Snowy Hydro is done by conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles and no Land Rovers remain on the fleet.

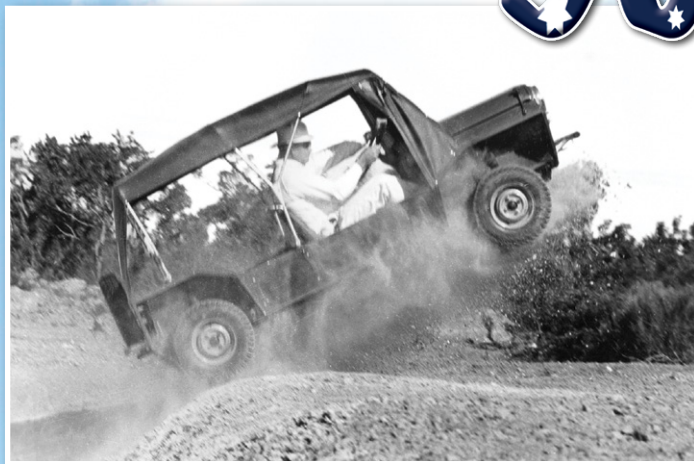
# She's a Beaut

## Aussie Moke turns 50



Words and photos by Craig Watson.  
Period photos from BMC Experience archive.

When John Finucane bought his 1966 Mini Moke it was in a sorry state. Now it is superbly restored and an excellent example of one of the earliest Australian-assembled Mokes – with one or two small modifications.



Back in 2003, John owned another Moke that he was looking at restoring, but, as is common, the floor was completely rotten.

"There were virtually no panels about, not like you can get now" John explained. "So I went hunting for bodies and a mate of mine came across one at a clearing sale near Grenfell. I went up and had a look at it and we had to scrape out all the old ploughshares and things to get to the floor

to have a look at it. The engine and front end were all sitting on the ground, out of the Moke. The head was off the engine; the motor was seized. It was a mess. The Moke was painted yellow and chocolate brown and the hood had yellow polka dots painted all over it."

But, importantly, the body, including the floor, was in remarkably good condition, so John offered the farmer \$1,000 to buy

it before the sale. "The bloke said no, so I took a trailer with me, and my box trailer to gather up all the pieces, and a couple of mates came with me and we went up for the clearing sale. I bid \$200; a bloke went \$250; I went \$300 and that was the last bid."

When he got it home, John stripped it down and sent the body off to have it sandblasted and painted. "It was a really good body. I had the body sandblasted

and had it painted by Frank Hiscock Smash Repairs in Cootamundra. He's a vintage car enthusiast and he had a twin-cam MGA and a TC, so he took a fair bit of pride in doing the paint work."

Meanwhile, John rang the farmer to ask if he had the original driver's handbook for the Moke. "He rang me back 20 minutes later and said he had the instruction book and one of the registration certificates for it too", John recalled. "He asked me what I was going to do with the Moke and I said I was going to restore it. He said, 'there's only one condition on me sending you the book and that is that you bring it out to the Henry Lawson Festival (at Grenfell) when it is finished'. So I agreed and gave him my address and he posted me the book."

The paperwork revealed the Moke, chassis number 1029 (the 529th one assembled in Australia) was sold new from Nash's Garage in Grenfell to J.J. Fowler & Sons on 22 April 1966. John was only the car's second owner, buying it on 29 November 2003.

### Australianising the Moke

The Mini Moke was launched in the UK in August 1964 (see Issue 8), with over 90% being exported to sunnier climes.

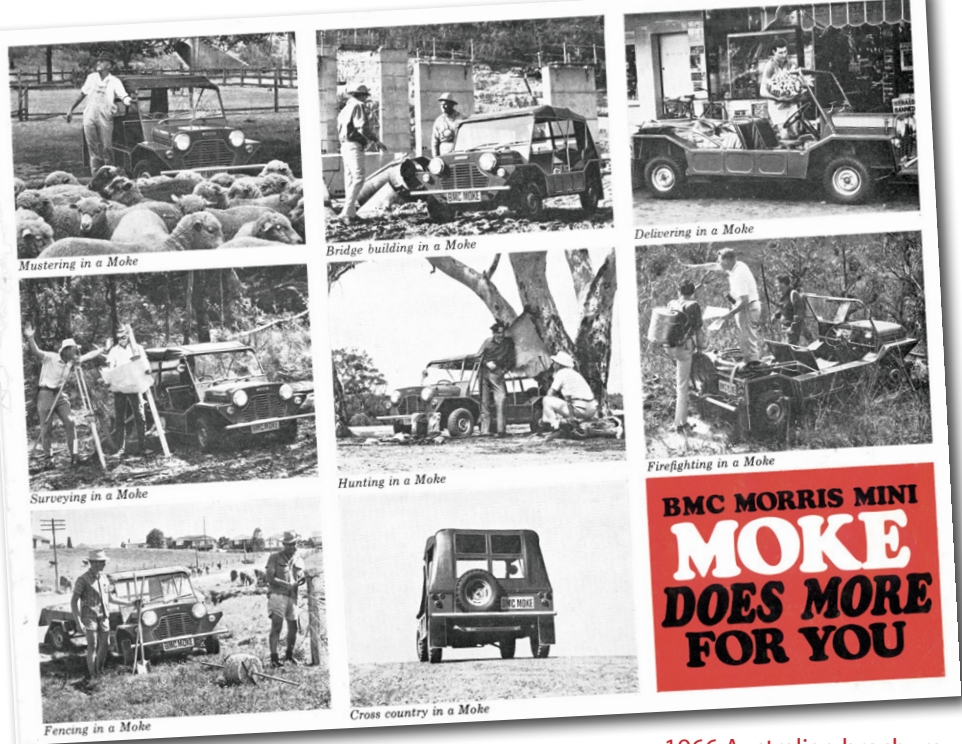
Six of the 848cc engined UK Mokes arrived in Australia in early 1965 for local evaluation. However, where the UK Mini had been adapted for Australia with few changes, it was a very different story with the Moke, as Roger Foy, former Experimental Department Road Proving Manager, explained.

"The Moke was a completely different kettle of fish. It looked like a go-anywhere vehicle, but it wasn't, and there were a lot of changes we needed to make before we were happy with it. It was indeed a minimalist specification, lacked performance, gave a hard ride, and lacked ground clearance, making it little better than a standard Mini in dirt road conditions."

With the Mini Van using the 848cc engine it seems logical that the Moke, a similar-sized commercial vehicle, could do the same. However, as the Moke was intended to be used in rougher country by the likes of farmers, on construction sites and in mines, it was decided that the 998cc engine was required for the extra power and flexibility offered.

Another concern was the standardisation of the 998cc engine, released with the Mini De Luxe in March 1965 – although it would be another couple of years before the Mini Minor and Mini Van also used the 998cc, while the Cooper S of course retained the 1275cc engine.

It was also felt that the UK Moke had



1966 Australian brochure.

insufficient ground clearance and under-engine protection, so the Aussie version had the suspension raised a little and a steel sump guard as standard fitment. There were also nifty little rubber CV joint shields, that bolted to the front wheel hub.

A second engine steady was fitted to the left side of the engine, which reduced problems of the lower engine mounts breaking when the Moke was used in rough conditions. A lower differential ratio, of 4.133:1 (the standard Mini was 3.765:1), was also fitted, which provided better traction for off-road use.

The hood was greatly improved, with the rear widened to the full width of the Moke body. The rear window was also redesigned to give four small Perspex windows instead of two long horizontal windows. The profile of the roof was also changed so the rear-most, unpainted, hood-bow leaned forward, instead of slightly backward, and the rear of the hood also leaned forward, instead of being vertical. This improved the look of the car considerably when the hood was up but, more importantly, gave better weather protection.



Dealer preview of Aussie Moke in The B.M.C. Rosette, August-October 1965.

A set of side-screens, made from the same material as the roof, was fitted to the sides of the windscreen, which greatly reduced the amount of rain entering the cabin. Side curtains were also redesigned and available as a \$30 optional extra for the set of four.

The original side curtains had an interesting fitting arrangement, that was later changed. A stretchy, plastic-coated cable slipped over hooks that were part of the hood bows and, for the front curtains, hooked into small holes near the top of the windscreen surround. The front curtains could also be rolled up and left attached to the hood, though only at low speeds.

Apart from the basic body structure, suspension and wheels, the rest of the Aussie Moke was vastly different from the UK model, especially inside.

The seats were completely different from the British model, being padded green vinyl canvas slung over tubular seat frames, with the seat base tied underneath with cord, while the back was a single-piece that pulled down over the frame. A modicum of fore-aft adjustment was available by bolting the seat in one of two preset positions.

The cushions sagged to a lower overall height than on the UK Moke, making you feel more sitting in the Moke rather than on it, but provided ample support and a significant improvement in comfort. This in turn meant the upright was slightly higher on the occupant's back, giving better back support as well.

A second set of identical seats could be specified for the rear of the Moke.

As a safety measure, the Australian



More obvious differences between UK Moke (above) and Australian Moke (next page) include the dash area, wipers, seating...

Moke came standard with two basic lap-only seatbelts – four if the rear seats were specified.

The central dashboard was flat at the base with sharp corners, as opposed to the UK Moke's curved corners, and was flanked on each side by a handy parcel tray.

The windscreen wiper was a different design and the Aussie Moke came with two windscreen wipers as standard and two sun visors – the UK Moke only having one of each.

The wiper switch was therefore fitted in the dash panel and the plunger-type windscreen washer moved to a small bracket mounted under the corner of the dashboard.

The Aussie Moke also came standard with the passenger grab handle – also known as the Holy Cow handle, Panic handle, Jesus bar or Shit Grip – which was an option on the UK Mokes, supplied with the optional front passenger seat.

Outside, the major difference was in the mounting of the front and rear bumpers. The front bumpers on the UK Moke mounted straight to the body, which would have caused damage to the body with even a low-speed impact.

The Australian engineers came up with a much more satisfactory and sturdy design. The galvanised tubular bar was welded to solid brackets that then passed through holes cut in the front panel and bolted directly to the subframe, which had been modified with mounting plates welded to the upper leading edge.

The rear bar has the same brackets as the UK model, bolted to the rear of the body. But, importantly, the Aussie Moke has an additional support in the centre, which

also bolts to the floor, that finishes in a tow hitch welded to the bar for additional support.

The tow bar was quite adequate for pulling small trailers, but was not sturdy enough for heavier loads. As a result, many have been strengthened over the years.

Colour schemes were also quite different, with Australian Mokes available only in Empire Green and, in much smaller numbers and only on special order, in Champion Red (1967) or Sandown Red (1968). This compared with UK Mokes that were sold initially only in Spruce Green – a slightly different shade from Empire Green – and, later, Old English White. Where British Mokes all came with wheels painted Old English White, Aussie Mokes all featured Silver Birch metallic wheels.

With its expected agricultural and industrial uses in mind, wire mesh grilles for the headlights were standard. So too was a fuel filter inside the filler.

Another, more subtle, difference was the identity badge on the front panel. British Mokes had a simple rectangular alloy badge that simply reads either Morris or Austin. Aussie Mokes were only available under the Morris brand, with the front badge being longer, with rounded-off ends, and reading "Morris-Mini-Moke". Mokes ordered for overseas markets could also be specified as Austin, though apart from the badge were identical.

So sweeping were the many changes that a new design office number was allocated by BMC Australia, being YD07. Although the Moke's body was assembled in Australia from Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits, and some other parts also came from the UK, all the parts required for the changes mentioned above were supplied locally.

## The Launch

As recently revealed in Issue 12, prototype Australian Mokes were running by the middle of 1965, with a dealer preview of pre-production models taking place in Brisbane by about July. Production officially started in January 1966, with the official launch on 31 March.

There were a number of dealer and press previews in February and March, where it seems everyone was encouraged to try their hardest to destroy the Mokes, judging by the number of photos of airborne Mokes that resulted. A number of magazines were also provided with a Moke prior to the launch to test for a week or so; some taking advantage to try the Mokes out in some very rugged terrain.

The press was generous with its praise, though realistic enough to point out the many quirks of travelling at speed in a mobile tent.

