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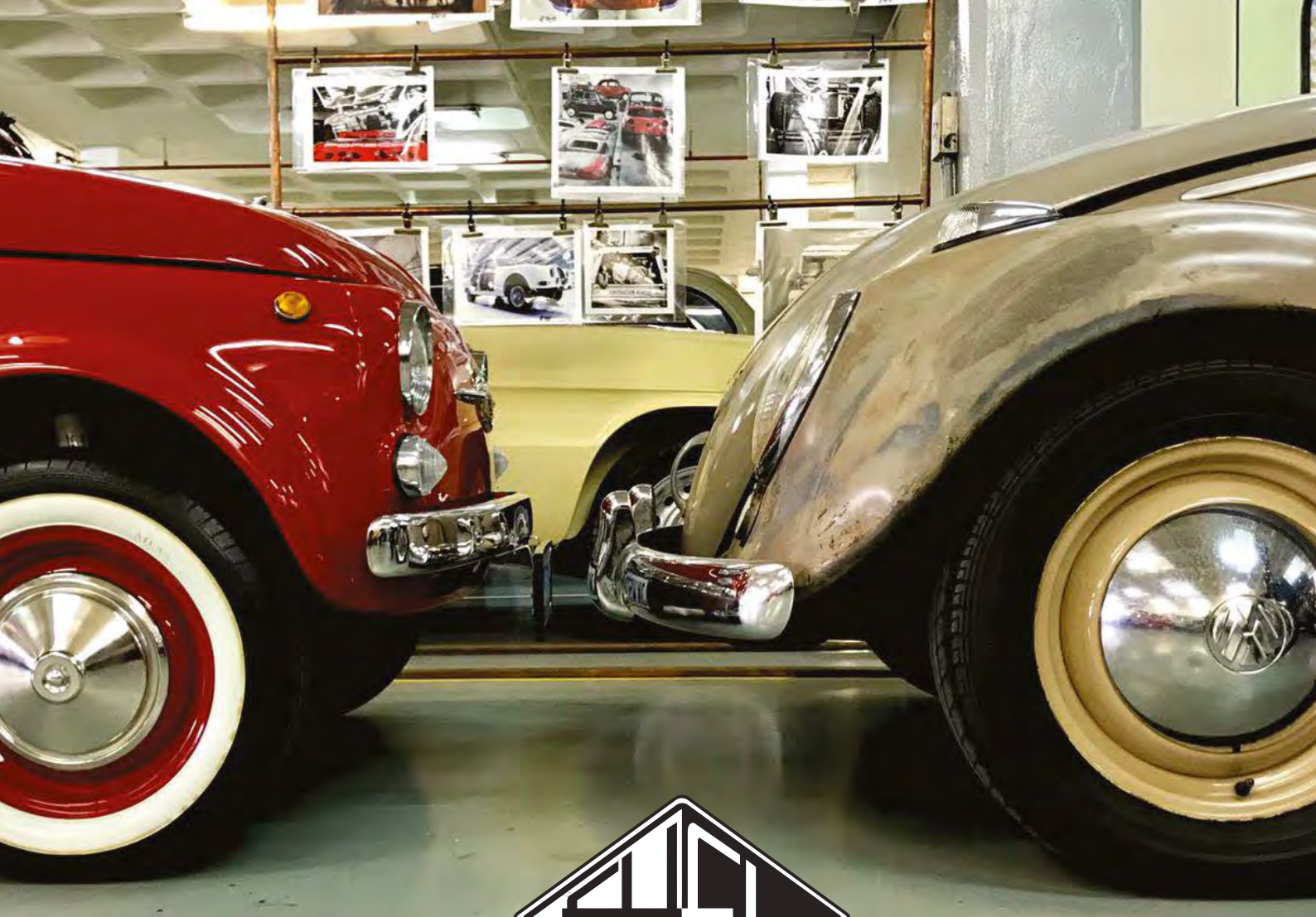
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# CLASSIC

CAR AFRICA

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## FIRE IT UP GET FEATURED

Now has fallen in various parts of the country, bringing with it our first real cold snap and sending classic owners scurrying for the fireplace rather than into the garage to fine tune and fettle their machines. I urge you to fight this; stick it out in the garage and get your vehicle ready to hit the road.

My reasoning is simple: winter is the best time to use your classic. Not only do our engines love the cool, crisp air and perform better but the need for aircon is also negated. And if you have a cabriolet it means you can drop the top without getting third-degree sunburns. Show organisers clearly know this and the next few months are chock-a-block with events – check out our 'News & Events' on page 4 and 'Classic Calendar' on page 6 to plan your life. We try to attend each event – not only to soak up the atmosphere, but also to see the cars that play in our niche and get feature ideas.

Graeme Hurst gives an example of this with his feature on a racy Austin-Healey 100S, which he first saw a while back at a Crankhandle Club event in Cape Town. This sporting theme carries on with David Pearson recounting the

story of the Brut GP that set new East London Grand Prix circuit records in 1984, and the '73 Wynn's Rally. Carvel Webb celebrates 50 years of the giant-killing Gordini R8 1300 in SA, I test drive a Bugatti Type 35B and Mike Monk drives the Franschoek Motor Museum's Moretti 750S – a car that holds an illustrious competition record. Mike then climbs into the Moretti's polar opposite: a Messerschmidt KR200 microcar – a car that was inspired by an aeroplane cockpit but is definitely not a flyer.

People and reader correspondence are the fuel that feeds our fire, and this month Gavin Foster follows up on a letter we got months back by testing a beautifully-restored Fiat X1/9. On a sad note we bid farewell to legendary tin-top racer Peter Gough and one of *Classic Car Africa* magazine's founder writers, Patrick O'Brien. Graeme Hurst catches up on a top-of-the-range, one family-owned Citroën 15/6 that started life in Algeria and now trundles around the Cape. This story sums up what we are all about – cars, bikes, people and Africa. Keep the stories coming.

