

May 1990

The **HUMBERETTE**



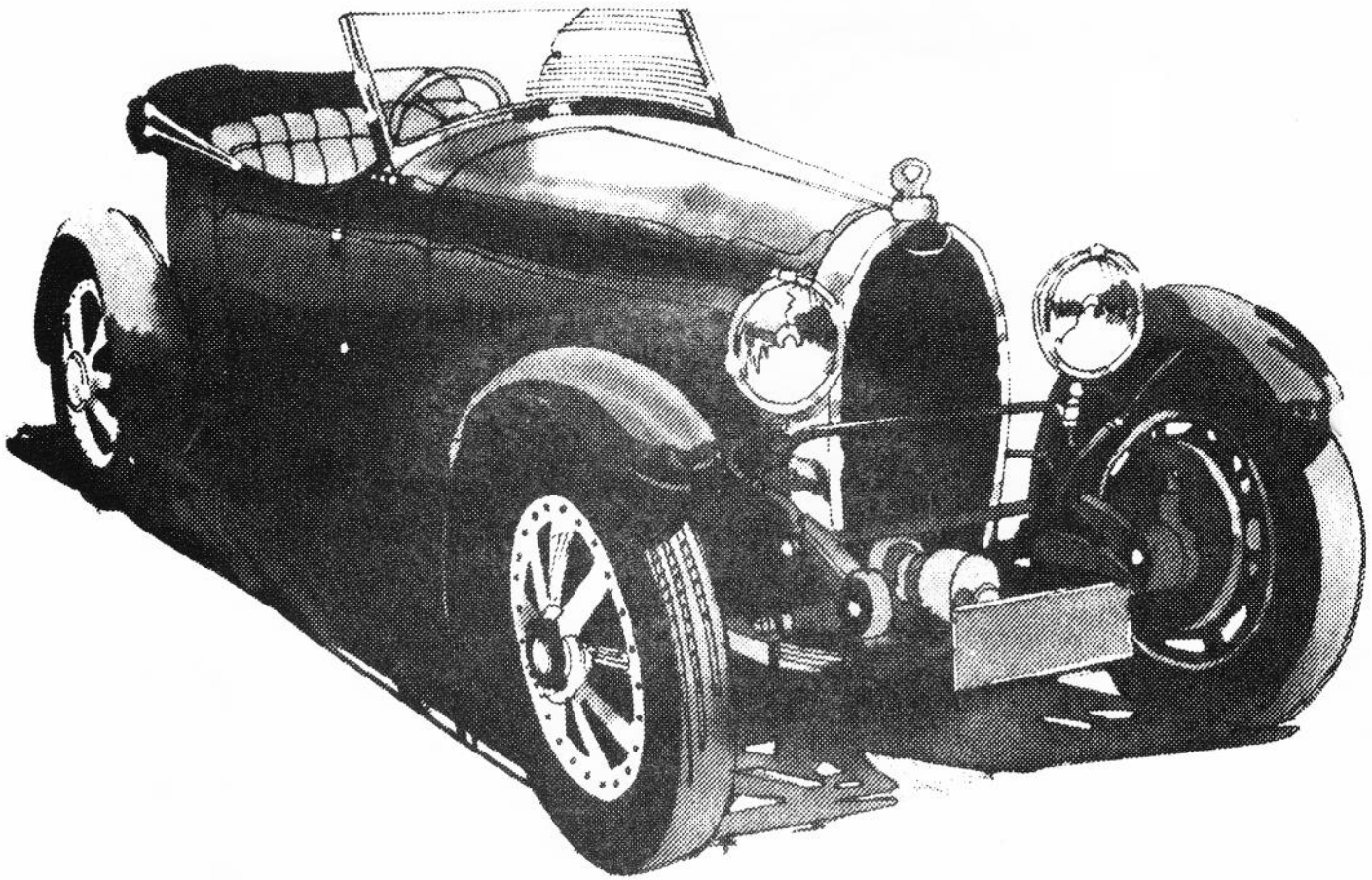
By Appointment to
The Royal Family

Official Newsletter of the
Humber Car Club of
Victoria Inc.

Affiliated with the
Association of Motoring Clubs



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CALENDAR

THE HUMBERETTE.

MAY 1990

- MAY 27TH. (SUNDAY) GENERAL MEETING / FAMILY DAY. DEEPDENE PARK HALL, WHITEHORSE ROAD, DEEPDENE. (MELWAY MAP 46 A7/8.) BYO PICNIC OR BBQ LUNCH 12 MIDDAY. MEETING COMMENCES 2.00PM.
- MAY 28TH. (MONDAY) A.O.M.C. DELEGATE'S MEETING, CARNEGIE PROGRESS HALL, TRUGANINNI ROAD, CARNEGIE. 8.00PM SHARP.
- JUNE 3RD. CLUB DAY-RUN TO CHURCHILL ISLAND. OTHER ROOTES CLUBS ALSO INVITED. SEE BELOW FOR FULL DETAILS.
- JUNE 1ST - 2ND. V.D.C. SWAP MEET SPECTACULAR. ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOW GROUNDS, EPSOM RD, ASCOT VALE. FRIDAY 5.00 - 10.00 PM, SATURDAY 8.00AM. BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES PH: V.D.C. (03) 439 9052. SITES \$25.00. ADMISSION \$3.00.
- JUNE 22ND. GENERAL MEETING. DEEPDENE PARK HALL. 8.00PM. SPEAKER TO BE ARRANGED.
- JULY ? MONTHLY CLUB RUN . TBA.
- JULY 27TH. GENERAL MEETING. DEEPDENE PARK HALL. 8.00PM.
- AUGUST 26TH (SUNDAY) GENERAL MEETING / FAMILY DAY. DEEPDENE PARK HALL BYO PICNIC OR BBQ LUNCH. 12 MIDDAY. MEETING 2.00PM.
- AUGUST 27TH. (MONDAY) A.O.M.C. DELEGATE'S MEETING. PROGRESS HALL, CARNEGIE. 8.00PM SHARP.
- AUGUST TBA. COMBINED CLUBS RUN TO WESTERNPORT PUB. HASTINGS.
- SEPTEMBER 28TH. GENERAL MEETING. DEEPDENE PARK HALL. 8.00PM.
- *** OCTOBER *** *** 15TH BIRTHDAY OF HCCV. ***
- OCTOBER 26TH. GENERAL MEETING. DEEPDENE PARK HALL. 8.00PM.
- NOVEMBER 11TH. ANNUAL CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE, PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP , AND DISPLAY DAY. DEEPDENE PARK OVAL. N.B. ALTERNATIVE VENUE MAY BE NECESSARY IF OVAL DRAINAGE WORKS ARE NOT COMPLETED.
- NOVEMBER 17TH - 18TH. BENDIGO SWAP MEET, PRINCE OF WALES SHOWGROUNDS, HOLMES ROAD, BENDIGO. CLUB HAS INFORMATION STAND IN THE CLUB CORNER AREA, CONFERENCE HALL.
- NOVEMBER 23RD. FINAL GENERAL MEETING FOR YEAR. DEEPDENE HALL, 8.00PM.
- NOVEMBER 26TH. (MONDAY) A.O.M.C. ANNUAL MEETING AND DELEGATE'S MEETING. CARNEGIE PROGRESS HALL. 8.00PM.
- DECEMBER CHRISTMAS BREAK-UP PARTY AND PRESENTATION DAY.



NEXT OUTING

****CHURCHILL ISLAND CLUB RUN.****



WHERE TO MEET: K-MART CAR PARK, HIGH ST. CRANBOURNE. 10.15AM. (MELWAY 133 J4)
ANDERSON ROUNDABOUT (AT STATION) 11.20AM (MELWAY 256 Q11)

WHAT TO BRING: ALL LUNCHEON NEEDS; WARM CLOTHING, "WELLIES"?

COST: SMALL ADMISSION CHARGE TO ISLAND (NATIONAL TRUST ADMINISTERED.)
FURTHER DETAILS FROM IAN WILD, PH: (03) 725 9897.

SCEPTRE PREPARATION FOR THE RALLY

The 7th Humber National Rally at Cowra is now over. Apart from a few minor problems with organization, which according to Murphy's Law, always seem to occur, it was very successful.

Margaret and I decided to take our Mk 1 Sceptre to the Rally as we were going on to Tugun (near Coolangatta) in Queensland to visit our daughter, son-in-law and grandson.

The Sceptre is quite a nice touring car, being fitted with overdrive as a standard extra. This means that at 100kph the engine is only revving at 3000rpm, resulting in economical running and reduced engine wear. The total mileage covered for the whole trip was 2,500, at an average fuel consumption of 34mpg. Apart from a minor problem caused by a dry speedo cable, which we fixed at Tamworth with some vaseline, it never missed a beat. I had a few problems with it before we left but once they were corrected it was excellent.

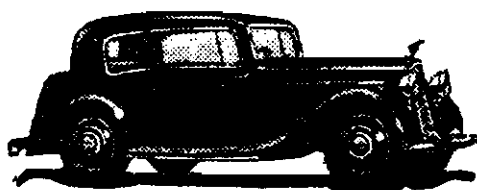
Problem number one was difficulty with idling on cold engine. I fitted a new set of spark plugs, then proceeded to check the high tension leads, which I found needed cleaning down in the coil lead by carefully revolving the screw down in the neck of the coil (don't lose the 'o' ring seal on the screw), and the distributor cap connections to the plug leads. Also, the centre contact in the distributor cap, this is a carbon rod with a spring attached. By carefully pulling it out using a clockwise twisting motion, it should come out without damaging the spring. You can then use a narrow screwdriver with a nice sharp blade end to clean the contact down at the bottom of the hole. Having done that you should be able to see the metal contact. Then with a small pair of pointed pliers, carefully bend the last half of the coil of the spring across the diameter so that you get better contact. Then very carefully replace the carbon rod and spring once again using a clockwise twisting motion.

Having done all this the Sceptre engine now idles nicely when cold. The other problem we had was with the steering which tended to be somewhat vague with a tendency to want to run along tram lines, joints in the road and be affected by roads with a lot of camber. Having come across some information on steering geometry, I came to the conclusion that the problem was being caused basically by oversize tyres, as I was running on 13" x 650 instead of the original 13" x 600. Ringing around a few tyre suppliers I was told 13" x 600 are no longer available. So eventually I fitted a set of Dunlop Guardian Radials 13" x 165 which are about the same diameter as a 13" x 600. They are also a textile radial which gives a softer ride than steel radials on the smaller 4cyl car. I'm pleased to say it handled beautifully on the trip.

This problem of obtaining correct size tyres is a common one among older cars like Humbers and is probably causing some troubles similar to mine among other members, so I have reproduced the relevant part of the article to explain the problem. As you will see, the cars have been designed to have a particular king pin inclination angle, or with cars like the Vogues and Sceptre with ball joint suspensions, steer axis inclination angle, to suite a particular size of tyre. So if you depart from that particular size you will most probably have some problems, unless you take the car to a steering and front end specialist (not a tyre retailers wheel alignment set-up) and have the camber adjusted to suite the size of tyres you want to use.