*Wheels* magazine was probably the most smitten, with James Laing-Peach declaring; "It's the cheapest set of four wheels about, it goes almost anywhere and no one short of a madman could break it... If the driver doesn't mind fresh air and rubbing shoulders with his passenger... then Moke poking is a delight."

"On dirt roads the Moke is great fun", Laing-Peach continued. "The low gearing wildly accentuates the Mini oversteer on trailing throttle."

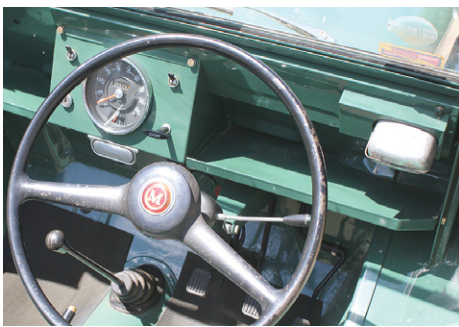


Engine bay only differed in detail.



Connector between curtain & side screen.





...weather proofing, bumpers, wheel colour, hood colour, hood bow design and colour.

However, he points out the limitations of the Moke, including the low ground clearance, particular on dirt roads with a high central crown, and the ease of losing traction in rough ground with the low gearing in first. "Someone bouncing on that stout front bumper bar (it's strong enough to knock down small trees) will help the little wheels gain traction."

Laing-Peach pre-empts BMC's engineers, by considering the fitting of larger diameter wheels. "We queried fitting Morris 1100 12in. wheels (the winter tread tyres fitted do help clearance a bit) and BMC told us that while this is possible in front the swinging arms at the rear prevent their use. But why not?...In the event of a puncture, the smaller spare would do as a temporary measure."

In conclusion, Laing-Peach said; "The Moke is a strange compromise. The light agricultural runabout is its ideal role...As a town car, the Moke is the beatnik's delight, is an ideal basis for procession floats, and has fresh air galore for blowing about long hair. It paradoxically combines the feeling of the wastefulness but fun of a sports car with the purposefulness of an agricultural machine."

*Modern Motor* seemed to delight in jumping the Moke and featured a photo of its test vehicle airborne on its August front

cover. "The Moke isn't a very good vehicle in which to tour", Barry Cooke reported. "On the other hand, it isn't nearly as bad as many of our critics said it would be."

After spending the first half-page of his report picking fault with the Moke's lack of weather-proofing, Cooke said; "Don't let us sour you though. We are full of admiration for the Moke and considering the very reasonable price (\$1295) reckon it's a bargain...The Moke with its front-wheel-drive, extremely light weight, and fat winter-tread tyres was virtually unstoppable in reasonable conditions."

Sturt Griffith, of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, was equally enthusiastic about leaping the Moke over embankments, but more praiseworthy in his remarks in the paper. "My test of the vehicle up banks and really steep slopes in rugged terrain showed that it will go places previously considered inaccessible in a two-wheel-drive vehicle...The Mini Moke is a most versatile small land vehicle with a big heart, a robust body and an eagerness for work... from the absurd bashing which I and the makers have given it, would seem to be indestructible in ordinary country use."

### A Success Story

On the back of such reviews, the Moke was popular in all its many and varied

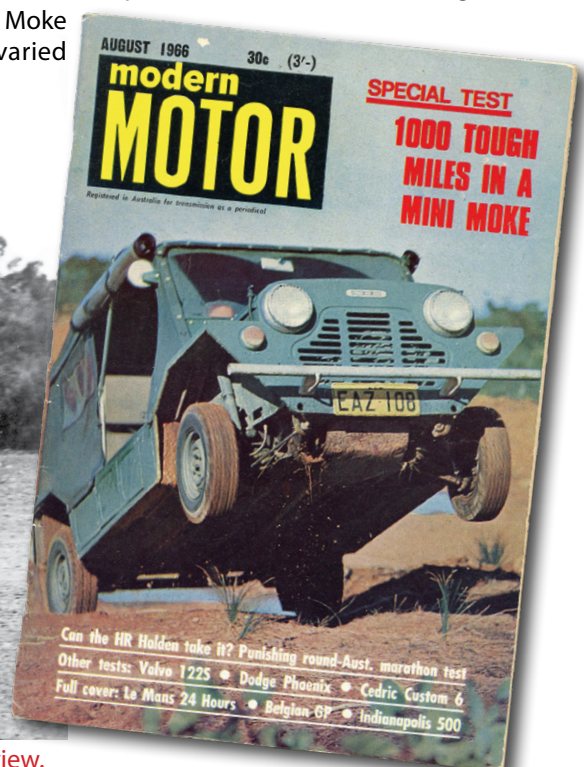
uses; from mining runabout, light farm utility and construction foreman's mount, to beach buggy, hippie jalopy and fun hire vehicle.

The pages of *The B.M.C. Rosette* were liberally sprinkled with stories of the various roles played by Mokes, in Australia and abroad. It seemed there was nothing the Moke couldn't do; from buffalo hunting in the Northern Territory, to surveying in the Simpson Desert or touring overland around Australia or across the world. According to the *Rosette* the Moke was virtually unstoppable.

A few were also apparently being exported and small numbers had even been taken by some Asian military and police forces, but the Moke's most successful roles were always in urban settings, as fun transport, advertising props, newspaper delivery carts or light runabouts at racetracks and other events.

But some buyers soon found the lack of ground clearance from the small wheels to be a major disadvantage. This was overcome with the fitting of 13" wheels from April 1968.

But that's another chapter, as we will explain in a later issue of this magazine.



BMC Commercial Vehicles mechanic demonstrates the Moke at the press preview.



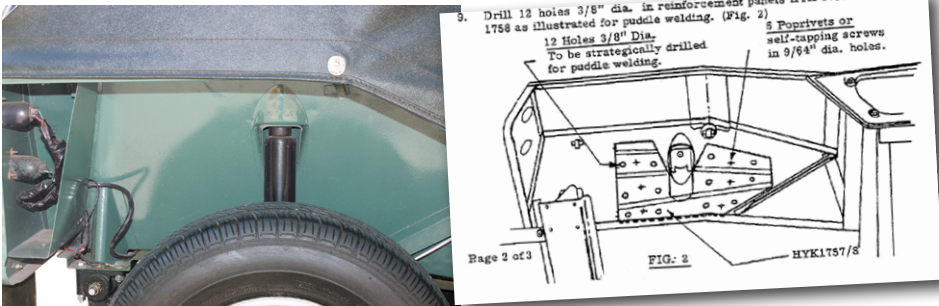
All Australian Mokes built at Waterloo (until Nov. 1974) went through the Rotodip painting pre-treatment process. This photo is dated between July 1968 (launch of the Austin 1800 Pick-up, at back) and May 1969 (end of production of the Morris 1100, foreground). The "spit" passed under the Moke, with two counterbalance weights (arrowed) to allow it to rotate correctly through the various chemical and primer tanks.



Curtain wire hooked in windscreen frame.



...and onto front hood bow.



In early 1967, from car number 3021, strengthening plates were fitted to Mokes under the rear wheel arch, as weaknesses had been found (not surprising with the treatment customers were encouraged to give the Mokes). Retro-fitting of plates at dealerships was available from May 1967, with *Service Bulletin Car 29/67* (above) outlining the procedure for welding on the plates. However, some were simply bolted in place. Few little-wheel Mokes still have no plates, like John Finucane's (above left).



Wire headlight guards were standard.



Mirror bracket longer on Oz Mokes.

## BMC Moke Trailer



To supplement the Moke's industrial or agricultural roles, a small trailer specifically designed for it was released at the same time.

Built for BMC by Dean Trailers in Bowral, NSW, they were supplied through BMC dealerships as a Standard Production Option with the Moke: SPO39 (without tonneau) or SPO40 (with tonneau), or separately.

Due to their light construction, they were not very durable and most have disappeared. When testing Mokes in 1969-70, the Australian Army rejected the BMC trailers out of hand.

However, in the early days of the Moke they were quite popular. John

Finucane remembers selling a few, as does Barry Luff from Gundagai.

John's trailer is one sold by J Luff & Son, and in fact the one featured on Luff's stand at the Gundagai Show in 1966 (pictured below). Barry Luff saw the trailer in a paddock, still owned by the original family, and alerted John to it in April 2007.

John said it needed a new floor, one new side and a new wheel arch, which was carried out by a local trailer builder.

Incredibly, the trailer still has its original Dunlop Weathermaster winter-tread tyres and original, if somewhat outdated, hitch.



Panic handle was also standard.



Correct position for Australian ID plates and car number (arrowed) on LH firewall.



### Back To The Feature (Moke)

With all this history behind it, John Finacune's Moke deserved to be properly restored, and that's what he did. By early 2006 it was completed, in time for the first National Moke Muster at Shepparton – where he came away with the award for Best Restored Moke. He also repeated that success at the Moke Muster in Wagga in 2009.

But John is the first to admit there are a couple of changes from the standard specification, in the interest of reliability. "I replaced every nut and bolt in it with aircraft bolts."

He also didn't want to put up with the notoriously weak exhaust flange. "I have fixed and seen so many blokes have to fix those bloody exhaust flanges. They were a menace, so I thought I'm not going to go through that. It's got a manifold off a 998 Cooper on it and twin carburettors, the twin air filter and extractors, a Cooper S centre-pipe and muffler."

The hood and seats were re-trimmed in the original patterns locally by Federation Interiors. All the mechanical work, with the engine kept at 998cc, was carried out by John, with occasional help from a couple of mates.

When it was finished, John kept his promise to the farmer, Mr Fowler, and took the Moke to Grenfell for the Henry Lawson Festival. "He couldn't believe it was the same car", John laughed.



### John Finucane



John (third from right) with the staff of Syd Chambers; circa 1951.

John Finucane started his apprenticeship with Cootamundra Nuffield and Plymouth dealer Syd Chambers in 1951.

He worked in the workshop, spare parts department and sales, married the boss's daughter, Shirley, and after 48 years with the company, retired in 1999.

The dealership is still in the same family, being run by Shirley's brother, his wife and son, and is today a Mitsubishi dealership.

John said the business stayed with BMC and then Leyland until the launch of the Marina and some heavy-handed

treatment from Leyland in Sydney.

He owned a Moke in the 1970s, with his brother-in-law, which had a police-spec Cooper S engine, and 1100S gearbox, with 4.33:1 diff.

They used the Moke in hillclimbs, motorkhanas and rallycross at Catalina Park (below).

When he retired John was looking for a project and bought the Moke, and it was that one, in very poor condition, that led to him buying the featured car.

He also owns a pair of Cooper S Minis - one a 1967 model, the other from 1968.



John in January 2016.



John at Catalina Park, 1972.

# Surprise Package

Words and photos by Craig Watson.  
Period photos from BMC Experience archive.

**The Mini LS was a way of improving the sales and profitability of the ageing Mini, and proved to be excellent value. While most were painted blue, this Iridium green example is a rare beast.**









Forerunner of the LS was the SS, of which only 500 were made.

Debbie Jandera didn't really like the gold stripes on the green Mini when she first saw it, but says that they are growing on her. That's probably just as well, because this Mini is one of the rarest produced by Leyland Australia.

Debbie saw the pictured car advertised on an internet sales website, but it was out of her price range. "It came down and came down, and came down into my price range, so I thought I'd go and have a look at it. I went and took it for a test run and took it home that day."

Tasmanian Mini expert James Willson has known the car since it was new and remembers it well. "It was bought new by a lady who lived at Kingston and she worked in a local child care centre. I used to see it parked outside there all the time. When she was in her early 40s she sold it. It went through a couple of different owners, then Debbie bought it."

Unfortunately, the car was involved in a bit of an altercation with another vehicle, resulting in damage to the rear corner, as James explained. "The fella who repaired it was the father of the lady who owned it. He bought a rear quarter from me and unpicked it then put it in. I went and had a look at it when he was repairing it and he did a really good job of it. Even the paint job on it, where it's been repaired it looks about how a factory finish would have been."



The original owner sold the car about five or six years ago, but neither the next owner, nor the following one did anything with the car. Debbie is only the Mini's fourth owner and did a little bit of tidying up to do to get it to her high standards.

"All we've done is put new brake shoes in it, a new starter motor in it and really gave it a good thorough clean", she explained.