Hoping this will explain problems some members occasionally complain about with their Humber's steering.

Keith Willimott.



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HUMBER

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THE HUMBER CAR CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.

CLUB ADDRESS — 23 HIGH STREET, WATSONIA. 3087

COMMITTEE 1990-91

PRESIDENT	:	Geoff Webb	233 6592
VICE PRESIDENT	:	Margaret Willimott	435 6354
SECRETARY	:	Ian Foreman	
TREASURER	:	Brian Parkinson	
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Hawks	:	K. Willimott	435 6354
Mk Cars	:	B. Kennedy	789 5119
General Information	:	B. Kennedy	789 5119
Auto Electrical	:	M. Fitchett	366 8987



JON WHITES' MK 4 S/SNIPE



BOB BRUCE'S SERIES VA S/SNIPE

THE HUMBERETTE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MAY, 1990

It was doubly pleasing to see the results of the 1990 Cowra Concours and to see once again that Victoria dominated the results in winning the 'Best Car' and a majority of the prizes. Congratulations to the participants and special thanks to Bill & Joan Holmes for their efforts with my car. With the two cars that Bob Kennedy is preparing, I hope that in two years time we can retain the 'Best Car' trophy for Victoria.

I am becoming increasingly annoyed with rising Government changes in relation to motor vehicles and the way Governments are bleeding the motor industry. The 'red plate scheme' previously, now known as the 'club plate scheme' is subjected to more regulation and the cost differential is now seriously effecting the decision whether it is worth accepting the usage restrictions and reverting the car to full registration.

I also object to the crazy premise of Governments of all persuasion, that fees are indexed according to inflation. If Governments held indexation, particularly our sensitive and important changes such as petrol and transportation, the multiplying effect on transport costs and the cost of all goods and services must fall. I guess the real truth to the matter in the economic sense, is that for any Government, inflation disguises many problems.

My objection, as it relates to the motor industry, is that now customs duty, sales tax, road levies, petrol taxes, stamp duty and motor registration fees are born by all of us on daily motoring and transport of basic goods and services, creating such crazy anomolies as paying sales tax on the freight component on the spare part that you have just purchased. Maybe the reason that there are so many Humbers still on the road in daily use, in that we can still drive in cars used by royalty and not pay the crazy imposts on today's motoring.

Geoff Webb

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING

HELD 27TH APRIL, 1990

AT DEEPDENE HALL

Meeting commenced at 8:12pm with 46 members present - individual count as not all members signed the book. New members Fed O'Shea and Dr. Warwick Slade were welcomed.

Apologies: Ray Webster, Wild family, Pam Batten, Sylvia Pieterston, Nat & Delsi Hanlon.

Treasurer's Report: Credit Balance	<u>\$2971.43</u>
Accounts for Payment	\$1008.60

Correspondence: R. Whittle A.C.T., Mr. J. Dows (Barandoola, Vic), R. Boan (Sorrento Vic), Sotheby's Auto Auction, Shannon's Auctions, Allison's Restaurant, W. Slade, INC Corporation (noise attention materials), Casterton Motor Enthusiasts Club, Single Life Magazine, Uncle Sam's Rock Cafe, HCCSA "In Vogue", Rover Car Club "Viking Torque", Austin A40 "Newsflash", Wolseley "Hornet", Daimler/Lanchester Club, SATOC News, Rootes Group Car Club Inc, Humber/Hillman Club of N.Z., Vic-Trek Tourism (Macedon Ranges promotion).

Events Director's Report: Margaret Willimott reported on the Easter National Rally (see article).

Librarian's Report: Nil.

Technical Officer's Report: Rob Dunlop brought up the subject of head gasket problems associated with Vogue cylinder heads, namely the stretching or expanding of the copper on the gasket over the ported areas of the cylinder head

Editor's Report: 215 newsletters circulated.

General Business: Mr. Daryl Mills of LEA Films requires a 1963 Series 4 or 1962 Series 3 S/snipe in white over light green for filming.

Hall improvement in video recorder shelf to be constructed on left hand wall, also general improvements to amenities.

Correspondence to go to Hall Committee as generally accepted.

Bill Holmes displayed new HCCA National Rally trophies.

Geoff Webb reminded those in attendance about the President's Dinner and the urgent matter of affirming bookings. It will (was) held at Clancy's Restaurant on 11th May, 1990.

Meeting Closed at 9:40pm, supper served - YOU BEAUTY!

Ian Foreman.

SOCIAL NEWS & NOTES

Greetings everyone! What a great weekend the National Rally turned out to be and quite successful for the Victorian cars that made the trip. Bill and Kevin fought a friendly tussle to the finish for outright Concours winner. In the end it was only one point and a belligerent clock that separated them. Not bad when the next closest points loss was almost double that of both Kevin and Bill. Congratulations also to Geoff whose car it was that Bill was cossetting during the Rally, and also to Keith who was most surprised when he took out the Audax (it means light car!) class.

Closer to home, our next Sunday outing is in the capable hands of Ian Wild and will be a combined Routes Run to Churchill Island (off San Remo). Churchill Island is administered by the National Trust and I believe folk from the district are already looking forward to the Humbers visit. Full details of meeting place etc., appear on this month's Calendar Page.

Although our numbers were small I think all who attended the President Dinner at Clancy's Restaurant on May 11th enjoyed the evening. It was a pleasant change to have the restaurant staff do all the organizing and arranging while we just sat, ate and chatted on. Thanks Geoff and Jill for a lovely evening!

Do you remember "Jenny", the MK IV Super Snipe from NSW that competed in the Variety Club Charity "Bourke to Broome Bash"? Well this year "Jenny" is trying her luck once more. This time from Bourke to Burnie (Tasmania). Although not officially an HCCA entrant this year, the NSW Club is providing the drivers and assisting with sponsorship. "Jenny" will be passing through Melbourne in early June and if you would care to cheer her on, or to donate towards sponsorship, you would be most welcome. Further details will be notified as they come to hand - but keep an eye on the daily papers also!

Finally, two brief reminders. This will be YOUR LAST MAGAZINE if subs have not been renewed. At \$20.00 a year membership is not expensive so please, if you have not done so, RENEW YOUR SUBS NOW! Cheques should be made out to HCCV INC and forwarded to club address in front of this magazine. We like to keep in touch with our members.

This month's meeting will be a SUNDAY FAMILY MEETING - we look forward to meeting some of our youthful and our more distant members on these occasions.

Hope to see you there.

Margaret.

FOR SALE

Hillman Hunter Safari Wagon, manual, needs muffler and tailpipe, no reg, \$300.
Contact: Ann Abraham, Ph: (059) 62 2882, RK.

Hawk Series 3, auto, one owner, plus sparecar, green/white roof, grey interior, excellent condition, rear seat not used at all, car at Elmore, reg Nov 1990, brakes just worked on, 134,000 miles.
Contact: Ph: 548 2822 (Bus), 232 5677 (A/H).

Two 1960 S/Snipes, autos, make one car out of two, \$150.
Contact: Bob, Airport West, Ph: 338 4922, RK.

Brand new disc brakes fit Mk 1 or 2 Sceptre, still in box, \$150.
Contact: P. Reeve, Ph: 543 1460, RK.

1963 Vogue, manual, rebuilt motor, reg. 1964 Vogue, autoccomplete, stripped for rest. 1963 Vogue, manual, parts car. OFFERS
Contact: J. Anderson, Ashwood, Ph: 807 6187, RK.

Series 5 S/Snipe, good interior, no reg, \$500.
Contact: Ph: 870 3438, Ringwood.

Series 3 S/Snipe, no reg, \$800 - Also Series 4 S/Snipe, each very good, no reg, \$800.
Contact: Ph: (051) 45 6762, Stratford.

1966 Mini Morris Deluxe, original, goes well, \$800.
Contact: Wendy, Seaford, Ph: 78 6369.

Workshop Manual, B.M.C. Services, Riley 1 1.2 and 2 1.2 litre, no A.K.D. 630 A, 1968, \$50.
Contact: (057) 83 1899.

1964 S/Snipe, 90,000 miles, excellent order all round, perfect upholstery.
Contact: L. Mathieson, Newbridge, Ph: 38 7283.

Two Humber overdrive gearboxes, no ball housing or clutch forks, \$250 each.
Contact: J. Dows, 1 Barton Drive, Baranooda, Ph: (060) 20 8682.

1933 Humber Twelve, very rare car, one of only three in the world, open to offers.
Contact: J. Berry, Canberra, Ph: (062) 31 8357.

WANTED

Series 5/5A grill and side surrounds.
Contact: F. O'Shea (C/- Ian Foreman/Secretary BCCV).

Series 5 S/Snipe, boot hinge, driver's side.
Contact: R. Whittle, 2 Walu Street, Aranda, ACT, Ph: (062) 251 1595.

Series 4, 5 or 5A S/Snipe.
Contact: K. Farren, Ph: 842 7448.

THE AGE,

Wednesday 16 May 1990

Perhaps the fate of the local industry's most high-profile export, the Capri Convertible, epitomises the Government's quandry over protectionism. Each rag top exported is subsidised to the tune of some \$3000 by Australian taxpayers through duty exemptions (part of the Export Facilitations Scheme).

NATIONAL RALLY REPORT - COWRA 1990

About 35 Humbers representing Humber Clubs in N.S.W., Victoria, Queensland and South Australia converged on Cowra for the 1990 Easter National Rally. Nearly 100 "Happy Humberers" were accommodated in all, and quite an impression was made on the township during the three days that were spent as guests of the Cowra Shire.

From Victoria went 10 cars carrying 27 members of the "Humber Fraternity". For most, the journey was uneventful, managing in true Humber style to survive wind and rain, police patrols (yes, even Mike arrived without a "bluey" - he says Vic was speeding!!) and the pitfalls of N.S.W. roads!

No problems, either, in locating Bill & Joan, Kevin Meggie or the Wild family on Registration Day - just look for their respective Humbers! But were they in, under, on or over their cars as they searched out that last elusive grain of dirt with cleaning brush and polishing cloth in hand? It was difficult at times to locate the correct owner of each arm, leg and cleaning cloth once the Wild crew swung into action, however all made it safely to the Friday evening B.B.Q.

Saturday morning saw us up early for a final polish and it was off to the Street Parade. Led by the local constabulary who wished all the cars on their patrol were as trusty as these "shining oldies" - 34 Humbers, an elegant (but not so trusty!) Humber motorbike and a hard working Humber pushbike wound their way past the local shopping throngs and onto the riverside parking area.

It seems however, that one important person wasn't impressed - the heavens opened in buckets as we neared the planned parking position!! Potential disaster was averted when the remainder of the day's activities were hastily transferred to an undercover showground pavilion. Only casualties being the well polished (and by now well washed) Concours entrants.

With the serious concours judging completed, Sunday became a fun day. Imaginative! Creative! Decorative! They were the key words for the Humber Easter bonnets that many cars displayed on arriving at the Safeway car park that morning. Squashed bunnies, furry bunnies, balloon bunnies; even an Easter Bunny's egg nest (with genuine Snipe just hatching). What a sight met passersby as they wandered on their way.

Imagination! Athletic Ability! Grey Matter! These were further listed that day as each car endeavoured to gather the maximum number of points during the Observation Run. All managed to arrive at the appointed picnic spot although how one car needed to travel almost twice the required distance still remains a mystery.

Sunday evening's Rally Presentation Dinner in the RSL Clubrooms brought the formal proceedings to a close. Prizes presented during the dinner were:-

CONCOURS AWARDS:

Veteran Class	:	Len Sheehan (NSW)/1914 Humber
Mark Class	:	Tom Kayser (QLD)/MK VI Hawk
Audax (Light Car) Class	:	Keith Willmott (Vic)/MK I Sceptre
Series Class	:	Bill Holmes (Vic-presenting Geoff Webb's car)/ Series II Snipe Estate
Outright Concours Winner	:	Bill Holmes & Geoff Webb/Series II Snipe Estate

Second place outright was Kevin Meggie (Vic), Series V Super Snipe with a loss of 11 points overall - just 1 point behind the winner!

NOVELTY AWARDS:

People's Choice	:	Brian Grogan (NSW)/MK II Snipe
Best Novelty Humber	:	Allan Hegarty (NSW)/Mercedes

Greatest Distance Travelled	:	Chas & Margaret Grimes (SA)
Observation Run	:	Ian & Anne Wild (Vic)
Easter Bonnet	:	Tom McAlpine (Vic)/MK IV & The Snipe's Nest
Hard Luck Award	:	Brian Grogan & family (NSW)/"Jenny" and the Mk II

Congratulations to all rally award winners and to the organizing committee. Much that was good came from the rally and it is hoped that it will serve to both further and strengthen inter-club relationships.

RALLY PARTICIPANTS FROM VICTORIA:

Bob & Nancy Kennedy	:	Series V Snipe Estate
Tom & Lyn McAlpine & family	:	Mk IV Snipe
Kevin Megee & Shirley	:	Series V Snipe
Bill & Joan Holmes	:	Series II Snipe Estate
Barry Bosnich & Billie-Jo	:	Mk IV Snipe
Peter Davenport	:	
Vic Wilson	:	Series IV Snipe
Frank Stockwin	:	
Lloyd Hughes	:	
Anne & Ian Wild, Karl,	:	Series IV Snipe
Melanie & Heather	:	
Mike & Christine Fitchett	:	Series IV Snipe
Bob Bruce & Joyce	:	Series V Snipe
Keith & Margaret Willimott	:	Mk I Sceptre

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following people who have joined the club this year.

- John & Eileen MacGregor, Alphington, two Series 3's and one Series 4 S/S.
- Mike & Christine Glare, Sebastapol, Series 1 and 3 Hawks.
- Jeffrey Rootes, Elliminyt, Series 4 S/S.
- Teena Harper, Frankston (at the time of joining the club she was wishing to purchase a Humber).
- Bruce & Lyn Alexander, Linton, Series 4 S/S.
- Glen Hall, Seaspray, Mk 2 S/S.
- Trevor & Hattie Ashton, Abbotsford (who are looking for a daily use S/S).
- Simon Lipman, Brighton, Series 4 S/S.
- Greg Louis, Kew, Series 5 S/S.
- Tom & Betty O'Keefe, Glen Waverley, Series 5 S/S.
- David Warburton, Noble Park (who is interested in buying a Humber).
- Kevin Guzelan, Lovely Banks, Mk 2 or 3 Pullman and S/S.
- Malcom Morgan, Brunswick, Series 3 S/S.

Further update next issue.

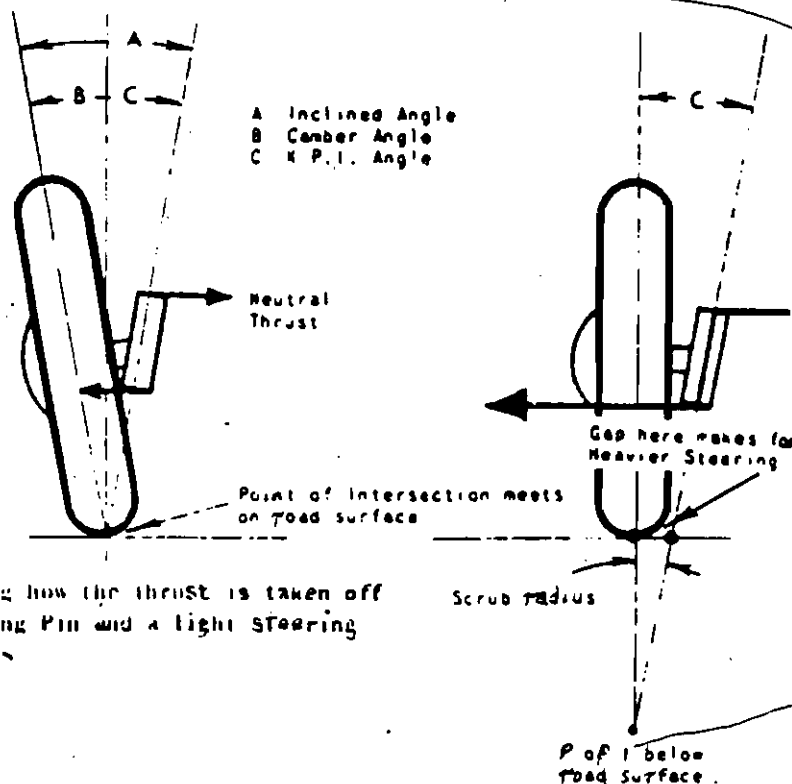
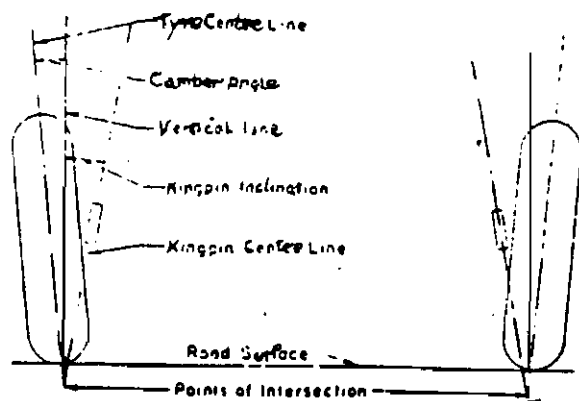
Graeme Finn,
(Membership Secretary).

ANSWER TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLE

Peugeot-Talbot now occupy the Coventry Factory once used by Rootes to manufacture their Humber range. Not so strange then that Peugeot should be sponsor of a British Rootes soccer team. Would be nice to see the three spires of Coventry Cathedral (the Rootes emblem) replace the Peugeot insignia all the same.

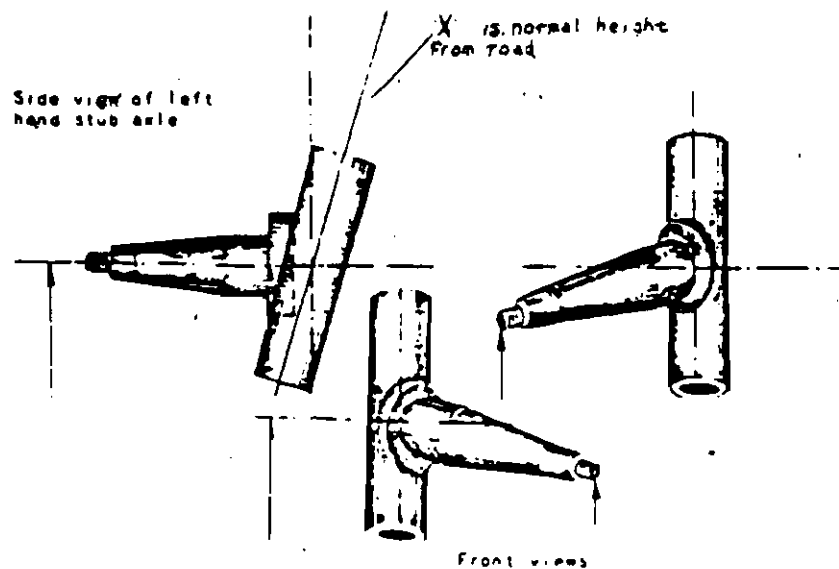
This month's "Rootes History" question:-

Who was the founder of the Victorian Humber Club and when was it formed? (Answer next week).



Showing how the thrust is taken off the King Pin and a light steering results

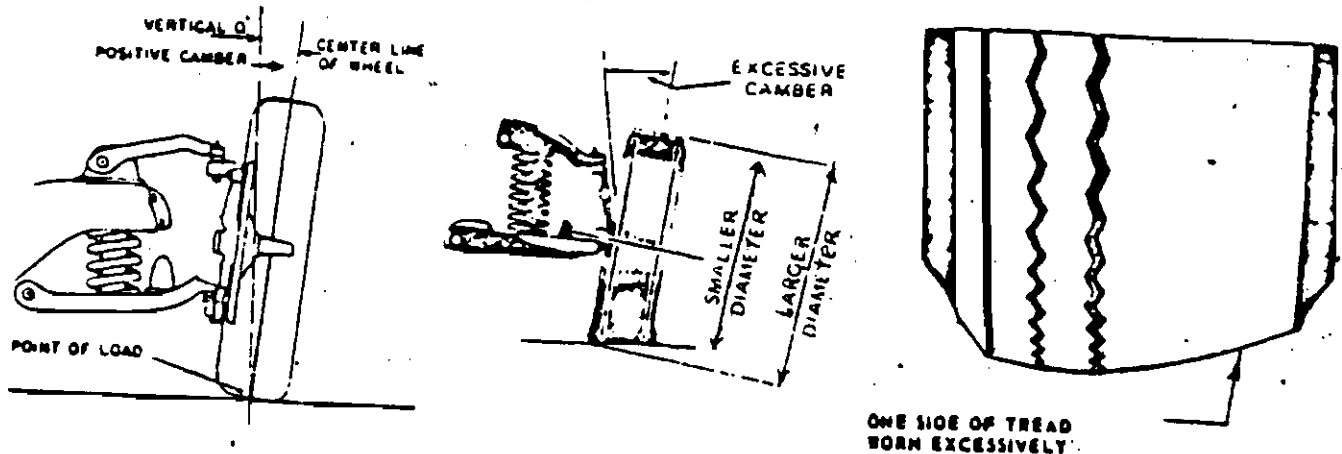
As the wheels are turned, the fall of the spindle causes the front of the vehicle to rise. Vehicle weight constantly bearing on the spindle ends will automatically force the wheels to return to a straight position.