This is actually Debbie's second Mini, having owned one as her first car, as she recalled. "The other one was an S and it was a bit of a car, so I wouldn't have a clue as to what was standard and what was not. I had it for a few years. I got it when I was 17 and had it for ten years. Everything in it broke. The body wasn't all that crash hot, and I just used it as my everyday car. I sold it because at the time I didn't have enough funds to do it up and keep it going."

Once she drove the LS she knew she had to have it, but she didn't know anything about the history of the model at the time. "It's been pretty much a learning experience since we got it", she said. "We got told it stood for Luxury Sport, but we don't know."

### Boosting Sales

With the closure of Leyland Australia's plant at Waterloo, production of Mini and Moke moved to its Enfield factory, previously Pressed Metal Corporation (see next issue for details).



Mini SS dash included extra ignition and oil warning lights.

On 7 May 1976 the 10,000th Mini built at Enfield rolled off the end of the line, and around 280 Minis were being completed each week. However, by that time sales had begun to falter due to increasing competition from Japanese imports, and production started to out-run demand.

To help boost sales, Leyland management decided that a higher-specification Mini was needed. However, the costs involved to make any mechanical changes, with the associated need for ADR compliance, etc ruled out disc brakes or hot engines. The only changes that could be done cheaply and without requiring engineering changes were cosmetic.

"We tossed it around the plant a bit, to see if we could do anything to improve the Mini", former Plant Manager at Enfield Ron Moss explained. "We did various things that we could do ourselves. We could buy different wheels, and we could get the steering wheel. Then we had a stripe guy come in and we asked if he could give us something that looks as if it's got power going to the back wheels. This is why it's got the turned-down effect there."

When it came to giving the car a model designation, it was simply a case of having an abundance of S badges, as Moss revealed. "All we had were S badges, so we decided we'd make it an SS. We used two badges on the front grille and two on the boot lid. It doesn't stand for anything in particular."

"We couldn't change anything that was for ADRs, or that hadn't been tested. The wheels were already a tested unit. The ordinary Mini seats had head restraints,



Blue LS had black vinyl & blue cloth trim.

# DRESS UP TO "SS"



Wall poster is only known publicity for Mini SS.

## Make your Mini look like a million dollars.

We have a list of accessories for your Mini as long as your driving arm. So you can customise your very own Mini and spend as little or as much as you like. Either way, you're going to end up with your very own Mini. Built to your exact specs. Here's the list of Mini accessories available right now from your dealer. He has fitting experts too. So go to it!



Options brochure allowed you to spec up you Mini, for a price.

and we kept the head restraint underneath, with the padding and so-forth, and came up with a big piece of polyurethane that did the whole back section...so it pulled down over the whole lot in one piece. The frame was still all the same."

"The engines came out from the UK in a dreadful black colour. Part of the building up of the engines, in putting on the ancillaries – the carburettors, air-cleaners and so-forth – was that the rocker covers were taken off and all the valve clearances were checked. We thought that was handy, so we re-routed the rocker cover through the small parts paint shop, and did them over in the wheel colour, which was the Silver Birch, I think. That made the S and the SS look a bit different, from the engine that was in the ordinary Leyland Mini."

"The radio in the Mini S had a speaker right in the middle (in the console under the radio), and the SS had a cassette/radio, but there was nowhere to keep cassettes, so it was designed into that centre unit. We deleted the speaker and put speakers in each side (of the dash), and then put a cut-out in the console to take cassettes, and put the radio under that."

"Another part was the vinyl roof, and a not-so-successful part was the plastic surround, which was a bit of the wheel arch moulding (in black plastic – Ed), which was put around the top (of the gutter). The main problem was the wheel-arch moulding was held on with pop-rivets, and you couldn't do anything like that up the top. It was a bit affected by the heat, and what-have-you. They'd expand, and in winter they'd contract, so generally that wasn't very successful, but it looked good (when it was new)."

### A luxury Mini

"We had the supplier of the glass do tinted windows and a heated rear window", Moss continued. "We wanted to make the front look different, and the only fog lights we could get, that would fit anywhere near it, were these Marchal ones, with the little cats on the front. They were rectangular and not deep, because they couldn't go back into the engine compartment too far. They also meant we were able to cut out the grille centre without it all falling apart and making rough edges."

In all, the Mini SS had nineteen changes from the Mini S. These included: metallic

paintwork (in Omega Navy metallic or Nutmeg metallic); two-tone interior trim (Parchment and blue in the Omega cars and Parchment and brown in the Nutmeg cars); special side stripes; centre roof-mounted radio aerial; vinyl roof covering (Parchment on all cars); black plastic gutter trim; Radiomobile radio-cassette player with twin speakers; modified centre radio console; tinted side and rear glass; heated rear screen; quartz-halogen headlights; Marchal halogen fog lights; Formula sports steering wheel; five ROH alloy road wheels (with shallow offset to avoid the tyres protruding beyond the wheel arches); dual horns; internal bonnet release; a chrome exhaust extension; chrome wheel centre caps with Leyland spinning-wheel logo; and the SS badges on the front and rear.

The switch panel had two green rocker glow-switches, one operating the rear heated screen, the other for the fog lights. The fog lights were also wired up to only operate instead of the headlights, in accordance with registration requirements of the time. That is, that when the switch was on only the fog lights could be used, and with the switch off only the headlights could be used.

There were also extra warning lights fitted to the outer top corners of the dash instrument panel, for oil pressure and low charge warning. Otherwise, the instrument cluster and panel were the same as for the Mini S, with the same tacho – red-lined at 5,500rpm.



The Mini LS was launched at the Melbourne Motor Show in March 1977.



20,000th Enfield Mini was an LS.



LS dash includes Brake Fail and Park Brake warning lights.



Iridium LS had all-tan cloth and vinyl interior trim.

While the vinyl roof did look quite good when new, though very Seventies in style, it was notorious for letting moisture under the edges, which often lead to serious rust problems. This wasn't restricted to the Minis, though, with similar vinyl roofs on Fords, Holdens, Valiants and others, giving similar problems. It's not surprising that today so few cars of the period have a vinyl roof, even though it was a popular fixture in the period.

Mechanically, the Mini SS and later LS were identical to the standard Leyland Mini and the Mini S. Coming into effect in June 1976, ADR27A required reduced emissions as a percentage of the total exhaust volume. Leyland Australia's answer was to fit an air pump to the engine, which simply pumped air into the exhaust to reduce the percentage of pollutants, while not actually affecting their volume.

This pump robbed about 3hp of the power from the 998cc engine, encouraging most owners to remove the pump and plug the holes in the cylinder head. Very few cars remain today with this air pump and its associated plumbing still intact.

Released in August 1976, with "over \$800 of extras for only \$355 over and above the cost of a Mini S", at \$3,895 plus on-roads, the Mini SS was an immediate success.

Only 500 had been planned and they sold like hot cakes, as Moss continued. "Well, the 500 came and went rapidly. The reasons for doing it were totally to do with getting our volumes up in our plant. But as it turned out, it was a sales boost for Mini overall and a marketing boost for



the company, because the Mini had been pretty static for a long time."

The Marketing Department was soon offering all the extra parts as options or after-sales extras for any Mini. You could effectively option up any Mini S into an SS – without the badges or the all-important compliance plate.

However, it is not known how many, if any, cars were ordered with the complete upgrade package on a Mini S – particularly as any such list would put the price of your new Mini well over \$4,000.

### Leyland Mini LS

With the Mini SS literally running out the door, Leyland executives could see the potential of continuing the car on as a normal production model, in small volume, to provide an up-market alternative to the base model Mini or Mini S.

The problem was, as Moss explained, the SS was always publicised as a limited edition. "When the 500 had gone, it was decided that perhaps this ought to be continued on as a model, not very high volume, I think probably only maximum of about four or five a day, but just to sort of have a premium model as such. We couldn't use the SS again, so we designed the L badge, and it then became LS."

Although many people have speculated over the years what the LS stands for, the fact is, like the SS, it doesn't really stand for anything. Moss explained that because they couldn't use the SS moniker again, they simply went through the alphabet until they found what sounded right. So, it's not Luxury Saloon, Luxury Sports, or anything else like that – it's just LS.

The Mini LS was launched in March 1977 at the Melbourne Motor Show.

## The Tale of the Hail-Damaged Roofs

The rumour has been around almost since the release of the SS that it came about as a result of hail damage to the cars while at grass at Enfield.

Ron Moss said this is simply not true, although there were other cars that were hail damaged. "We did have a hailstorm that hit Enfield, but that was either prior to or after this; I can't recall which. But these (SS) were specifically done to try and maintain volume. We had all this labour, and it was difficult to maintain the efficiencies, and thereby keep the costs right, if you weren't producing the right amount of vehicles. As the sales volume dropped a bit, you couldn't just heave guys out the door, sort of thing, so therefore we had to come up with something to keep the sales volumes up."

Peter Davis, former Enfield Product Engineering Manager, confirmed the hail damage was to other cars. "There were a few hundred cars damaged in a severe hailstorm, but they were

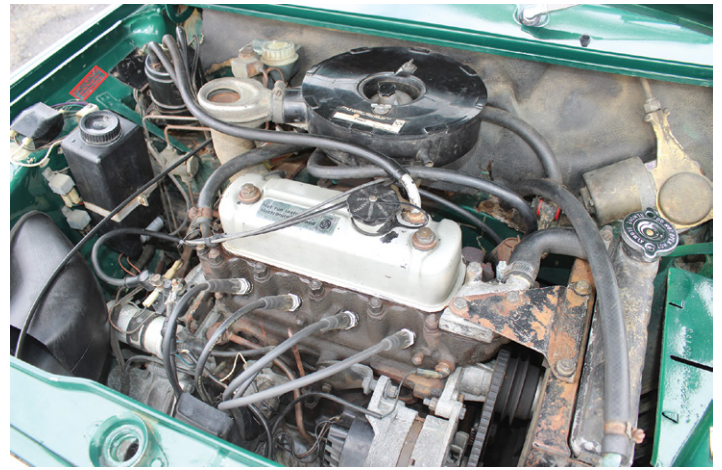
standard Minis and the Mini S, and a few Triumphs and Land Rovers. We changed the bonnets and boot lids (on the Minis), because that was easy to do, as they were just bolt on components, but the roof was a different story. To panel beat the roof meant taking the headlining and everything out, which was very labour intensive, and it wasn't economically viable. So, we just put vinyl on the roof."

"So, if you had a standard Mini or a Mini S with a vinyl roof, then, yes, it has been hail damaged."





Mini LS engine showing the air pump and plumbing.



Debbie's engine - only missing the air pump and plumbing.

The earliest compliance plate that we have seen is dated February 1977. However, an anomaly sees the chassis number prefix on the compliance plate as 022D251M09; but it does have Leyland Mini LS stamped on the plate. The D is correct for a February 1977 car, but the 1 should be a 4. This could simply be an error by the person stamping the plate (see Issue 15), or it may have more significance, but the facts are lost in the mists of time.

We have also seen a compliance plate from March 1977; this one having the correct code of 022X2S4M09 (see below).

Shortly after the release of the LS, the 20,000th Mini was assembled at Enfield on 1 June 1977. To celebrate this achievement the car presented to the media was an LS model and a great fuss was made of it by the publicity department.

It is not known how many 998cc Mini LS

were built, but an educated guess – based on Ron Moss' approximate production of 4½ per day for five days per week, over sixteen months (Mini production ceased in October 1978) – would mean around 1,600 in total. The figure may well be less, but it is not likely to be more.

There were a number of subtle differences from the SS, including a slight difference in the colour of the ROH wheels, and the fitting of chrome wheel-arch moulding around the roof gutter (which still suffered shrinkage problems).

When the Mini LS was released, in June 1977, it sold for \$4,495 plus on-road costs – some \$600 more than the Mini SS. A standard Mini was \$3,690 and the Mini S was \$3,995. There is no doubt the LS provided a substantial boost to the profitability of the Mini at this time.

Mini racer Paul Gulson did a road test for

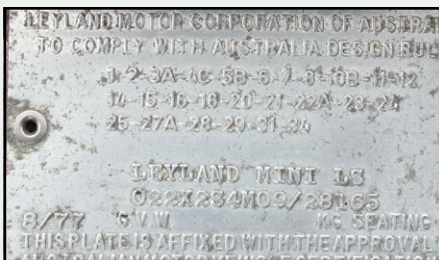
*Racing Car News*, describing the Mini LS as; "the best thing they've ever done with any car design".