STEERING PROBLEMS

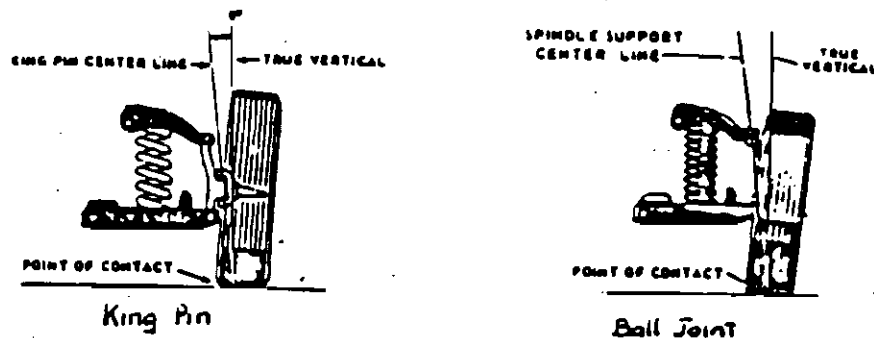
(1) The purpose of camber is to endeavour to bring the point of road contact of the tyre under the point of load of the vehicle and as a result provide easy steering by having the weight of the vehicle supported by the inner wheel bearing and stub axle.

(2) Harmful effects of incorrect camber are excessive tyre wear on one side of the tyre and excessive strain on wheel bearings and suspension. Tyre wear is effected because a tilted wheel creates varying diameters of the tyre.



3. King Pin Inclination (K.P.I.)

This is the inward tilt of the top of the king pin or ball joint when viewed from the front of the vehicle (similar to camber).



(4) King pin inclination is the angle measured in degrees between the true vertical line and a projected line drawn through the centre of the kingpins or ball joints. The term kingpin inclination was first introduced when nearly all vehicles used kingpins to swivel the front wheels. However, since most modern vehicles use balljoints in their suspension system the term Steering Axis Inclination is sometimes used in place of K.P.I. The principle is the same but instead of working from a line drawn through the centre of the king pin, the angle is taken from a line centred through the upper and lower ball joints. These ball joints not only allow the stub axle to pivot (as do kingpins) but also control the up and down movement of the suspension.

(1) Purpose of K.P.I.

To reduce the need for excessive camber. Combines with camber to place the weight of the vehicle more nearly under the point of the road contact of the tyre.

To provide a pivot point about which the wheel will turn and produce easy steering. To aid steering stability.

THE ABOVE ARTICLE HAS BEEN REPRODUCED FROM A LONGER ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE ROVER CAR CLUB OF AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE.

Our First 3000 Miles in a Snipe.

It was about two years ago that the urge to own and drive a top british automobile came over me like a rash.....Annes' description of my allergy for Humbers. I guess it really started with Dad who swore by Rootes Group cars from the day he bought his first Hillman. (He owned a number of them; his last one being a Series IV Super Snipe Estate car and he curses the day he sold it).

My first cars were all Rootes Group cars but when Chrysler brought them out I spat the dummy and went french. Now I've realised the error of my ways and have returned to the marque that I never should have deserted.

Our first recent Rootes acquisition was a Humber Vogue that I drive 30 miles every day to and from work. She's a little beauty that needs a new exhaust, a respray and the original engine put back into her. She's as reliable as anything, starts when I turn her on, cheap on booze and bits, etc. etc. I love her, second to Anne and the family of course.

However, I had my eyes set on a Snipe IV or V, preferably the former and after a lot of dollar justification we, the family became the proud owner of a Series IV Super Snipe in prime condition. Incidentally, the old saying "you get what you pay for" is true for Humber. If you want a good one that will give trouble free motoring as good or better than a new car, then be prepared to pay. Otherwise be prepared to work.

I actually took possession at the start of November 1989 (just after the Victorian Humber Club Concours) and immediately pawed all over it. Anne and I must have cleaned it a million times that week just to make sure all our friends OOOHed and AAARed every time they saw it.

Now for the start of our 3000 miles.- our summer holiday 1989-90.

In brief it was:- Phillip Island and back a couple of times; Mt. Gambier (SA), about and back; and, then to the Tumut, the Snowy Mountains, Lake Eucumbene, Cooma, Canberra and return via Cann River, Lakes Entrance, etc. etc.. This last lot was with 6 adults, a boot full of food and towing a sailing boat that was full to the gunnels with camping equipment.

Well, the Snipe performed like a dream and I was a very proud driver. However the trips were not without some concerns.

The first occurred on the way back from Mt. Gambier. The ignition light just came on when accelerating from about 50 MPH to 60+ MPH.

"Better pull over and check this out" I said.

On deceleration and at about 15MPH, the light went out;

"Oh Boy this will be interesting".

On checking I found nothing wrong. So onward we went. About 60 miles further on it happened again and again a few hundred miles later. I've checked and checked and still found nothing out of the ordinary. The only thing I can guess is that it was a slipping fan belt. If anyone has any clues?????? please call. Whatever, it hasn't happened since and we never really diagnosed it.

The next problem could have been really disastrous. On the day after the Albury bush fire (3.1.90) and in temperatures greater than 40C and going up a long (approx. 6+ miles) ...#@\$+*... steep hill from Tumut to Kiandra the fuel vaporized. And guess what happens to a hot engine when it stops in hot weather. You've got it in one... It gets hotter. No Problems you say, just pull over and wait until things cool down. But on that road, where we stopped, I am sure that the Humber was wider than the road!!!

Well, with traffic building up, we had to get the car going and that just got the car hotter and hotter. Eventually the radiator blew water so we were forced to stop.

OH Bother!

Finally, the ever faithful country truckie came to our rescue with 4 gal. of cool clear water for our dear car. He even gave us the plastic container.

So we wrapped the fuel line in wet rags got the car started, added water to the radiator and at last drove to a spot where we could pull off the road, rest and give the girl a time to cool her beautiful head gear.

After a while we drove on only to discover that the car mis fired and lacked power. I thought that perhaps serious damage had been done. But after a while things dried out... it only proved to be nothing more than wet ignition leads and a wet rag dripping onto the coil; which incidentally is located just under the fuel line from the petrol pump to the carburetor.

I must also comment that the fuel line is in a dill of a position for hot climates; right next to the engine, under the inlet manifold; it just has to get hot there. Also, another point worth noting is make sure you've got the right radiator cap on. It was approximately 2 months later that I found out that the car had a 7 lbs cap instead of the 13 lbs cap.

We finally got up the hill and to Lake Eucumbene where we were to set up camp for our mountain lake sailing holiday. Within 15 minutes, the youngest of us, Heather, tripped a beaut and split her knee from A to Z. Anne said it was a neat trick by me to get out of putting up the tent because I unloaded everything, dropped the trailer and broke all records into Cooma, the nearest hospital, about 30 miles away. 6 stitches latter, a very sad but brave Heather and a frazzled Dad returned to Lake Eucumbene to discover that Anne, Karl and Melanie had set up a very neat camp for us all.

I simply sat down and pulled the top off a couple of stubbies and said here's cheers. Anne joined me and the camping went well after that... for a while.

On the trip up to Canberra we found that putting ones foot hard down on the brakes does something to ones adrenaline. Snipe breaks work... very well. In fact when you consider it; stopping a 35+ cwt. mass moving at 50 MPH needs good brakes. A semi trailer jack knifed 1 car in front of us. The car, a volvo stopped real quick and pulled to the left. We stopped quicker and steered to the right. the semi prevented on-coming traffic. Phew Phew and Phew again.

The next little adventure happened on our way home and coming into Cann River; from Cooma. SQUEAK, SQUEAK, SQUEAK. All at road speed frequency, faint but persistent.

"What now"!! said everybody on board in unison.

Again, out of the car, under the bonnet, under the car, check, check check. Nothing to be found.

"It's only faint, lets drive on", I say.

Next stop, Lakes Entrance and by then a very loud Squeak Squeak etc. etc. And the noise is definitely coming from the rear of the transmission area.

"The universals", I say very authoritatively!

Check again. I was wrong. So check all over again. I'm really starting to get to know this car.

I'm also starting to think the transmission.

Anne had a bright idea! "Call the RACV". They were located just over the road from where we stopped. She said, "at least its another opinion".

Ok and I go get him. He'd been looking at the car and welcomed my request for help. In fact it was over half an hour before he stopped drooling all over the car from top to bottom and finally asked, "what was the problem?"

Off we went for a drive. The RACV bloke said, "OOOHHH! what a noise. Humbers should NOT do that. Back into his work shop and onto the hoist for a thorough checking. He liked clean cars.

"The universals are OK", he says.

I prompt, "the transmission"?

"No way," he said, "These autos never make that sort of noise"!

Well he fiddles on, plays with this and that and finally just says, "It isn't serious so you'll just best drive on really slowly back to Melbourne, and take it easy. No charge, because I can't diagnose the problem and besides the car is clean to work on."

A bit hesitantly I agree, start the car and drive out of the RACV garage and... No Noise at all. Where did it go? We, The RACV bloke and I searched high and low for it, but no noise. The only thing we could guess was the speedo cable had gone dry and fiddling had temporarily fixed the problem. Subsequent inspection proved this and also that the outer casing was damaged, so a simple replacement unit sorted the issue out once and for all.

Well we finally got home after 3000 miles and three and a half weeks of good clean motoring fun. Overall, I still say the car preformed like a dream, especially when you consider she(car) is 26 years old. We averaged 23 MPG for the holiday (with all that load) and since November 1989 it has returned an average of 19.3 MPG. It's lovely to drive, beaut to work on and just marvellous to look at. I recommend Snipes for any discerning car owner, they are top value for money and a true pleasure to own.

Incidentally the camping, sailing, horse riding, etc. etc. at Lake Eucumbene were great.

Ian, Anne, Karl, Melanie and Heather Wild.



The 1989 ROOTES GT day.

Ron Stafford and Debra Manolitsas leaning on their 1954 and 1953 Minxes' respectively (respectfully having dual meaning, of course).

Daydreams from under

There's more to the Australian motoring scene than meets the eye, as Pedr Davis explains

AS Holden is the only internationally known Australian car, one is apt to think that it has a monopoly on the market. This is far from the truth. Holden holds only 22 per cent of the total vehicle market which, through a government quota system, is shared so that the local manufacturers get four fifths of the action, imports the rest.

At least 60 attempts have been made to launch uniquely Australian cars, ranging from the world's first four-wheel drive cross-country tourer, the Caldwell Vale (1913), to the Marks-Moir. The latter had no chassis but used laminated plywood to form a unitary structure body of great strength, as far back as 1931.

Though firms such as the Australian Six (1919-1930) and Lincoln Pioneer Six (1920-26) built cars by the hundred, no one produced profitable home-grown cars before the Second World War. Economies of scale and the relatively low cost of imported components turned such ventures into fiascos.

From 1919 onwards, the Government insisted that two out of every three imported cars should be fitted with locally made bodies. This provided the nucleus of a motor industry which expanded enormously and made it possible for GMH to launch the Holden in 1948.

The Holden was an enormous success and, within seven years, had gained 50 per cent of a rapidly expanding market. Inevitably, its success encouraged others to daydream. If GMH could do it on a big scale, why couldn't we do it on a small scale, ran the argument.

As one of the few full-time motoring journalists in Australia during the Fifties and Sixties, I was fortunate enough to witness the birth and — all too often — the demise of several dozen uniquely Australian vehicles.

Eight remain firmly in mind, partly because I was privy to the vehicle's secrets before they were launched, but mainly because I knew the people involved personally and am still in touch with the survivors.

I grew used to seeing the entrepreneurs' immense confidence that they had a winner gradually dissolve — as they came into contact with the harsh realities of commercial life. Twice I saw ebullient confidence drain from robust men in a matter of days as they saw their brainchild swamped by the fast-flowing eddy we call the free market. As each vehicle went under, I felt a strong personal loss. It was like watching a promising youngster attempt to swim down Niagara Falls. Only the spectators knew that the attempt was Mission Impossible.

Ascort

As I write, it is a few weeks since Anna Craney called with the sad news that Mirek, her husband, had died following a serious illness. Mirek was one of the first men I met after emigrating to Australia in 1956. I was then writing for several motoring magazines and eager for new experiences.

Having read something I had written, Mirek called a magazine editor and learned my home phone number. He rang to say that he had just completed the prototype of a luxury sports coupé which he planned to produce in Sydney. Would I care to come and drive it?



Above, very well conceived, the Ascort, built in Sydney, offered a smart GT glassfibre bodyshell on a VW chassis. The finished car was lighter than the standard VW Beetle and accelerated more briskly. High manufacturing costs killed it off in 1958. Right, the Bolwell brothers launched the Nagari in 1970, and it was probably the most successful Australian specialist car ever built. It had a Lotus-type chassis clearly inspired by that of the famous Seven



I arrived with my wife, who promptly befriended Anna, while Mirek and I went to a small rented factory. He uncovered a beautifully built two door coupé bearing the name Ascort. The finish inside and outside was superlative. Mirek was a craftsman and expected to be able to sell the car for over twice the retail price of a standard VW.

I was not surprised to learn that the new car was based on Volkswagen components. VW Beetles were the wonder cars of the Fifties. They had been so successful in round-Australia trials that the public lost interest in such ventures. To most, it was hardly worthwhile following a trial if Beetles were certain to fill the first few places.

Volkswagens were the first really popular four-cylinder cars on the Australian market since the Model T and the Chevrolet National. Their toughness on unmade roads was legendary and a nationwide dealer organisation was doing record business.

The Beetle had more than a reputation to offer to would-be builders of 'specials'. Its separate chassis platform was an ideal base for a glassfibre body and a number of such projects were launched.

Mirek Craney was one of the few Australians who developed expertise in glassfibre during the early years. By the time he came to produce the Ascort, he was an acknowledged expert. Craney conceived the design in 1956. He envisaged a

high quality, grand touring coupé which started where the Karmann-Ghia (VW's own luxury model) left off.

The roomy, double-skinned body sat on a modified Beetle chassis. The 1.2-litre, flat-four engine had been hotted up by means of an Okrasa kit, to produce 33 per cent more power than standard. Despite the additional equipment and roomier body, the Ascort weighed less than a standard Beetle. Extensive silencing material helped to cut down the noise level.

The coupé boasted luxurious trim and an instrument panel comprehensive enough to gladden the heart of an enthusiast. The luggage boot was almost big enough to sleep in. The interior appointments included several novel features, including one later copied by Mercedes — a first aid kit hidden in the armrest.

Mirek tossed me the keys and we took off. I found the lightweight car pulled strongly in top gear and reached an indicated speed of 90mph, evidence that good aerodynamics can be achieved by eye alone.

Mirek built and sold 19 Ascorts but I doubt that he made money from any one of them. Within two years he was forced to close the project down and concentrate on industrial glassfibre productions. At the time of his death in late 1982, he was importing and manufacturing glassfibre spraying equipment.

Strangely perhaps, he never owned an Ascort

Down Under

after his small production line closed. But when Anna came to see us after Mirek's death, she told us that her children had just bought a 25-year-old Ascort in memory of their father.

Bolwell

Graeme and Campbell Bolwell were brothers who launched the most successful enterprise of its kind Australia has seen. Had not the combined onslaught of safety regulations and strict emission controls hit the hip-pocket nerve, Bolwell could now be exporting cars worldwide.

Graeme had spent six months in the design and development team in Lotus, working under the late Colin Chapman. No one could serve a better apprenticeship. Among many other things, he learned to walk before he tried to run and, when he returned to Australia to join Campbell, the brothers decided to start with kits rather than make complete motor cars.

The brothers put up their shingle in 1963 in a small factory in the Melbourne suburb of Seaford. Within four years they had earned a national reputation as kit-car builders and were ready to launch the highly successful Holden based Mk 7. This was sold as a complete kit, including all mechanical parts including Bolwell-designed suspension. The well-conceived and beautifully finished car made their name. Its success encouraged the brothers to launch a complete, ready-for-the-road car, the stylish and well-equipped Nagari, announced in 1970.

As a busy motoring journalist, I used to appreciate the occasional letter from Campbell Bolwell, who headed the commercial end of the business, while Graeme looked after design and development. Campbell kept me in touch with progress but as the orders increased the letters became fewer. By that time the liaison and personal interest in the progress of the enterprise was well-established.

A sensational design in many ways, the Nagari borrowed heavily from the Falcon GT, an Australian-produced Ford of prodigious performance, especially when equipped with the larger of the optional V8s. The Nagari retained the Lotus-type backbone chassis developed for the Mk7 and which featured Bolwell-designed independent suspension on all wheels.

The Nagari cost around \$5500 when first released and was within touch of the prices of other locally produced performance machinery. Unfortunately, Australia's unique safety rules and emission laws (to say nothing of inflation) pushed the retail price relentlessly upwards. By 1974, the retail price had reached \$12,000 and the writing was on the wall.

Demand tumbled in direct proportion to the price rises. Production fell from one vehicle a week to one a month. The end was inevitable. In fairness to the brothers, it should be added that the Nagari had been planned with the US market in mind. At the time, the West Coast was a gigantic sponge soaking up imports with an apparently insatiable thirst. Unfortunately, the Nagari took some years to develop for volume production and by then the scene had changed. The State of California had introduced stringent emission and safety laws which were so costly to implement, that exporting the Nagari became an exercise in fantasy.

In 1974, Campbell and Graeme quietly

withdrew from car manufacture and turned their unquestioned talents to more profitable avenues.

Buchanan Cobra

Nat Buchanan was well known in the motor trade in 1952 when he set up a small shop to build glassfibre bodies to special order. His clients were mainly MG, Austin-Healey and Holden owners who wanted lightweight bodysheells for racing purposes. Nat was happy to build them anything they asked for. His business grew steadily and, after arriving in Sydney, I kept tabs on his progress by periodically calling into his workshop and photographing the latest 'special' under construction.

He had a surprise ready for one such visit. Taking me to a corner of the workshop, he whisked away a dust-sheet and proudly unveiled an open two-seater I had not previously seen.

"This is a prototype of a new car I have designed around Standard Ten parts," he said.

"I have shown it to executives from AMI (Australian Motor Industries assembled Standard/Triumph vehicles at the time).

"They have agreed to sell me new components and distribute the car through their national dealer network."

Nat was elated. He had been a battler all his life — a battler being an Australianism for someone who works hard but has little money to show for it. The Cobra, as he called the newcomer, represented his big chance.

The well-finished body was unusual for its day, being a self-supporting monoconstruction design. It sat on a box-section chassis carrying mainly Standard Ten components.

Readers with long memories may recall the Ten as a robust and lively small sedan, with a tough suspension system and a free-revving 950cc engine which could be extensively modified without breaking.

In the light-weight Cobra, the engine put sting into the performance — a top speed of 80mph and exceptional fuel economy.

In some ways, Nat had anticipated the smaller-engined MGs and Austin-Healey Sprites which were to follow. But in the Fifties, when money was tight, the main aim was to launch a low-cost two-seater selling for less than the MGTF and the newly arrived MGA.

As much by accident as design, the Cobra offered a major advantage for the Australian scene — a large ground clearance which allowed it to be taken over gravel roads, of which there was — and is — no shortage. The Cobra also had wind-up windows and comfortable seating — unusual features for low-cost cars at the time.

Nat had built and sold half a dozen Cobras when something went wrong. The distribution plans were abruptly cancelled and the Cobra was

Above, another local car to employ glassfibre technology was the Buchanan Cobra, first released in 1958. The box section chassis had a Standard Ten 948cc engine and gearbox. It looked faster than it was. Top right, this tiny two-seater was the brainchild of Bill Buckle and was based on imported Goggomobil components. Right, Sydney businessman Bill Buckle launched his first car in 1955 but this more stylish model powered by a Ford Zephyr engine, went into production in 1956. Only 20 were sold and each one lost money

withdrawn from production. He was, of course, immensely disappointed, but never told me what had caused the crunch. I rather think that he had badly underpriced his handywork and, when a large increase in price became necessary, the Cobra was uncompetitive.

The MGA had just gone into local production and, in all probability, Nat Buchanan discovered he could not compete on price.