However, *RCN* editor Don Eade, who took the car from Sydney to Melbourne and return, was more realistic in his appraisal. He pointed out that the seat design, though meeting with current safety requirements, was a long way behind the acceptable standards for comfort of the day, as it had no tilt adjustment or seat sliders. He also criticised the position and number of switches on the central switch panel, making finding the right switch at night very difficult.

By January 1977 ADRs required the inclusion of handbrake and brake fail warning lights. Therefore, all Mini LS should have these in the padded top dash rail, just as all 1977-'78 Minis should.

Originally, the Mini LS was only available

## Mini SS, LS and 1275LS by the numbers



The correct chassis number prefix for the Mini LS is 022X2S4M09, where:

- 022 – YDO22 Mini De Luxe
- X – compliance code for cars built from March 1977 to March 1978
- 2S – two-door saloon
- 4 – Trim level or model variant.
- M – manual four-speed
- 09 – engine size: 998cc

There is a discrepancy in the seventh digit (4). As we explained in Issue 12, according to the Leyland Australia Standards, this digit stood for the trim level: where 1 is Base, 2 is De Luxe, 3 is Super and 4 is Executive.



However, the SS Mini was built to the same spec as the LS, but this digit was 3 – 022D253M09 (the D is for manual cars built between May 1974 and Feb 1977).

It appears in this case the seventh digit has reverted to the BMC Standards of relating to the model variant, where 2 is Mini S, 3 is Mini SS and 4 is Mini LS.

To throw a further spanner in the works, a standard Leyland Mini was also listed as 2, but has the model prefix of 021 – for standard Mini.

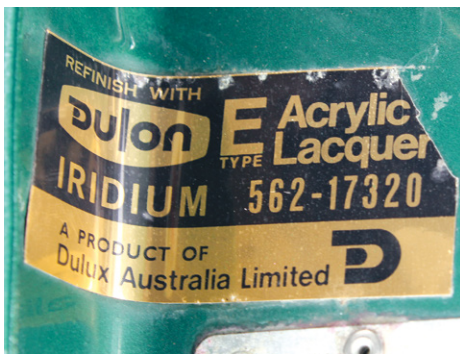
As the car identification prefix codes changed in April 1978, any 998cc Mini LS built from 1 April 1978 should have



the prefix XNFAB18Y on the compliance plate, where:

- XN – marque code for Mini
- F – trim level (High Line)
- A – body style (two-door saloon)
- B – engine size (998cc)
- 1 – 4-speed manual, right-hand-drive
- 8 – year of introduction (1978)
- Y – Australia

For comparison, the 1275LS was XNFAD18Y – where D is for 1275cc engine (above); a Mini S would be XNHAB18Y (H for Mid-Line); while a standard Leyland Mini was XNPAB18Y (P for Low-Line).



in Silver Blue metallic, with mid-royal blue roof vinyl and side stripes. Inside, the door and side cards were black vinyl with blue-dot cloth inserts, while the seats had black vinyl on the back and sides with blue-dot cloth facings.

From about July 1977 the LS was also available in Iridium (green) metallic paint, with tan vinyl on the roof and tan vinyl interior trim with tan dot cloth facings on the seats and inserts in the door cards.

The Mini LS remained as the up-market or premier version of the Mini, until the release of the 1275 LS in August 1978 – more on that model in a later issue – and continued along side it until the end of production in October.

In 1978 the Mini LS was available in the same Hi-Ho Silver or Nugget Gold as the 1275LS, though few are believed to have been sold.


It is not clear whether the Mini LS was still available in Silver Blue or Iridium at this time. Neither colour is listed in the Dulux colour book for 1978, though both are listed for 1977.

The only two examples of cars painted in Iridium that I have photographic record

of are from July and August 1977. In the past 30 years while researching Minis, I have only ever come across one other Mini LS painted Iridium, though I do not have details on its production date.

As always, if any of our readers can shed more light, we would be very interested to hear from you.

Suffice to say, the vast majority of the 998cc Mini LS were painted in Silver Blue, but today very few of either the Mini SS or Mini LS remain in original specification.

It is easy to see why Debbie Jandera's Iridium Mini LS caused such an enthusiastic stir at the Tasmanian Minifest. Debbie's really quite chuffed with the car now, particularly after winning the trophy for its class at her first Mini show, and the stripes will definitely be staying on it. 



SS and LS have internal bonnet release.

Debbie Jandera is a proud and happy owner of a very rare Mini.

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# Crisis

## The closure of Waterloo

### Part 6 - The Sellout

By Craig Watson

#### Sydney: 10 October 1974 Press Release

*"The Minister for Manufacturing Industry, Mr. Kep Enderby, and the Managing Director of the Leyland Motor Corporation of Australia, Mr David Abell, announced today that the Australian Government and the company had agreed upon certain arrangements to enable restructuring of the company's activities in Australia."*

The fact that it was possible for David Abell to pull off the deal with the Labor government has often been described as remarkable, even "genius".

Peter North, the man Abell replaced at Leyland, said; "David pulled off what would have to be one of the coups of all time, absolute genius. He packaged the cars, and the property, and sold it for millions."

But brokering the deal, which put 3,000 employees out of work, perhaps wasn't such a remarkable feat, as it courted the position of both parties at the time. When one party wants you out and you want to get out, reaching an agreement shouldn't be too difficult.

#### Leyland's Position

As we have already discussed in Issue 15, David Abell arrived in Australia to take over the reigns of Leyland with one aim – to close the Waterloo factory and make the remainder of the company profitable.

His arrival in July 1974 coincided with the release of the much anticipated report from the Industries Assistance Commission on the state of the motor industry, specifically on passenger vehicles.

Last issue we looked at some of the recommendations of the report and its impact on sales of P76 cars. In Issue 11 we also looked at the impact of other factors, including: the 1973 oil crisis; the government credit squeeze in May 1974; inflation; the steel crisis, strikes and the poor financial position of Leyland's parent

company in the UK.

In Issue 12 we considered the problems, real and imagined, of the various cars on offer from a company that was struggling to provide vehicles desired by consumers.

All these conspired, despite signs of Leyland Australia's recovery (although Abell insists that such signs were fictitious), to bring about the closure of Waterloo.

The decision of the closure, and Abell's appointment, were made before the details of the IAC report were made public. But the perceived impact of the report was a godsend for Abell, as it gave him the perfect platform on which to base his proposal to the government.

#### The Government's Position

Conspiracy Theorists have always believed that the Whitlam Government made it a goal to bring Leyland down as part of its "anti-British" principles. While such a theory has generally been ridiculed, there is a surprising amount of evidence to give it at least some basis in truth.

During Whitlam's three years in office, his government established diplomatic relations with Communist China, ended those with Taiwan, replaced God Save The Queen with Advance Australia Fair as the national anthem and the British honours system with the Order of Australia awards.

Upon his swearing in as Prime Minister, "Whitlam had been offered and had rejected the traditional prime ministerial honour, bestowed by the Queen on the recommendation of the British Prime Minister, of membership of the Privy Council. Describing it as a 'meaningless and anachronistic hangover from Victorian times', Whitlam said that no Australian prime minister should be 'beholden to his British counterpart' ", according to Jenny Hocking in *Gough Whitlam – His Time*.

He also disposed of the Prime Ministerial

Bentley car, and two Rolls Royces, in favour of three Mercedes, causing displeasure among the Australian car makers. Ford at the time produced the top-of-the range LTD, which Whitlam had used as leader of the Opposition, while Holden felt its Statesman model suitable. Leyland, of course, had the fully-imported Jaguar and Daimler cars available.

For whatever reason, Whitlam and his cabinet did appear to have had a bias against Leyland. I have read many references to Whitlam calling the P76 "a dud" and Bill Hayden calling it "a lemon", but to be honest not one that actually has the original quotes. I would be interested if anyone can enlighten me on where the quotes come from.

The government established the Industries Assistance Commission in January 1974, with the report on the motor industry as one of its first tasks; the final report being delivered to the Prime Minister on 2 July, nine days before being tabled in parliament.

By that time, it seems, the Government had already made up its mind that Leyland had to go and it was more a matter of how than why.

#### North's Last Gasp

With the release of the IAC report on 11 July, Peter North, then still Managing Director of Leyland Australia, was asked if the recommendations of the report spelled the end of Leyland as a manufacturer. "Mr Peter North, dismissed the suggestions as 'presumptuous' ", the *Canberra Times* reported, "and said his company felt the commission's report offered a profitable future in Australia".

"Leyland was operating, and would continue to operate, in all major countries, including Australia."

"Mr North said the report would have

to be assessed by the Government in consultation with the industry before any sound plan could be legislated and it was reasonable to question whether the Government would accept the report in full because of its significant effect on employment."

"He pointed out that the report did not appear to affect the prospects of Leyland's commercial vehicle operations, which account for about one-third of total company assets", the paper said.

But North's days were already numbered and he was replaced by David Abell only six days later, on 17 July.

### Abell's Ultimatum

According to a Federal Cabinet Submission in October 1974, it was reported that Abell approached Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns directly in early August, alleging; "that the fall in (P76) sales in July was directly attributable to Press comment about Leyland, following the public release of the IAC Report on Passenger Motor Vehicles".

"Mr Abell said that he had little alternative but to terminate the company's operations in Australia involving the immediate retrenchment of 6,000 employees", the Submission stated. "In addition, more than 300 independent Leyland dealers would be unable to continue. As an alternative to this course of action, Mr Abell said if he could obtain liquidity immediately he could restructure the company's operations to phase out the uneconomic activities and build up the company's more profitable operations. Mr Abell stressed that the UK parent company was not able to assist because it was having considerable financial difficulties itself."

Obviously sensing the dire political fallout of the sudden closure of Leyland and the loss of so many jobs, Cairns entered into discussions with Abell.

### Negotiations

In 2014 Abell told *BMCE*; "I became pally with Cairns. I really liked the guy. I'd go to Canberra and the girls would say, his office is there, help yourself to drinks and use what you want, and I'd go into the Deputy Prime Minister's office and just sit there while he was in parliament and wait until he came back. I couldn't believe any of this. I mean, I have occasionally met ministers in England, but never on an informal basis."

"I had a list of points I wanted to cover. I said, 'look, I've got a proposition for you; you need a smaller industry - I didn't say how small. In my opinion it needed to be zero - but, I will help you, by withdrawing voluntarily, but you've got to help me do it!'"

"The key part of this, of course, was to sell the land. That was the ultimate goal", he explained.

Abell also wanted the government to buy 2,000 P76 and Marina cars, and the

proposals were considered on 3 October by Cairns (who was also Minister for Overseas Trade) and Ministers Hayden (Social Security), Uren (Urban & Regional Development), Bryant (Capital Territory) and Enderby (Manufacturing Industry).

Indicating the speed with which discussions had taken place and the lack of due process, it was noted that; "the Department of Services and Property has made the following points: (a) It has not been possible to undertake the usual searches of title to the land; (b) It has not been possible to obtain a report from the Department of Housing and Construction on the suitability of the land for housing purposes; (c) It has not been possible to ascertain the attitude of the State Planning Authority of the South Sydney Council to the land use proposed; (d) It has not been possible to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement as required by Cabinet in the time available; (e) The Department is unaware of the public purpose which would enable acquisition to proceed."

Brushing these concerns aside, in a letter to Abell on the same day, Cairns said that the Government agreed to purchase the Waterloo site; "at a valuation on the basis of a willing buyer and willing seller to be agreed upon within one week." He also promised the Government would purchase "no less than 313 P76 sedans (6 cylinder) and 469 Marina sedans (4 cylinder) for earliest possible delivery... at prices to be negotiated" and that "The Australian Government will make every endeavour to expedite the payment of moneys owing, or which become owing, to Leyland."

Cairns concluded his letter; "I would appreciate your confirmation that action along these lines... would enable you to avoid the closure of the total Leyland Motor Corporation of Australia's operation with the disruptive consequences which you have outlined to us. If you are able to confirm this, we can get our Officers into immediate contact to bring the proposals to fruition as quickly as practicable."

On 9 October, Abell replied to Cairns confirming his acceptance of the Government's proposals, but pointing out that in discussions with Neil Currie and Alan Woods from the Department of Manufacturing a verbally agreed price for the factory site was between \$19million and \$22million. "Verbal agreement was reached that best endeavours would be made to achieve payment of this sum this calendar year."

Abell also said that the purchase of 782 vehicles was far short of the agreed 2,000 and warned; "This shortfall in purchases does mean reduced short term employment opportunities."

The result was the aforementioned joint press release on 10 October,

### References

I am indebted to James and Gary Mentiplay from WA for sharing some of their research into Federal Cabinet papers. Other information has come from: *Passenger Motor Vehicles* report by the IAC, July 1974; PM Transcripts <https://pmtranscripts.dpmc.gov.au/> my personal interviews with Peter North and David Abell; BMC-Leyland Australia archives; *BMC Experience* archives; *Wheels* magazine - December 1974; other digitised newspapers from: [www.trove.nla.gov.au](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au).

announcing the Government's purchasing of the Waterloo site and approximately 800 vehicles.

Despite its concerns, the Department of Services and Property was instructed on the evening of 15 October by the Minister, Fred Daly, at the request of Kep Enderby, to begin negotiations with Leyland regarding the purchase of the factory site and buildings, to be "completed by the evening of 16th October 1974". One day hardly seems enough for negotiations, unless the principal points had already been agreed upon. It would seem the only point left to negotiate was the actual price, which was \$20 million, with settlement before the end of the year.

### Legalities

It seems that even at the time, there were some questions of the legality of the Government's purchase and that due process had not been followed; as shown by the concerns of the Department of Services and Property.

On 17 October, the Caucus Economic and Trade Committee met to discuss the Leyland purchase and had been advised; "Because of possible Constitutional difficulties the choices of legislation are somewhat limited. The legislation could appropriate funds to purchase the site for the purposes of aiding an ailing trading corporation and it would be necessary in such legislation to include a provision avoiding the operation of the Lands Acquisition Act."

"The Treasury considers, however, that in deciding whether to introduce such legislation, the consequences so far as other corporations in difficulties are concerned, would need to be very seriously considered. Such legislation would set a far reaching precedent, and, particularly in present circumstances, lead to considerable pressure for the Australian Government to 'bail out' other companies in difficulty."

"If it were intended to purchase the land in accordance with the provisions of the Lands Acquisition Act it would be necessary to specify the public purpose for which the land was being acquired. The

## The Greenfield Proposition

In 1972, Peter North, then Finance Director, and John Martin, Leyland Australia MD, looked at the possibility of building an entirely new factory in Sydney's west, on what is known as a Greenfield site.

A location had been identified that would be large enough to accommodate all the company's diverse activities and replace factories in Waterloo, Enfield, Revesby and Footscray. This would have provided, the pair believed, substantial savings in production costs centralising all its production on one site.

"The idea was to get through the P76 launch period and if there was enough going for the future at that stage, to build a Greenfield plant and sell Waterloo", North told me in



2007. "(Waterloo was) a prime piece of potential residential space, and we factored that in even at that time – to give you an idea, P76 investment was \$20M and at that time we saw the property being worth around \$65-70M."

The deal was put to Leyland's banks, but it relied on a federal government guarantee on a \$20 million loan, to be paid off with the sale of the Waterloo plant. However, North was unable to get anywhere with the then Liberal government, and the plan was dropped.

only purpose reasonably available is that to provide housing for special classes of persons namely members of the Defence Forces, migrants, Aboriginals, members of the Public Service... The specification of these purposes is not only somewhat artificial but may involve constraints on the future use of the land."

It was felt, though, that Leyland could be considered a special case. "There might be exceptional circumstances which justified the provision of assistance even though the circumstances could not be described as resulting from previous Government action – the release of the IAC Report on 11 July 1974 and the subsequent publicity is claimed by Leyland to have had a drastic effect on their current sales performance. Sales figures supplied by the Company certainly show a marked drop, but both before and after release of the IAC Report... The extent to which Leyland's problems have arisen from particular Government action have been exaggerated by the Company and the unions. It can be argued that Leyland's problems are the result basically of normal market forces."

Nevertheless, the Committee had recommended Cabinet to; "authorise the drafting of legislation to appropriate the funds necessary to acquire the... site"; and "consider whether such legislation is to be based on the purchase of the site under the Lands Acquisition Act or under some other power, taking into account the problems that each alternative raises."

Cabinet agreed to the sale on 28 October, even though a specific use of the property had not been disclosed and "agreed that the future use of the site be the subject of a feasibility study by the relevant Department and authorities."

The Committee was also advised that the purchase of almost 800 cars from Leyland would have a negative impact on

other manufacturers, which were already contracted to supply vehicles to the Government. "Purchase of these vehicles will mean that Chrysler will not receive orders for approximately 200 six cylinder cars and GMH orders for approximately 260 four cylinder cars which normally would have been allocated to them this year under existing period contracts... and that tender action in course by other departments for the balance of current requirements – that is about 300 vehicles – will be set aside and the purchases allocated to Leyland."

The new Governor General, Sir John Kerr, who had only been sworn in on 11 July (the same date as the tabling in parliament of the IAC report) was recommended to authorise the purchase of the vehicles from Leyland and the waiving of the normal contract and tender requirements.

### Final Steps

Despite the fact that the sale had not yet been ratified by Cabinet, the joint Government/Leyland announcement on 10 October coincided with a company announcement to all employees on the same day, of the closure of the Waterloo plant by the end of the year.

The last P76 was completed in the same month and the factory closed for good in December. By early 1975, the Royal Australian Navy was already moving in to occupy the site as naval stores, which it remained until the 1990s. This use was also contrary to the provisions for the purchase of the land under the Lands Acquisition Act, which begs the question under which legislation was the purchase approved?

### Afterword

The IAC report said that Australia could not maintain more than three motor vehicle manufacturers, and Leyland became the "obvious" victim. The report also stated that the high level of protection

offered by the local content rules, at 85% and 95%, was the main cause for the non-viability of the Australian motor industry and recommended that the local content requirements be greatly reduced and further protection be offered in the form of immediately increased import duties, to be lowered over time.

Of course Australia had numerous smaller assemblers at the time, and the Japanese were just starting to make inroads to the market. But any thought that Government intended using the IAC report for anything other than a means to get rid of Leyland as a major manufacturer, can be dispelled with the press statement from the Prime Minister's office on 14 November, before the Waterloo factory had officially been closed.

"A new plan to assist and strengthen the Australian motor industry was announced today by the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam... assistance would be based on a company average local content plan of 85%". (NB: This was a target that had been easily reached by Leyland before its closure.)

In a move that compounded Leyland's problems, Whitlam announced that the tariff on imported cars was to increase immediately to 45% – up 25% on the previous rate.


"These proposals will develop a stronger long-term base for the local industry and help safeguard the jobs of Australian workers", Whitlam said, adding, "the Government accepted the judgment of the Industries Assistance Commission... that the Australian Motor Industry should be restructured... The industry must be able to exploit the advantages of economies of scale."

Whitlam went on to espouse the Government's commitment to the IAC's recommendations, including reducing the local content requirements from 95% to 85% and encouraging the common sourcing of components, to "reduce model proliferation and fragmentation and produce a more viable industry in the long run."

He then announced that; "talks were under way with Japanese motor producers about the possibility of their further manufacturing motor vehicles in Australia. Japanese technical experts would come to Australia soon to carry out feasibility studies."

So much for the three-manufacturers policy.

With Waterloo's closure, Leyland moved to being more reliant on imported cars, with assembly of the Mini range continuing at Enfield, alongside the Land Rover and National busses.

Next issue, in our final installment, we look at what was the outcome for Leyland Australia after the closure of Waterloo. 

# Temporary Measure

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

The MG TF was hastily put together to keep the MG fires burning until a replacement could be built, and served its purpose well.





As we detailed in Issue 12, the MG TC, the first post-War MG, had proven popular among US servicemen stationed in the UK. Many were taken back to the US and became well regarded in racing circles.

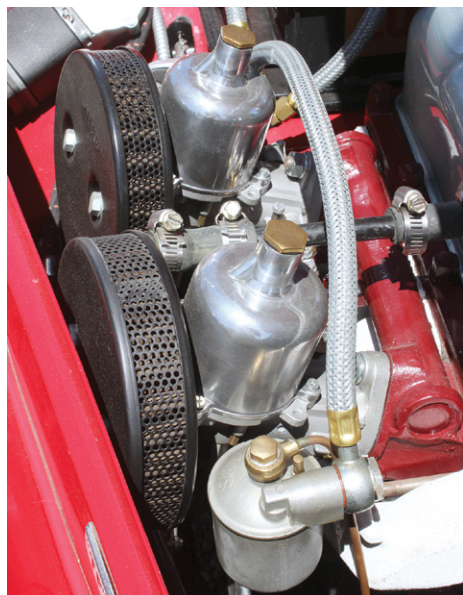
The TD was the first MG sports car built specifically to accommodate left-hand-drive (the Y-type being the first left-hooker MG of all) and was directly targeted at the lucrative US market. Announced in November 1949, it was an immediate success, breaking all MG sales records. Of the 29,664 TDs built, some 79% or 23,488 went to North America – about 95% of which went to the US.

While only 904 were sold new in Australia, this was enough to be the fifth-biggest market, behind UK (1,656), West Germany (1,248) and Canada (1,146), according to Anders Clausager in *Original MG T-series*.

1952 was the biggest year for the MG TD, with 10,838 produced. The following year saw a slump in sales of around 20%.

It must be taken into account that production of the TD ceased in around August 1953, but this drop in sales was due mostly to the release of the Austin-Healey 100 in May 1953 (see Issue 2); a true 100mph car, with more modern looks and engineering, though at a price premium.

However, MG was acutely aware that



the aging TD had a limited lifespan and was already looking forward to a more modern design. The Austin-Healey had been announced at the 1952 motor show and MG designer Syd Enever was one who could see the writing on the wall.

### A Stillborn Replacement

Enever had already designed a special streamlined body that was fitted to a TD chassis for George Phillips and Alan Rippon to enter at Le Mans in June 1951. Although the car retired after only 80 laps, its appearance had caused quite a stir, particularly among MG enthusiasts.

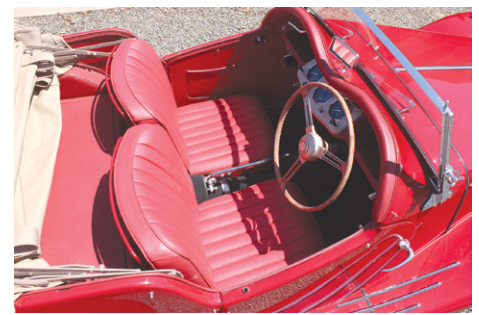
One thing that Enever wasn't happy about was the high seating position of the driver with the TD chassis, so he had chassis designer Roy Brocklehurst draw up a new chassis with the side rails further apart, allowing the seats to be positioned much lower. This car became known as EX175 – all MG experimental cars or prototypes carried an EX number.

Shortly after the 1952 Motor Show, Enever and MG boss John Thornley showed EX175 to their boss of the recently-formed BMC, Leonard Lord, requesting to be allowed to put the car into production as the replacement for the MG TD.

Lord had just signed the deal with Donald Healey to produce the Austin-Healey and didn't think there was any need for MG to have a similar looking sports car, particularly when, at the time, the MG TD was still selling very well.

As F. Wilson McComb wrote in *MG by McComb*; "The disappointment at Abingdon was intense, and as 1953 went by it soon became apparent that for M.G., at least, BMC's decision was a calamity... Although the TD was considerably cheaper than the new Austin-Healey, and still scored a few class wins here and there, it certainly looked out of date beside Donald Healey's pretty little two-seater... People began to talk of M.G. as a marque that had had its day."

Lord insisted that MG continue with the TD for the time being, but allowed for a cosmetic facelift, under strict cost control, to be developed.



### TF – Refining the TD

The MG TF was the result of that facelift. Under the skin was still essentially the TD, although MG at least used the mechanical package of the competition version TD MkII.