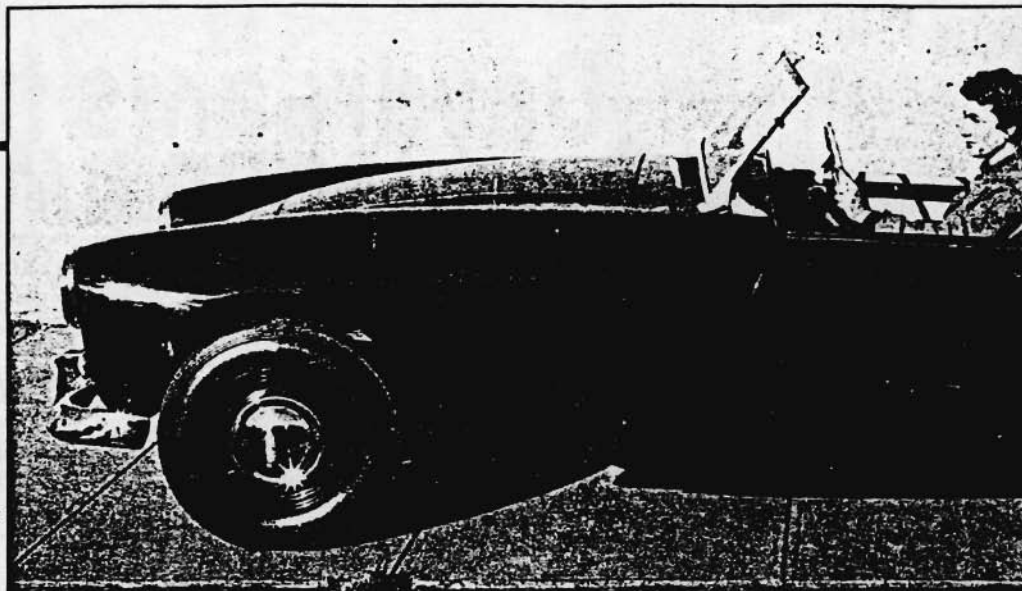
Buckle Coupé

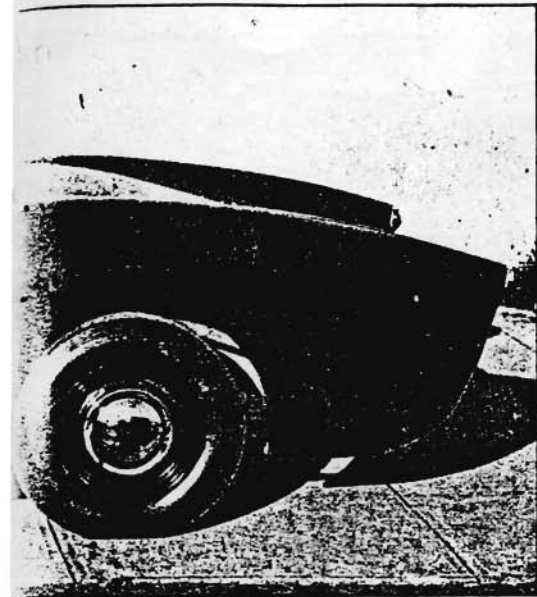
When I met Bill Buckle in the mid-Fifties he was struggling to make a living building a glassfibre coupé with sporting pretensions. Today he is a highly successful Toyota dealer, with a flourishing marine division and a boat-importing company.

The son of a successful car dealer, Buckle went into business on his own in 1955, building a glassfibre coupé based on Ford Zephyr components. Why he chose them in preference to the more readily available Holden parts, I am not sure, but this design proved very competitive on such demanding tracks as the Mount Panorama circuit at Bathurst, NSW. Often Bill himself was at the wheel.

It was less successful as a commercial enterprise, losing large lumps of money but, fortunately, young Buckle was able to recoup the losses (no pun intended) by manufacturing a local version of the German Goggomobil mini car.

His coupé was, however, the labour of love. Bill's dream was to produce a quality sporting car. He built a prototype with features such as a fold-down rear seat to enlarge the boot space, adjustable steering column and push-button electric door locks. It made its debut at the Sydney Motor Show in late 1955. The reaction to the rather curious styling persuaded Buckle to





so low, you simply stepped over the side.

There were no doors. The 300c twin-cylinder engine was in the rear, the luggage compartment in the nose.

The father of the baby sports car was in the passenger seat, his knees carefully folded under the dash to give the impression there was plenty of room. He tossed me the keys, adding: "Take it for a spin."

Mindful of the facts that I had had a few drinks and acutely aware that this was a costly prototype, I drove the tiny two-seater gingerly around a few blocks.

"Good God, man," said an exasperated Buckle, "this isn't a toy. Move over."

He jumped behind the wheel, flattened the accelerator and kept the gearlever in a constant blur as he flicked up and down the constant-mesh gearbox, keeping the tach needle at 5000rpm. Bill hammered the car through the night in an awesome display of enterprise, audacity and skill.

He was right. The Dart, as he later christened the sportster, was no toy. It weighed a mere 6½cwt and, with 17hp in its tail, was capable of a genuine 65mph. Bill was soon providing owners with tuning information which boosted the maximum speed to 80mph. It was a sensation which would have done extremely well in a larger market than Australia had to offer.

As it was, Buckle sold 5000 Goggomobil saloons, coupés and Darts before the Issigonis-designed Mini arrived in 1961. Dangerously close to the Goggo saloon in price, the Mini offered a greater level of sophistication as well as more room, a national dealer network and a reputation which preceded its arrival in Australia.

The Goggo project was wound down, but at least it had been profitable, which was more than could be said of just about every other Australian built car prior to the Holden.

Hartnett

Larry Hartnett is one of Australia's most remarkable auto men. He came from Vauxhall to Australia in 1932 as managing director of the newly formed General Motors Holden combine. Prior to 1931, Holden had been an independent company with the largest body-building factory in the Southern Hemisphere. General Motors Australia imported and assembled a range of GM products from other parts of the world. Both companies were doing well until the 1929-31 depression struck with unprecedented fury. They merged in a marriage of survival, but the red ink continued to flow at an alarming rate.

Larry Hartnett (now Sir Laurence Hartnett, CBE) was sent to take over the reins and make the combine pay — or close it down. He chose the latter course and, two years later, proudly announced a sizeable profit.

By 1936 Hartnett was working on a plan to build an all-Australian car. The Second World War intervened but in 1944 he revived the project

because it was obvious that the huge war contracts which kept the giant GMH factories busy would soon cease.

Hartnett took a team to New York and sold the concept to GM's Overseas Corporation. Within two years three prototype Holdens had been built by a joint US-Australian team.

Though Hartnett had permission to proceed, he disagreed strongly with the US instructions that all funds were to be raised in Australia as loan capital. Hartnett wanted Australian participation in the form of share capital. As work on the project proceeded, the philosophical gap between him and his US masters grew so wide that something had to give.

In December 1946, a top US executive named Harold Bettle arrived at GMH's Melbourne headquarters with two letters. One appointed him as GMH's new managing director. The other advised Larry Hartnett that he was being transferred to New York.

Hartnett went to New York and promptly resigned. Almost immediately, he started to plan a counter-attack by going into opposition with a smaller, less expensive Australian-made car.

After touring the world looking for a suitable vehicle (considering among other things, the Volkswagen), he settled on a brilliant front-wheel drive car devised by French engineer Jean Gregoire. Gregoire had designed the car for production in Britain as the Kendall, but the project had foundered. Hartnett was able to purchase the prototype and manufacturing rights for £10,000.

In addition to front-drive, the innovative design featured four-wheel independent suspension, rack and pinion steering and extensive use of light-alloy components. The 600cc twin-cylinder engine had more advanced exhaust emission equipment.

Hartnett brought the prototype to Australia and secured permission to produce it under the Federal Government's approved car manufacturing plan.

The enterprise got off marvellously. Victoria (Hartnett's home State) offered a rent-free factory for two years, plus a sizeable loan. Plans were made to import mechanical components from Britain at the rate of 10,000 cars per year and to have the body panels locally pressed. When put on display, the prototype attracted 2000 firm orders before a dealer network had even been organised.

From then on, it was all downhill. Hartnett is convinced that 'big business' set out to destroy him. Certainly, some mysterious things happened. For example, Hartnett could not find a bodybuilding company prepared to make his body. When he had headed GMH, the company's bodybuilding division had taken orders from all-comers, including Austin, Chrysler, Dodge and Willys. But Hartnett ran into a blank wall when he asked GMH to produce bodies for his car.

Next came the shock announcement that the Victorian Government had withdrawn its offer. No free factory, no loans. Hartnett says that he was never given any reason. To raise money, Hartnett floated a public company, leased a factory and arranged for Commonwealth Engineering — a firm without previous bodybuilding experience — to produce the body panels.

modify the moulds to yield a more conventional shape. A refined version of the original concept went into production in 1956.

A strong box-steel chassis frame had transverse leaf springing at the front and semi-elliptics at the rear. The 2.6-litre six-cylinder engine, gearbox, back axle and brakes were standard Ford Zephyr parts. Thanks to the glassfibre bodyshell, the four-seater coupé weighed a modest 17cwt, and the high power to weight ratio permitted a genuine 100mph.

Selling the coupé against exotica from Britain and Europe proved an uphill battle. Bill built 20 coupés in all and by 1959, when he pulled the plug from the venture, he had a swinging business building diminutive Goggomobils.

Goggomobil

Bill Buckle secured the Australian rights to the Goggomobil (made by Hans Glas of Dingolfing, Bavaria) to keep his glassfibre factory busy. Diminutive though it was, the German version had an all-steel body. Bill Buckle used a steel body to make his glassfibre moulds. Production of the Australian version started in 1958 and soon three bodystyles were offered — sedan, coupé and a handsome open two-seater.

The latter was Buckle's own design and, like the sedan and coupé, used imported Goggomobil components. It proved so successful that today it is an Australian collector item.

My introduction to the car happened early one Saturday morning. I was immersed in a convivial party when my host, a mutual acquaintance, said: "Bill Buckle has just arrived. He wonders if you could step out of the door for a moment."

Outside was the smallest four-wheeler I had ever seen, a veritable eggshell on wheels. It was

Down Under

Within months the factory floor was jammed with completed chassis — but there was no sign of the panels. After further waiting and frantic manoeuvring, Hartnett took Commonwealth Engineering to court. The legal battle lasted for four and a half years and although Hartnett eventually won, with costs, the project was dead and beyond revival.

Hartnett's next move was to import and locally assemble the German made Lloyd Alexander, a small front-drive car with an east-west engine of 600cc capacity. I was fortunate enough to drive the first Lloyd-Hartnett off the Brisbane assembly lines and a few weeks later Hartnett asked me to establish a fuel economy record by driving from Sydney to Melbourne.

This was easily done (at normal road speeds) with an average of 60.8mpg. Hartnett sold 3000 Lloyd-Hartnetts and was just getting into his stride when Carl Borgward, owner of the German Lloyd factory, closed it down and the supply of components to Australia dried up.

Ironically, Hartnett's next move — to import Datsun cars from Japan — hurt GMH more effectively than any locally produced rival he could have devised. Datsun led a wave of Japanese cars which gradually whittled down GMH's market share from 50 per cent in 1958 to 22 per cent in 1982.

Ilinga

Many enthusiasts have dreamed of producing an Australian Ferrari but such dreams are fragile in the extreme. The annual sales of Ferrari and its rivals on the Australian market can be counted on both hands.

But one firm made a determined and well-conceived attempt to produce a car in this class.