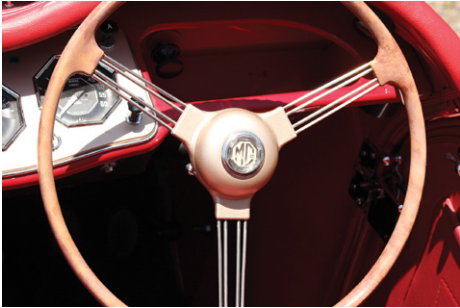
This included a warmed over 1250cc XPAG engine with 1½" SU carburetors, giving 57bhp (the standard TD having 54bhp), and higher final-drive ratio, although the compression ratio of the engine (8:1) was between that of the standard TD and the MkII.

The TD's independent front suspension and rack-and-pinion steering were retained, giving the TF a very similar driving feel.

All the obvious changes, those most notable on the showroom floor, took place on and in the new body. This had been designed and a prototype constructed in a matter of weeks by a small team of Enever, Alec Hounslow and Cecil Cousins, and the skills of an unknown panel beater.

The changes from the TD body were many subtleties that combined to good effect to give an altogether lower, sportier and prettier look.

The scuttle was lowered slightly, the bonnet sloped forward to a rearward sloping radiator grille, while the external fuel tank and rear panel sloped forward slightly. The headlights were mounted in



pods that were flared into the front guards, reminiscent of the Jaguar XK120.

One area that came in for a fair bit of criticism at the time and ever since is the bonnet. Although both sides of the top of the bonnet open along a central hinge as before, the sides of the bonnet remain in place. This makes for a bit less access for routine maintenance, although the bonnet sides can be unbolted for more complicated work.

Push-button bonnet releases, however, did make opening the bonnets a much simpler affair. The sides could also be removed for motorsport, to aid with engine cooling.

Inside the cabin also came in for plenty of improvement. Where the TD had a bench seat back but individual squabs, the TF had true bucket seats that provided considerably more support for driver and passenger and individual forward and aft adjustment.

The instruments were all gathered together in a central binnacle, which continued the sloping theme, on either side of which were open glove compartments.

Across the top of the dash rail was a padded, leather-covered crash pad, which was a nod toward passenger safety.

The outdated screen-mounted wipers and motor were replaced with a cable-rack type, with the motor hidden under

the bonnet and the wipers mounted to the scuttle.

Due to the lower bonnet line, the engine compartment came in for a couple of changes. Most notably was the replacement of the TD's fairly tall oil-bath air filter with a pair of "pancake" filters.

As the cooling system in the TD had struggled in hotter climates, such as Australia, the TF received a pressurised cooling system with overflow tank. This meant the elimination of the previous cap on top of the radiator. This was replaced with a dummy cap that gave the classic look, but was non-functional. The debate still rages as to whether this is a positive or negative aesthetic feature.

The TF included flashing direction indicator lights as standard. Storage for the side weather screens was changed from the TD's vertical behind-the-seats arrangement, to a flat locker under the luggage compartment. However, as June Dally-Watkins asked in the Australian magazine *Wheels*; "how do you get at them with luggage on top?"

For most markets the TF came standard with steel disc wheels, with wire spoke wheels available as an extra-cost option. However, in Australia, all came with wire wheels as standard.

Optional equipment also included a badge bar (for club enthusiasts), fog lamp, external rear-vision mirror and an external luggage rack.

### Meeting the Press & Public

The MG TF was unveiled at the British International Motor Show at Earls Court in October 1953, to a mixed reaction. Some writers considered it a pleasing and stylish evolution of the T-series, while others thought it far too outdated for its time.

"If BMC thought the TF was going to fool anybody they clearly knew little about sports car enthusiasts", wrote McComb, "for the new M.G. was greeted with derision. British pressmen merely damned it with faint praise, but elsewhere the comments were more forthright."

McComb uses the words of Tom McCahill

in the American magazine *Mechanix Illustrated* as an example, quoting; "I feel the new TF is a big disappointment...Mrs Casey's dead cat slightly warmed over. To get down to facts, the new M.G. TF is a dyspeptic Mark II imitation that falls short of being as good as the Mark II... Only out of supreme arrogance would the manufacturers attempt to keep ramming this old teapot down the throats of American buyers...I personally feel the current management of M.G. has let me and hundreds of other American M.G. fans down pretty hard."

"Every knowledgeable enthusiast recognised the truth of this", McComb asserted.

However, looking through many other magazines of the period reveals a generally positive reaction to the TF and suggests McComb's analysis may be a bit harsh.

In *Cars* magazine (November 1953), Gordon Wilkins went on a "sentimental" journey, waxing lyrical about the virtues of MGs in general, before turning his attention to the TF.

Possibly aware of the EX175 prototype, but not of its market potential, Wilkins wrote; "No one at MG is in any doubt about the demand that exists for a 100-mph super-streamlined MG Midget. They have been assured of this by American writers and users for some time, and they would regard it as an agreeable task to make such a car. Unfortunately, it could not be made at the present price and so it is doubtful whether it would sell in anything like the present quantities."

"So it was really no great surprise to learn that the new MG is an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary design."





Dummy radiator cap just for looks.



White felt inside tool box.



Bonnet release push-button on TF.

Wilkins does fit McComb's description of faint praise, alluding to the history and traditions of the marque in many of the design features, like the hexagonal surrounds for the instruments, saying; "For oldtimers among MG enthusiasts, this is a welcome change."

He concludes by saying; "But at a price of around \$2,000 the TF MG will undoubtedly please a lot of old friends and make many new ones."

But other writers seemed more genuinely pleased with MG's new offering.

Cecil Vard used an early example in the 1,000 Miles Circuit of Ireland Trial, reporting in the May 1954 issue of *Motoring Life*. "This, in my opinion, is one of the few genuine motor cars, and probably the only one in its price category left on the market. The latest MG is a sturdy car, built to last, which revels in hard work, and lives up to its maker's slogan of Safety Fast."

*Motor* magazine reported in October 1953 that; "the M.G. Midget open sports 2-seater has been very much improved for 1954...No fundamental changes are being made to the chassis...nor is there any change in the rack and pinion steering gear...The cockpit layout has, however, been very much improved."

*Wheels* magazine in Australia was very pleased with the new car, reporting in an extensive road test in August 1954: "Stunning acceleration, top-gear performance and handling make the new

MG/TF one of the hottest cars available on the Australian market."

"The TF is a true sports car", the magazine continued. "It handles like one, has the high performance expected, and marks a return to the pre-war M.G. potentialities... Along with its performance the TF handles as perfectly as a car can... Given the right conditions, the TF can be power slid in GP style, staying docile and controllable at normally unthinkable speeds... The brakes work dramatically at high speeds, cutting speed off with deceptive ease."

"Overall, we would class the MG/TF as an enthusiast's car. It is fast, accelerative, very controllable and MG's have an enviable record for standing up to hard use. For those looking for pleasure driving at cheap basic cost, this one is hard to beat."

June Dally-Watkins gave her usual "Comment for Woman Drivers" in the same magazine, saying; "This is one of those cars that appeals to the worst in a woman. It has impressive lines; looks and is fast. A short drive convinced me it is far superior to the earlier model TC's and TD's. It is more comfortable, more practical and better finished... The driving position is one of the best I have tried... This is a car which makes fun of otherwise prosaic motoring."

Barry Loudon was equally enthusiastic, writing in *Modern Motor* the previous month. "A day at the wheel of the latest MG TF can be summed up in two words - magnificent motoring... I say without reserve that this new TF, with its lively

power unit and excellent road manners, is the best yet from the MG factory."

In contrast, *Australian Motor Sports* (Sept 1954) was far less taken with the car, finding more fault in the lack of real development in the car, though agreeing the aesthetic and interior changes were for the better.

"Summing up, we think the TF's good points achieve balance with such features as are personally less desirable, and expect that it will enjoy equal popularity amongst enthusiasts with all M.G.s that have gone before it."

While McCahill's comments in the US are certainly scathing of the TF, writers in *Road & Track* magazine, by far a more influential tome for US motoring enthusiasts than *Mechanix Illustrated*, were much more appreciative of the new MG.

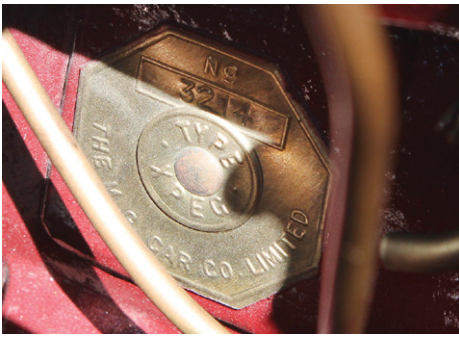
Following its first viewing of the car, at the October 1953 Los Angeles Motorama show, *R&T* declared in its following January issue: "As might be expected, in an area of considerable MG concentration, the new model was a great success, a fact substantiated by a casual survey at the show where the universal opinion seemed to be... 'much improved over the TD.'"

In a full road test in its March issue, *R&T* was even more effusive in its praise for the TF, declaring it "America's Best Sports Car Buy". "Here is a car that exemplifies far better than mere words the answer to the question: 'What is a sports car?'"

The car did come in for a bit of criticism, though, which McComb had seized upon in his summary. "The revised styling, though lower and more rakish, is still far from being modern. The performance is well below the 1954 Detroit norm and you have to shift gears", *R&T* reported.

"Yet, the fact remains that the entire staff of ROAD & TRACK vied with each other to produce the best reason for using the MG", the magazine continued. "Summed up, and despite our few carping remarks, the TF is still the greatest sports car for the money available today. It offers a competition potential combined with the ability to stand up to extremely hard every day driving, plus a modest price and reasonable depreciation."





Engine tag identifies XPEG.

Despite this sort of glowing press report, the MG TF struggled to sell in the US against the Triumph TR2, also released in late 1953, which was priced only £5 more in the UK, and the Austin-Healey.

Less than half as many of the TF sold in the US in 1954 as the TD the previous year – 1,614 against 3,509. Many people felt the MG was simply out-dated and under-powered compared with the opposition.

Perhaps buoyed by the *Wheels* article, and perhaps to help offset the poor sales in the US, Australia received 793 of the TF in the same year – against 112 TDs in 1953 – making this country the car's second-largest market for the year; even ahead of the UK.

### A Little More Poke

Meanwhile, Castrol executive and record-breaking driver George Eyston had persuaded Leonard Lord to allow him to try for a series of class records with a modified version of the streamlined EX175.

After tests showed the car was unsuited for the record attempts, another car was built up from the spare EX175 chassis with a special enclosed streamlined body, becoming EX179.

A new engine was built for this car, being based on the XPAG, but with larger bore thanks to siamesed cylinders, removing the water jacket between cylinders in each pair. The 72mm bore resulted in a capacity of 1466cc and the new engine was designated XPEG.

EX179 set a number of class records on the Bonneville salt flats in Utah, USA, driven by Eyston and American Ken Miles, including 24 hours at an average of just over 120mph and a top speed of 153.69mph.



XPEG engine increased the capacity to 1466cc and raised performance around 10%.

Fitting the XPEG engine into the TF allowed the car to be marketed as the "New TF 1500 with the record-breaking 1½ lt engine".

By this time, MG was producing the ZA Magnette at six times the number of the TF and even Lord had seen that MG needed to do something more to revitalize its sports car sales, especially in the US. He had finally given Thornley and Enever the go-ahead to build a production version of EX175: what would become the MGA.

Thornley had also convinced Lord to re-establish a full design department at Abingdon – the previous design office being closed in 1935 by William Morris when he sold MG and Wolseley, which he owned privately, to Morris Motors Ltd (the listed company he still controlled).

Although the new engine produced 63 bhp, an increase of over 10% on the 1250cc, the TF1500 was no more than a further stopgap measure. But, as McComb admitted; "it renewed M.G.'s sporting image and allowed the TF to be kept in production a little longer with this shot in the arm."

The only identifying features on the TF1500 were two small 1500 badges on the bonnet sides and a small red reflector just above each rear wing.

### Selling the TF 1500

McComb seems biased against the TF, and quotes *Road & Track* as saying; "So, the M.G. TF has a full 1.5-litre engine at last – too little, too late, so what?" However, that quote is taken out of context, being a comment apparently overhead from the staff photographer, and *R&T* not only restated their affection for the TF, but considered the TF1500 an event better buy – helped along by a drop in the list price from \$2,260 in 1954 to \$1,995 a year later.

"Proof that the extra 200-odd cubic centimeters are well worth-while can be summarized neatly in one sentence", *R&T* explained. "The larger bore engine adds 5 mph to the top speed, reduces the time of acceleration to 60 mph by 3 seconds."

"After last year's test on the TF was published, a well known writer asked us 'the new TF isn't that good, is it?' Our answer to that is, we think it is every bit as good as we say, and more. Even though the MG is the lowest priced sports car on the market, it is the accepted standard of comparison", the magazine continued.

"The MG personifies and defines the term 'sports car' better than words can describe. Its ability to stand-up under the most strenuous type of competition driving has given this car a reputation for







Reflector one of two TF1500 identifiers.

stamina second to none...If we seem to like the MG (and we do) it's because it is that good."

According to Barry Lake in *Spotlight on MG Downunder*, the TF 1500 was released in Australia in June 1955; "with the price unchanged from the 1250cc version, at £982."

It is not known how many TF 1500s were exported to specific countries, as Clausager says the figures for 1955 are not available. However, overall production figures do exist, and show that 244 were sold in the UK, with 522 being right-hand-drive export models. Based on the figures for the 1250cc model, and the late introduction of the 1500 here, it is likely the figure sold in Australia would be a little under 500.

The same figures show that 1,487 of the TF 1500 went to North America, of which the vast majority would have been sold in the US.

In total, 9,600 of the MG TF were produced, of which 6,200 were 1250cc and 3,400 were 1500cc.

Where 10,838 TDs had been built in 1952, a combined total of only 8,145 TD and TF models rolled off the line in 1953.

1954 saw a combined total of just 6,516 TF 1250 and TF 1500 produced, as the impact of the Triumph TR2, released at the 1953 Motor Show, was felt. Only 1,449 TF 1500s came off the line in 1955 – production ceasing around May – showing just how sales were being affected by the outdated design compared with the competition.

There is no doubt that had MG soldiered on with an unchanged TD, its sales performance would have been even worse. But the MG TF had proved its worth as a stopgap measure, keeping the MG flame flickering while its replacement, the MGA, was being developed.

## References

- *Original MGT-Series* by Anders Clausager
- *MG by McComb* by F. Wilson McComb
- *Spotlight on MG Downunder* by Barry Lake
- *MG - Britain's Favourite Sports Car* by Malcolm Green
- Period magazines
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## TF in Competition



Pat Moss and Pat Faichney were third Ladies in the 1955 RAC Rally.

Due to its short production run, it is not surprising that the TF also had a fairly limited motorsport career. However, there were a few highlights worth mentioning.

As stated in the main story, an early example of the MG TF took part in the Circuit of Ireland, driven by Cecil Vard, and finished second outright.

While the 1250cc TF proved a spirited competitor in many events in the UK, USA and Australia, with its chassis said to out-perform its engine, it was not until the arrival of the TF 1500 that it became a truly competitive car in its class.

Mike Allison and Peter Browning summed up the TF's suitability for rallying of the day in their book *The Works MGs*. "Events like the RAC Rally, the Scottish Rally and the Circuit of Ireland, all followed a similar pattern with results decided upon short speed tests and what today are called autotests... The TF was quite a good car for these 'rally of the tests', being small with a snappy gearbox, fly-off handbrake, adequate off-the-mark acceleration and firm road holding."

"Above all having an open car offered

excellent visibility especially when, for many of the tests, the driver spent more time motoring backwards than forwards."

"Other successful works TF entries during the 1955 season were on the circuit of Ireland where Ian Appleyard won his class, while on the Scottish Rally, TFs took the first three places in the class and the Manufacturers' Team Prize."

Pat Moss was another driver with limited success in the TF, having joined the fledgling Works team in its first year. Of her first drive in a TF, in the RAC Rally in which she and Pat Faichney were third in the Ladies class, Moss said; "The MG TF handled well and was quite fast for those days, but it was stark... On one (test) we had the fastest time in the whole rally and I was terribly pleased. There were a lot of manoeuvring tests in the RAC then and they suited the MG, which was a very manoeuvrable car."

Moss also won her first ever circuit race in a TF, though admitted she was given a generous handicap.

The TF was also competitive in its class in Australia and, despite quickly being superseded by the MGA, remained so for a number of years.



Holt Binnie - Hume Weir: 12 June 1960. Photo by Simon Brady / Autopics

## Feature Car

Our feature car is an exceptional restoration, but little is known of its history.

A Heritage Certificate from Gaydon shows it was built between 8 and 10 February 1955, as a RHD export model, so was almost certainly sold new in Australia. It was supplied from the factory with the wire wheels and in its current colour scheme of red with red interior and Biscuit hood.

The current owner bought the car about ten years ago and said the previous owner, John Dean, had owned it for a similar time. Apart from that he knows nothing of the car's history.

When he bought it the car appeared to be in fairly good condition. But, seeing the rubber strips under the fuel tank straps were perished he ordered a pair from the UK then set about what he thought would be a simple replacement.

Before he knew it, he had dismantled half the car, as he explained. "To undo the bolts for the straps you have to get into the rear of the car, which means you take off the back lining, after you take the hood off. Then I pulled the straps forward and I could see that it was sitting on two rubber pads and they had completely perished. As I pulled those off I realised the sender unit for the fuel tank was absolutely stuffed and that the wiring was rubbish. Then I could also see that there was a crack in the back of the trunion on the right-hand side."

"Suddenly, I've got the tank, the front wing, the rear wing, the whole interior, the wiring, the hood, and of course the straps all over the floor."

"So, then my wife came in and said, 'what the hell have you done?' I had the whole floor covered in parts, and I realised that even though I've worked on lots of cars I was never going to be able to get this back together."



After making enquiries through the MG fraternity, he got onto Ron Taylor in Gosford, NSW. Ron, an avid collector himself, has been restoring MGs for about 45 years, the past ten on a full-time basis, but is these days winding down his business with the aim of retirement.

So, the TF was bundled up, loaded onto a trailer, filled with all the parts and sent to Ron in Gosford. Three years later it returned to Victoria, as you see it here.


Ron said there were no nasty surprises with the car. "I've done about six or seven TFs, so it wasn't really a challenge for me, but it would have been for someone who hasn't done one before."

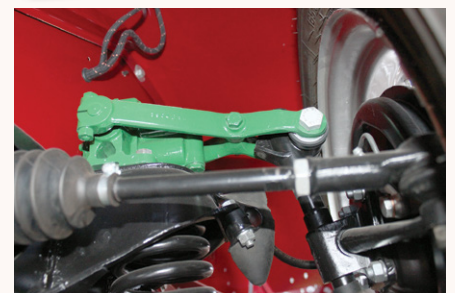
Although the car was restored with every attention to detail and accuracy, there have been a couple of small changes in the interest of longevity. The carpet, of the correct type, has been bound on the edges to prevent fraying, while the nuts and bolts have all been plated to prevent rusting.

Otherwise, the car is as it would have come from the factory – maybe even better. The attention to detail extends to the wire wheels being the correct painted grey, rather than chromed, while the Armstrong lever-action shock

absorbers on the front have been painted green. That's how they would have been when new, but they were almost always painted black when reconditioned, which is why most you see are black.

The end result is quite simply one of the most outstanding TF restorations in the country, but don't expect to see it at the shows any time soon. Although he never intended it, the current owner said the end result is too good to drive, and he wants to maintain his anonymity with the car.

We are just pleased to be able to show it in the pages of this magazine. 



# Thoroughbred

Words by Patrick Quinn.  
Modern photos by Vince Johnson.  
Historic photos courtesy Tony Parkinson.

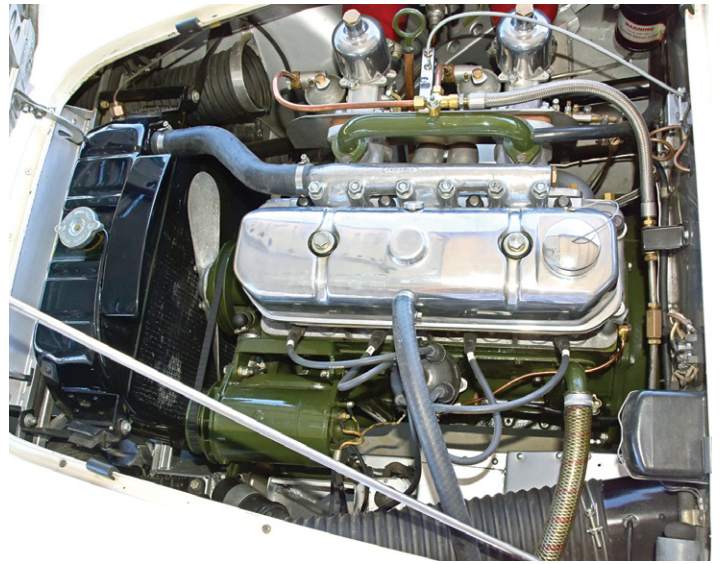
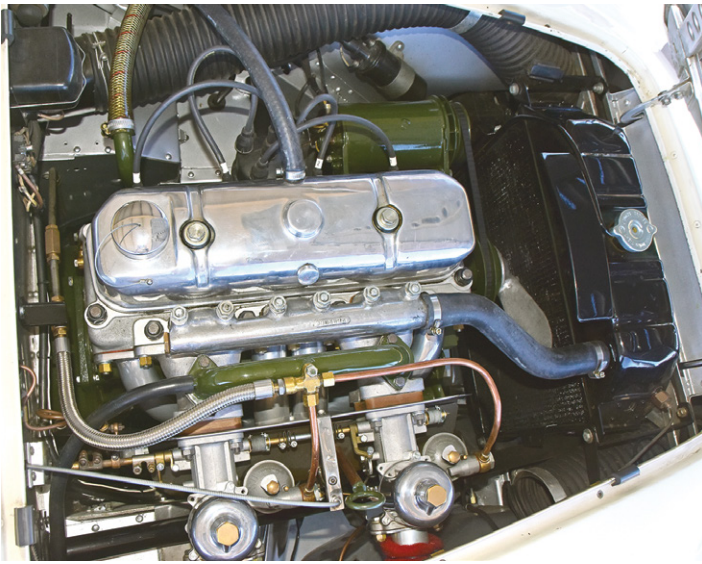
We have said before that not all Austin-Healeys were created equal and one model in particular was pretty special, with a capital S.





Collingrove Hillclimb, SA - 7 April 1958





With its eight-port alloy head and other modifications, the 100S engine was considerably different from the "garden variety" 100.

Part of the agreement with Leonard Lord on the formation of the Austin-Healey Motor Company (DHMC) would undertake a competition programme for the new marque, financed by Austin.

The first twenty Austin-Healeys were assembled by the DHMC at Warwick and four of these have become known as Special Test cars. Three of these were prepared for the 1953 Le Mans 24 hour, and two ran the distance with success.

Soon after, engine specialist Harry Weslake was brought in to look at improving the car's 2660cc four-cylinder engine. With push-rods, inlet and exhaust ports all on the same side of the cylinder head it didn't make for efficient breathing. Weslake designed a new eight-port aluminium cylinder head, moving the inlet/exhaust ports, plugs and other electrics to the opposite side from the push-rods.

Other changes, including the strengthening of the block and Nitrided crankshaft and higher compression pistons, resulted in the new engine being significantly different from the standard Austin-Healey engine.

Coupled with the fitting of larger H6 1 3/4" carburettors with a joint cold-air box, the improvement was significant, with power rated at 132bhp at 4,700rpm compared with 90bhp from the standard 100 engine.



Fisherman's Bend, Vic, on 14-10-'56

### US Success

Donald Healey was very clever at promoting his cars and was early to recognise the greatest potential for them was in the US.

While the initial competition foray for America was at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1953, it was the Sebring 12-Hour the following March that took Healey's greatest interest, as the race was also foremost on the minds of potential Austin-Healey purchasers.

The winter period of 1953/54 was put to good use, with cars being developed featuring the revised engine, Dunlop disc brakes all round, a David Brown four-speed close-ratio gearbox, upgraded differential and a cast alloy oil cooler/filter.

One car was entered as an Austin-Healey 100 by the DHMC at Sebring in 1954 and while it looked like a standard 100, beneath the metal it was a very different vehicle. Despite running on three cylinders at the end of twelve hours it finished in third place.