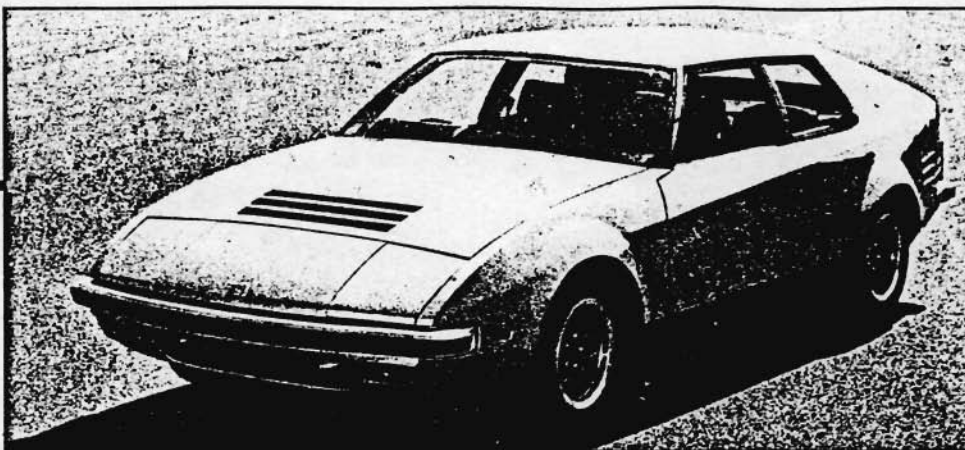
The Melbourne-based Ilinga Pty Ltd was headed by Darryl Davies and backed by a wealthy car dealer, Len Bainbridge. Work on the project commenced in the early Seventies and, in February 1975, Davies announced that the Ilinga AF2 would go into production at the rate of 100 units a year. The projected retail price was \$16,000. The plan, he said, envisaged a total production of 300 AF2s, after which it would be replaced by a totally new model.

The car was brilliantly designed and powered by a locally built Leyland P76 engine, itself based on the former BOP power plant built under licence as the Rover 3500.

The body consisted of a safety cell structure panelled in aluminium and claimed to have immense crash protection qualities, as well as lightness and exceptional stiffness. The safety cell sat on a box-section chassis with a separate floor pan. The design was such that a collision would push the engine under the passenger compartment.

I never got to drive the prototype which was claimed to have a top speed of 120mph, but some colleagues did and made complimentary noises about its road manners. Most observers, including myself, thought the design and standard of finish exceptional but we wondered in print whether the projected price of \$16,000 was realistic in view of the limited production and generous array of appointments.

As things turned out, our reservations were academic. After spending \$200,000 on the construction and testing of two prototypes, Ilinga Pty Ltd closed down. No official reasons were



Above, the ill-fated Ilinga project of 1975 had Rover-based Leyland P76 power. Right, the Lightburn Zeta of 1963: disastrous styling killed it. Below, Larry Hartnett's Gregoire might well have been a success had there not been bodyshell supply problems



offered, but three years ago I had lunch with Len Bainbridge who still had one prototype. He said that the car's demise was caused by the abrupt withdrawal by the firm who had agreed to supply the automatic transmission.

No other unit capable of taking the grunt from the 3.5-litre engine was readily available and there was no money left to redesign and test the car around an imported automatic transmission.

Lightburn Zeta

During the early Sixties I wrote an article for an Australian motoring magazine deploring the trend from basic transport to more lucrative 'up-market' cars. I pointed out that there were no low-cost four wheelers available in Australia — locally produced or imported and that 75 per cent of locally produced cars had six-cylinder engines.

Within weeks, a letter came from a well-known industrialist, Harold Lightburn, inviting me to his plant in Adelaide to see a new vehicle he planned to produce. At that time, Lightburn was the biggest name in mechanised concrete mixers and handyman power tools. He also produced a range of components, including car jacks.

An affable and energetic man, Lightburn had little knowledge of the auto business but a great deal of determination to grab a share of the highly lucrative growth industry. He told me that he had just gained the right to assemble and distribute Alfa Romeo cars and planned to build them alongside a completely new 'people's car' designed in his factory and called Zeta.

With his chief engineer in tow, Lightburn took me to a special security area where a Zeta awaited us. The curious looking design had a boxy glassfibre body and disproportionately large doors. The ingenious structure was the first I had seen which combined virtues of sedan, waggon and panel van. The doors opened at right angles to the body, allowing easy access to the rear seat. The roof was stiff enough to use as a roof rack. There was even provision for owners to unclip the front seats and secure them to the roof for watching sporting events!

Other trend-setting ideas included quickly removable rear seats which could be folded and stowed over the wheel arches, leaving a large flat cargo floor. The seats also folded down, estate car style, and, if I recall correctly, the front and rear seats formed a double bed for camping.

All of this was advanced thinking in 1963, but



the mechanics of the car were dreadful.

I knew this even before we had driven out of the factory gate. A Villiers twin-cylinder 324cc two-stroke engine drove the front wheels via a three-speed gearbox. The 4bhp engine seemed flat out driving the gearbox, let alone the car. To make matters worse there was a curious monkey-up-the-stick gearshift, which I never mastered. When I consistently failed to change gear cleanly, Lightburn instructed his chief engineer to 'show me the knack'. He had as much trouble as I did, so the strange demonstration continued and I left the factory bemused how a large and successful company could produce such a vehicle.

Production of the Zeta commenced in 1963, presumably with an improved gearshift. Potential buyers enjoyed the unique opportunity of seeing Alfa Romeos, Zeta and a range of concrete mixers displayed on the same showroom floors!

The PR bulletins said that the company would manufacture 50 Zetas a week and assemble 40 Alfas. Neither target was reached and only 363 Zetas had been produced when the axe was wielded three years later.

Ironically, Lightburn produced a potential winner before he withdrew from the auto business. The design was inspired by a similar vehicle developed during the early fifties in England by Gordon Bedson and called Mackson. The British design began as a racing car but a road version was displayed at the 1957 Geneva Motor Show. It is more than likely that Harold Lightburn saw the Mackson and acquired the production rights.

As things turned out, the Zeta Sports was as handsome as its stablemate was ugly. Powered by a rear mounted FMR 500cc engine, it had a claimed top speed of 75mph and could buzz from rest to 50mph in 12.0 seconds.

Michelotti had made an excellent job of the styling and the little machine had four-wheel independent suspension, a four-speed constant-mesh gearbox and a dry weight of only 8cwt.

I do not know how many were sold, but it may not have been more than the initial production run of 48. I managed to get a chance to drive one and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Even more, I have enjoyed the privilege of watching the birth of other people's dreams even though so many eventually turned into financial nightmares.

In the early 1960s, when big – in terms of engine capacity – was beautiful, American V8 power units offered the solution to many a British motor manufacturer's quest for sheer power. However, of the larger companies, only the Rootes Group took advantage of this source for upgrading the models in their range.

The Sunbeam Alpine was Rootes' answer to the MGA and first appeared in October 1959. Powered by a 1494cc ohv engine which produced 78bhp at 5000rpm, the car's performance was respectable rather than spectacular. Its maximum speed was about 100mph and acceleration from 0-60 took some 14secs. Then, in 1960, the Alpine's engine was increased in capacity to 1592cc which upped the power to 80bhp, but this did little to improve its performance. If anything, the Mk 11 was slightly slower. Clearly, a more radical approach was needed if the Alpine was to stand any chance at all, particularly in America, in the competitive market of sports/tourers.

Rootes' development engineers began looking at the options available for increasing the Alpine's performance. The four cylinder 2.2-litre Humber Hawk engine was too big and heavy and its power output at 73bhp was no more than the Alpine's. So in desperation, the team looked at engines produced by other manufacturers. With a directive from the Rootes Board, they tried the 1600cc twin ohc Alfa Romeo unit and the 2½-litre V8 Daimler engine, but because of their size, neither proved suitable, needing extensive surgery to the bulkhead for them to fit. Even Jack Brabham became involved with the project suggesting that one of the V8 engines from the States would prove the answer. But, without any tangible evidence of how this kind of transplant would work, the idea was rejected.

In fact, the evidence needed to persuade the Rootes board to adopt the V8 technique was to come from Rootes' own sales manager in California. A prototype Sunbeam Alpine fitted with a 4.2-litre Ford engine with manual transmission was prepared by Carroll Shelby in California; the car was then shipped over to England where it was tested by the Rootes executives. Immediately the concept was accepted as being a winner, so, against a background of rising financial problems, a deal was signed with the Ford Motor Company to supply engines and transmission units.

The Alpine could take a V8

What made the Alpine bodysell so appropriate for accepting the larger Ford power units was its inherent strength. The Alpine monocoque structure was based on the floorpan of the Hillman Husky and while its wheelbase/track ratio was not ideal for outstanding roadholding, the underside had been braced with a cruxiform box section thereby adding rigidity. Further, during its development, the Alpine had been fitted with stays between the scuttle and inner wings, the result being a body quite capable of handling the 258ft.lb of torque delivered by the 4.2-litre Ford engine.

By 1964, Rootes' financial situation was becoming acute. Putting the Hillman Imp, Rootes' baby car, into production had been a major drain, and a crippling industrial dispute at British Light Steel Pressings (one of Rootes' body suppliers) had also been a costly business. Eventually, rescue came in the form of a contract between Rootes and the Chrysler Corporation, giving Chrysler a percentage of Rootes' voting and non-voting shares while at the same time providing much needed cash with which Rootes could maintain production.

The Tiger's first public appearance was at the New York Show in April 1964 where its performance allied to a competitive price ensured it a good reception. Production began at Jensen's Kelvin Way factory in June that year and soon the car was being featured in motor magazines on both sides of the Atlantic.

When Chrysler took over Rootes they tried to insert their big V8s into everything in sight, from Super Snipes to Sceptres!

Story by Mike Taylor

The late Gregor Grant of *Autosport* was one enthusiast who spoke highly of the Alpine with the V8 power unit. "The Tiger costs £1195 plus £250 10s 5d PT", he said. "Not a great deal to pay for such a splendid motor-car, which, when the word gets round, must sell in ever-increasing numbers".

The comparative performance between the Alpine Mk IV and the Tiger were as follows:

Sunbeam Alpine Mk IV (1592cc)	Sunbeam Tiger 4.2 (1592cc)
0-30mph 4.4sec	3.2sec
0-40mph 6.1sec	5.0sec
0-50mph 10.2sec	6.8sec
0-60mph 13.8sec	9.5sec
0-70mph 19.6sec	12.4sec
0-80mph 30.6sec	17.5sec
Maximum speed 95mph	117mph
Fuel consumption 23mpg	16.9mpg

Rootes cars occupied an important percentage of the British car market and they were particularly pleased at the way the Tiger was beginning to increase in popularity. Indeed, they were bitten by the V8 'bug' and felt there had to be other cars in their range which would benefit from a V8 transplant. The Rootes Board asked the Product Planning Division to carry out an analysis and come up with some suggestions. The two models which were chosen were the Humber Sceptre and the substantial Humber Super Snipe/Imperial.

The reason for choosing these two models was simple. The Sceptre was aimed at the fast semi-luxury saloon market, yet it could barely reach 90mph; a V8 power unit would increase its performance dramatically. The Super Snipe/Imperial also badly needed upgrading and it was thought that a V8 engine would give the kind of effortless performance more in keeping with the Super Snipe's image.