In recognition of this success DHMC built a small number of replicas, which became known as the Austin-Healey 100S (Sebring). Gerry Coker, who styled the original 100, was given the task of redesigning the original shape, which resulted in a subtle change to the front profile along with a completely new oval-



Victorian Tourist Trophy (TT): 17-03-'57.

shaped grille. A large stylised S was added to the "100" grille badge.

A distinctive colour scheme of Old English White over Lobelia Blue was chosen as the standard livery for the new model. However, chassis 3504, sold new to American actor and racing driver Jackie Cooper, was painted Spruce Green on special order. There were also two cars finished in red and one in black.

While the chassis and bodywork were sourced from the normal places, such as Jensen, the 100S never saw the inside of an Austin factory. Each was carefully hand-assembled at the DHMC in Warwick. To prove its authenticity, each car received a commemorative plaque on the dashboard.

### Production

Once again the British Motor Show at Earls Court, which opened on 20 October 1954, was considered the best place to launch the new Austin-Healey 100S. The first cars became available early the following year to 'selected customers'. With the car's release came a proper brochure with 'Built for racing, by Racing Specialists' emblazoned across the front: an item that today commands a pretty penny.

Besides the distinctive colour scheme the entire body was in light-alloy against the steel/alloy combination of the 100. In fact the DHMC went to extremes to lower the weight with all-alloy sub-frames, half-



3906 in its "red" period.



Current custodian, Tony Parkinson.

height Perspex windscreen, lightweight seats, no bumpers and certainly no creature comforts such as carpeting or weather equipment.

In view of the car's competition future each was also fitted standard with a 20-gallon fuel tank with a large, quick-action external fuel filler. All 100S models left the factory in right-hand-drive.

Contemporary reports indicate that when fitted with the standard 2.92:1 differential and four-speed non-overdrive gearbox the 100S was good for at least 120mph, but speeds way in excess have been recorded. With a little fuel and no driver the 100S weighed in at 901kg, compared with the 984kg of the production 100.

Assembly of the 100S continued through to mid-1955 with the majority being sold in the US. Available records show only 50 cars were built for sale, along with five Works cars and probably two or three others to satisfy demand due to accident damage. A total of five were sold new in Australia.

As an aside, during 1954 the 100S engine was being considered as a replacement for the Austin A90 powerplant in the production Austin-Healey. However, the new BMC six-cylinder C-series engine was in the wings and the news came from Longbridge that it had to be used in as many BMC cars as possible.

### AHS 3906

With production in such limited numbers it's hardly surprising that individual 100Ss are known by their chassis numbers. During 1954 and '55 the 100S was assembled in



The all-alloy bootlid.



five batches of ten cars, with chassis numbers allocated accordingly.

The first batch was chassis AHS 3501 through to 3510 while the next batch was 3601-3610, then 3701-3710, 3801-3810 and 3901-3910. All perfectly clear when you know your Austin-Healeys.

According to Anders Clausager in *Original Austin-Healey*, there was only a single batch of engines assembled, with engine numbers 1B222701 to 1B222750. The number sequence is certainly correct, but it is not clear if these were built in a single batch.

Our feature car is AHS 3906. It was part of the fifth and last batch of 100Ss assembled and was shipped on 22 July 1955 to Austin Distributors in Melbourne.

With his eye on taking advantage of every situation, Donald Healey ensured that wherever possible the 100S was first sold to someone who was well known.

Accordingly, Austin Distributors sold 3906 to well-known Australian racing driver Stan Jones. Despite registering the car with his personal Victorian number

plates '751', Jones would own the car for only a few short months. The next owner was car dealer Ron Phillips, who was a close business collaborator of Jones.

### Current Owner

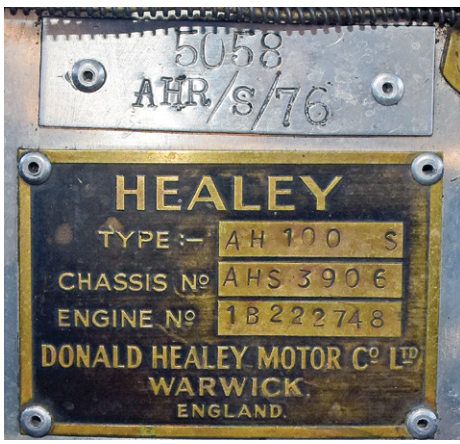
Tony Parkinson hails from South Australia's McLaren Valley, has been interested in cars from when he started walking, and bought 3906 in 2001.

"My first car bought with my own money was a Mini Cooper," Tony said. "That was followed by Cooper Ss, as we used to do. Then in about 1976 I bought my first Austin-Healey from Melbourne. It was a 100 BN2 that I worked on for about four years and then sold it. There was a bit of a gap before I bought another BN2 in 1991. I didn't at the time realise the big difference between them and the BN1, so it was just a quirk of fate that I ended up buying two."

"I was becoming rather enthusiastic about the marque and in '95 bought the ex-Works Rally 3000 (UJB 143) that had been driven by Pat Moss and Peter Riley, and kept that for five years. That's now in a very good home in Jersey, in the Channel Isles."



Little room in the boot with 20gal (91lt) fuel tank. Spare wheel moved over to left.



No mention of Austin on build plate.



The plaque affixed to the dashboard facia of every genuine 100S.

"As to the 100S, I first saw it when I was just 10 in 1958 at Willunga, the town next to here, when it was being raced by Jim Goldfinch, whose family had the Shell roadhouse. The distinctive memory of the car sitting on the forecourt has stayed with me ever since. I can also remember it being practiced quite a bit on the country roads around here. It was the only car that Goldfinch raced, as he then got married."

"I kept track of the car since," Tony added. "I actually gave Goldfinch a lift after his semi-trailer had broken down and I asked him about the 100S. He said it was in Queensland during the time when Ray Jorgensen owned it. I had seen a photo of the car in an issue of *Sports Car World* when the car was painted in a regency red colour."

"In 1976 it went south to Jim McConville who is an Austin-Healey enthusiast in Victoria. By this stage I was running an openwheeler in historic racing, as was Jim, so I knew who he was. Then in the early 1990s I found some early photos of 3906 that I passed on to Jim."

"To cut a long story short, we were both at the same race meeting and in the pub one night I broached the subject of him selling the 100S. Jim said that he didn't have any plans on selling."

"Then a few things happened, like I managed to buy the actual brochure that came with the car and was still with it when Jim Goldfinch bought it. So I wrote to Jim McConville who said that one day I might be able to reunite it with the car. Then, in

1996 he said that he might consider selling me the car, so I just kept on plugging away. All that came to a conclusion in March 2001 after five years of negotiation. Jim at that stage had owned the car for 25 years."

### History

Tony admits that when he bought the car he wasn't aware of its full history, but he soon found out that 3906 had one of the best histories of any of the 50 built.

"Almost every time it was raced it was successful", he said. "It never failed to finish and was tuned by Ern Seelinger who looked after the cars of Stan Jones and Lex Davison. Back then Austin Distributors no doubt approached Stan Jones with a deal he couldn't refuse, but in February 1956 Ron Phillips began racing it."

"Phillips was at Wangaratta Motors and 3906 was always entered under that banner. He had huge success with the car through to the end of 1957, when it was sold to David Harvey of Adelaide who had it briefly, but he had a back ailment so he found the car quite uncomfortable. So it was quickly put back on the market."

"That was when Jim Goldfinch bought it in 1958 and I came into the picture. It was then sold to John Hyland who was a RAAF jet pilot in NSW, who did the deal in Holbrook with a new Austin sedan along with some cash. Unfortunately, John didn't

make it far up the road when a front stub axle broke. In those pre-mobile days, Jim didn't know that Hyland was stranded in Holbrook for three days waiting for parts. John Hyland used it as a road car, after painting it green and fitting a windscreen and hardtop."

"It was soon 'yesterday's racing car' and went through a succession of owners in NSW, until it was bought by a syndicate of Austin-Healey owners in that state. In the early 1970s it went to Ray Jorgensen in Queensland and in Ray's expert hands it was given the transformation it deserved, including the Regency Red Paint. It stayed with Ray until 1976 when Jim McConville bought it."

"All up, 3906 has had thirteen owners counting the syndicate as one. It was Jim McConville who had the car repainted back to its original white over Lobelia and that's how it is now. I have not had the reason to touch the bodywork or paint in 15 years."

### Engine Dramas

"Jim explained that in 1978 the engine blew up while he was driving it at Winton", Tony continued. "The damage was considered terminal, as there was a piece of crankcase missing and the bores split. So Jim and 100S guru Steve Pike fashioned a 100S engine using a 100 block, doing a beautiful job. However, Jim wisely didn't



Original steering wheel.



100S had disc brakes on all four wheels.



Lucas Le Mans headlights.



Tony Parkinson with Lyn Punshon at the start of Historic Mille Miglia, Italy, 2007.

throw away the old block and that came with the car when I bought it."

"Then I heard of Auto Restorations in Christchurch, New Zealand, and I sent them the old block. A few weeks later I heard back from them saying they think they could put it all back together. Luckily, Steve had the remains of a 100 block that just happened to consist of the part that was missing and shipped that as well."


"So they did a forensic laser jigsaw welding of the crankcase. So then over many months they resurrected the original engine and I decided that it also should have new pistons, crank, rods, head etc., but the important thing is that the original block is now back in the car and also back to its original 2,660cc capacity. While it was quite costly, I think it was vital for the car's provenance."

"There was always a risk that it mightn't work, but since reinstalling the engine I was able to run the engine in by running the car to the Grand Prix in Melbourne and back again. Over 1,600 miles and over 30



Souvenir sticker from the Miglia.

laps of the GP circuit the car returned over 25 mpg."

"We all love the car and both my two boys, David and James, are named on the insurance policy. A few years back I put together a book on the car, but as soon as it was printed new material came to light. I now have a website on the car which is [www.austinhealey100s.com.au](http://www.austinhealey100s.com.au)", Tony concluded. 



3906 leads three other 100S Austin-Healeys at the AGP - Albert Park, 2006

## Looking Lively on the Road - by Patrick Quinn

It's been a few years since I last drove a 100S and it quickly came back to me how lively they are.

Sure all Big Healeys have a good turn of speed with the 3000 being great for outright speed while the four-cylinder cars are quick and nimble.

However with the power from the engine and the lightness of the 100S body, you get a combination of it all.

I know I'm biased, but there is nothing quite like blasting up a winding hilly road. Yes, I know there was a smile on my face and I could see it in Tony as well. Accelerating through the gears it's isn't long before we were into licence-loosing territory, even on a country road.

The four-speed gearbox is precise and the ratios perfect for the car, plus with discs all round confidence abounds. Of all the Austin-Healeys, the

100S is the best performing and best handling, while at the same time docile enough for modern traffic, mid-week or weekend.

Only 38 of the Austin-Healey 100S are known to survive, and they don't come cheap. Expect to pay more than \$1M for a production example and significantly more for an ex-Works car – if you can find one for sale. However, you never know what the next barn find might turn up.





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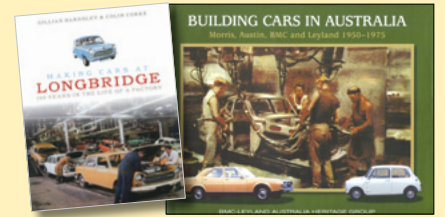
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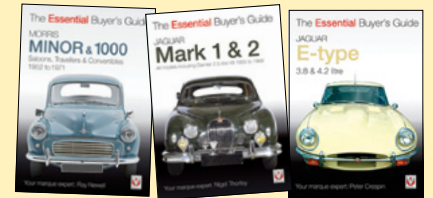
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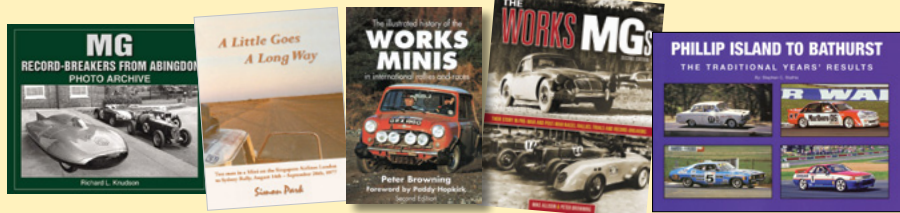
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