A contract between Rootes and Jensen Motors of West Bromwich provided the necessary know-how to undertake development and the low volume assembly facilities to put the Alpine V8 into production.

Bigger engine for the Tiger

Meanwhile, by early 1965, Rootes' development engineers were well advanced on the Mk 11 Tiger programme. Supplies of the smaller 4.2 litre (260cu.in) engine were running out so the second generation of Tigers would feature the 4.7-litre (289cu.in) unit. In addition to making small cosmetic changes, like the move to an egg-crate grille and chrome wing embellishers, Tiger 11 would have 10.7in discs on the front and 9.7in discs on the rear together with 14in road wheels. Cars for the States would also have black and white side flashes.

With the approval of the Rootes Board, the development engineers began selecting engines for their V8 saloon programme. With the link which now existed between Coventry and Chrysler, it was decided to utilise a Chrysler unit if possible rather than a Ford engine. In the event, the unit chosen for the Sceptre was the 273cu.in, 4.4-litre 'Barracuda' V8. With a four-barrel carburettor and a compression ratio of 10.5:1, it produced 196bhp at 5100rpm. This drove through a 'Torqueflite' automatic transmission to a Salisbury 3.07:1 differential. The brakes and suspension were to be identical to that used on the Tiger 11 complete with a Richard rod on the rear axle. Externally, the car looked like any other Humber Sceptre except that the twin headlight

system had been replaced by the single lights of the Super Minx.

The result of this modification was nothing short of dramatic. All those who worked on the V8 Sceptre project enthused over its performance. In a straight line its acceleration compared to the 1600cc model was shattering.

Humber Sceptre (1600cc)	Sceptre V8 (auto)	Sunbeam Tiger 11
0-30mph 4.9sec	3.3sec	3.0sec
0-40mph 7.7sec	4.7sec	4.2sec
0-50mph 16.6sec	6.7sec	6.2sec
0-60mph 17.1sec	9.1sec	7.8sec
0-70mph 23.5sec	11.6sec	10.8sec
0-80mph 35.9sec	15.2sec	13.7sec
Max. speed 90mph	133mph	125mph
Fuel Con. 22.5mpg	20.2mpg	22.5mpg

The figures tell their own story. But there were several major drawbacks. The body surgery necessary to allow the engine to fit into the Sceptre's shell disrupted the car's interior considerably and it would have been impossible to use the old transmission tunnel/dashboard arrangements on production cars. Also, with so much weight over the front wheels, steering was very heavy at low speeds and the handling suffered from understeer. In the event, the one and only prototype was cut up, much to the disappointment of the development engineers.

The Super Snipe/Imperial programme was more adventurous. Six prototype cars were made in all, the first having a 5.1-litre (318cu.in) Chrysler engine with manual transmission. Performance was dramatic, with a maximum speed of over 125mph. But this was considered a little too powerful, added to which fuel consumption was equally impressive! So this engine was taken out and replaced by a smaller 273cu.in unit, again with manual transmission. The other five cars were also tested with 273 engines, some with two-barrel and others with four-barrel carburettors. But after suffering several head gasket failures on the more powerful four-barrel engines, it was decided to continue development with the two-barrel cars only. Of the remaining five cars, one was an Imperial, which had Armstrong Selectoride dampers on the rear, and another was left hand drive.

Although fitting the V8 engine into the Snipe bay was straightforward enough, the installation did call for a certain amount of modification to exhaust systems, radiators and the routing of the brake pipes. After many months of testing during 1965, the go-ahead was given for a pilot assembly line to be set up where it is thought a further six (this figure is uncertain because of the lack of records) pre-production cars were made.

But even after reaching this advanced stage, the Humber Super Snipe V8 was never to reach series production. It seems that among the many snags encountered on the pilot line was the difficulty of installing the engine, which had to be effected from above rather than by offering it up from beneath which was the more normal practice. Moreover, fitted with the two-barrel carburettor, power output was a miserable 150bhp at 4400rpm, only 21bhp more than the standard Super Snipe. Therefore, performance was equally unimpressive.

Super Snipe V8	Standard Super Snipe
0-30mph 4.0sec	5.5sec
0-40mph 6.4sec	8.3sec
0-50mph 9.4sec	12.3sec
0-60mph 13.0sec	16.1sec
0-70mph 17.9sec	23.1sec
0-80mph 23.1sec	30.3sec
Max. speed 102mph	99mph
Fuel con. 16.4mpg	19.7mpg

P-plate laws get tougher

By CHRIS GEORGE

The State Government is refusing to back down on draconian new laws which will severely restrict the activities of probationary drivers.

The amendments, which will be in place by July 1, will provide for two categories of P-plate drivers.

Red P-plates will be issued to new licence holders under 21, and gold P-plates to new drivers over 21.

Drivers on red plates will graduate to gold plates after a year.

Holders of red P-plates will be banned from carrying more than

one passenger per car or driving manual cars if tested in an automatic.

All probationary drivers will be banned from driving V8 or turbo-charged vehicles.

A government document also says the only alternative for probationary drivers is a night-time curfew.

The Government has dismissed as unimportant the inconvenience of the more extreme measures to cut the road toll among young drivers.

The rules will apply to all new probationary licences and to anyone regaining a licence after cancellation for any traffic in-

fringement. This affects at least 100,000 people a year.

The laws have been detailed in a regulatory impact statement released this week.

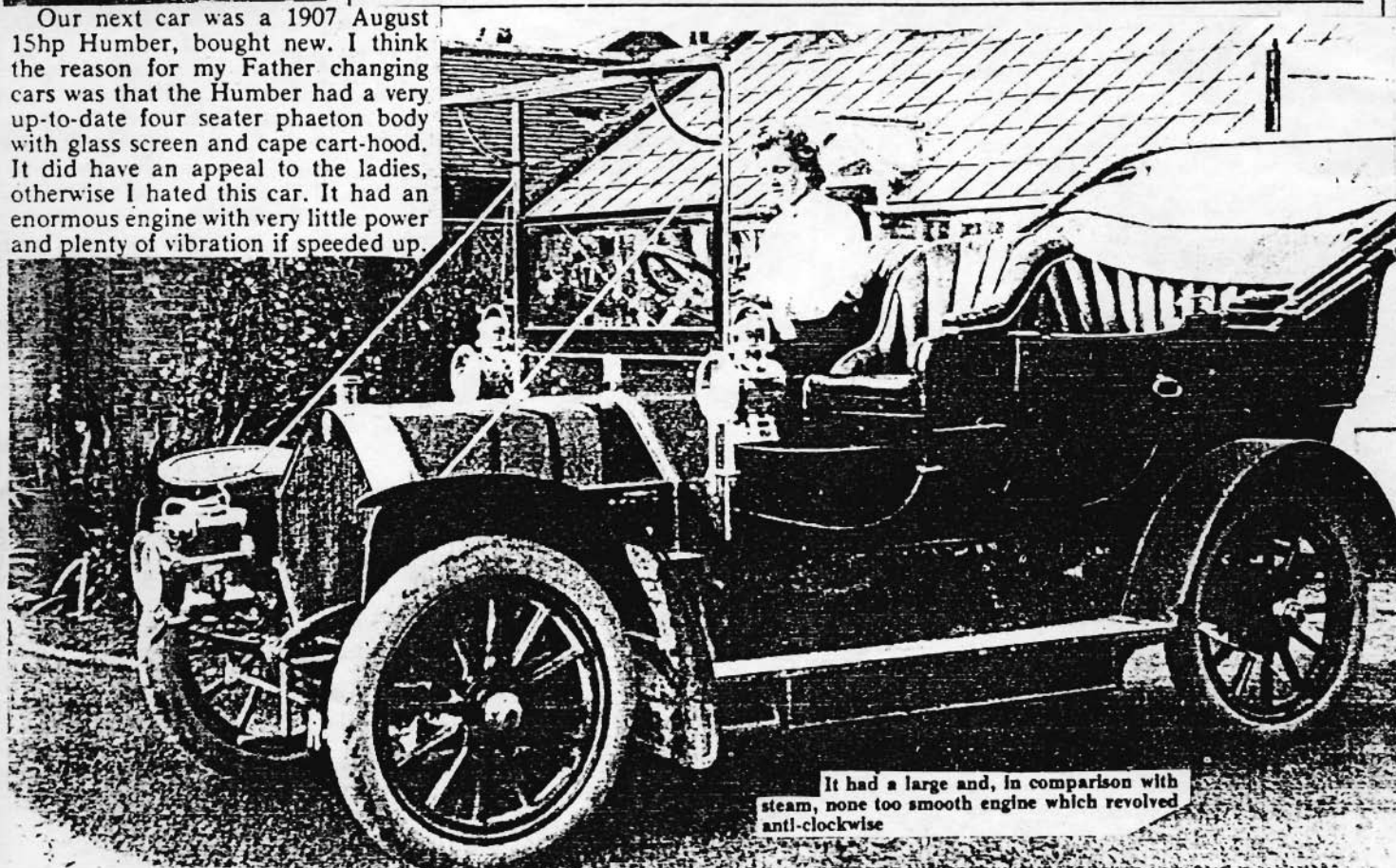
The Government says the cost of implementing the plan is at least \$3.7 million, but it has not estimated the added cost of inconvenience to the public caused by the restrictions.

From July, the probationary period will also apply for a minimum of three years and a learner permit will be required for at least a year before qualifying for a probationary licence.

The age limit for learner permits will be lowered to 16 years.



Our next car was a 1907 August 15hp Humber, bought new. I think the reason for my Father changing cars was that the Humber had a very up-to-date four seater phaeton body with glass screen and cape cart-hood. It did have an appeal to the ladies, otherwise I hated this car. It had an enormous engine with very little power and plenty of vibration if speeded up.



It had a large and, in comparison with steam, none too smooth engine which revolved anti-clockwise



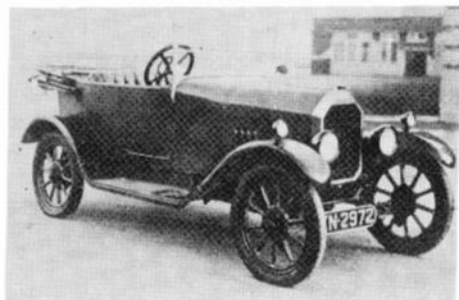
British craftsmanship in action on the Hillman Minx production line, Coventry.



Humber Hawk gets its radiator topped up at a Shell country garage.

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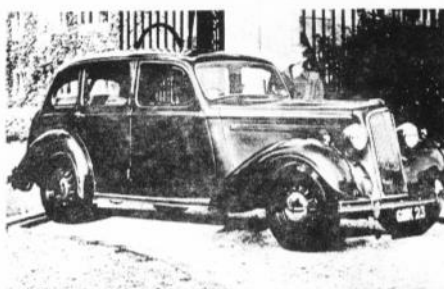
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