Stuart



## MYERS STILL IN BLOOM

The stream of renowned visitors to FMM never ceases and the latest celebrity to visit the museum was 94-year-old John Myers. John was one of three men responsible for designing and producing the first all-South African car, the Protea, in 1957, just beating the more famous GSM Dart by a few months. John and Bob Fincher developed the car's ladder-frame chassis and tubular spaceframe, while Dr Alex Roy was mainly responsible for the design of the glass fibre body. The Protea was powered by the Ford 100E 1172cc engine and was capable of 0-96km/h in 14.5 seconds and a top speed of 136km/h. Myers and John Mason-Gordon won the 1959 Pietermaritzburg 6-Hour at Roy Hesketh in a Triumph TR2-engined Protea, leading from start to finish.

John thoroughly enjoyed being reunited with FMM's Protea and was taken for some quick laps of Plaaspad during his visit. For a full story on John's career, refer to *Classic Car Africa's* Deputy Editor Graeme Hurst's feature story in the September 2016 issue of the magazine.

## JUDGES WAYNE & STUART

Wayne Harley and *Classic Car Africa* editor Stuart Grant were concours judges at the 2017 Knysna Motor Show, sponsored by Sanlam Private Wealth, and after a hectic morning reviewing all of the eligible vehicles, the pair awarded the following prizes:

The Meilleur Voeux Voiture Trophy for the most appealing and beautiful Vintage and Veteran car: pre-1940 went to Rudi Greyvensteyn's magnificent, one-of-a-kind 1926 Hispano-Suiza.

The Concours d'Elegance Trophy for best classic car in terms of appearance, cleanliness and originality was won by Krige Bolton's 1973 Alfa Romeo Giulia Super 1600.

The Style et Lux Trophy for the best featured one-make car club went to Rose and Peanuts Fouche on behalf of the GSM (Dart and Flamingo) Club.

The final trophy was for the most beautiful motorcycle on display, as voted for by the public, and this went to Steven Helm's 1914 Clyno with sidecar.

## FMM VISIT PROCEDURE CHANGE

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Franschhoek Motor Museum and during the winter months the museum, along with other facilities on the L'Ormarins Estate, will undergo some major renovations and upgrades that will temporarily prevent being able to accept casual visitors. As a result, for the time being, visits will only be accepted by appointment – phone (021) 874 9002 (international +27 21 874 9002) to make a booking. In addition, entrance to the estate and museum will be only via the Anthonij Rupert Wyne gate. Visitors will be



transported to the museum via the charabanc shuttle service. However, in all other aspects the museum will operate as normal. FMM apologises for any inconvenience caused to patrons as a result of this important and necessary work and trusts that the public will bear with us during this time.

## COOPER BLOOPER

There is an old adage about 'the best laid plans of mice and men' and it certainly applied to Dickon Daggitt's ex-Tony Fergusson Cooper 500. A plan was hatched to feature the Cooper at this year's Knysna Motor Show on 30 April, followed by FMM curator Wayne Harley doing a demonstration with the car during the following weekend's Jaguar Simola Hillclimb, but old cars can be fickle at the best of times...

The car attracted a lot of attention at the show, which was attended by a record crowd; its small and simple construction belying how competitive the car was in its heyday in the 1950s.

Tony was known as the 'Ace From Africa' and was a successful driver in a variety of cars both locally and in England, where he spent four months in the summer of 1955 racing against the likes of Stirling Moss. As well as being a prosperous businessman, when not racing Tony was a gifted organiser and was instrumental in establishing motorsport in South Africa in

the early post-war years. Tony passed away in 1997 after a long illness, aged 76.

FMM consultant engineer Dickon has had the famous car for 30 years but it has lain dormant for most of that time. Its original Norton engine has been replaced with a Triumph twin and when it came time to be prepared for the show at the FMM workshop, the motor would only run on one cylinder. After some fettling, the second cylinder took over before, finally, the two ran in harmony. Then just prior to being transported up the Garden Route, the gearbox broke. This was repaired by Stefan Klein in Knysna but the decision was taken not to risk this valuable car any further so, sadly, it only went on display in the pits during Classic Car Friday.



## WHERE, WHAT TIMES AND HOW MUCH

The Franschhoek Motor Museum is situated on the L'Ormarins Estate along the R45 in the Franschhoek Valley in the Western Cape. Visiting is currently by appointment only – phone (021) 874 9002 to make a reservation. Opening hours until November are: Monday to Friday 10h00 to 17h00 (last admittance 16h00), Saturday and Sunday 10h00 to 16h00 (last admittance 15h00). The museum is open on most public holidays except Christmas Day. Admission prices are R80 adults, R60 pensioners and motor club members (with membership ID), R40 children (ages 3-12). Guided tours are available upon request at no charge. An on-site Deli offers refreshments and a selection of wines produced by Anthonij Rupert Wyne.



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MK2 240 – R280 000



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R385 000



1976 Rolls Royce  
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# MAKE A — DATE —

We will continually update the 2017 events calendar. To submit your club event for publication in the magazine as well as on our website ([www.classiccarafrika.com](http://www.classiccarafrika.com)) please submit details along with an image or two to [stuart@classiccarafrika.com](mailto:stuart@classiccarafrika.com).

## JUNE

3	Mampoer Rally	Pretoria
3	Historic Tour – Red Star Raceway	Delmas
10	Vryheid Cars in the Park	Vryheid
11-15	Continental Milligan	Port Elizabeth
16	Golden Oldies at the Mall	Rustenburg
18	Cars at the Mall	Nelspruit
24	Great Train Race	Krugersdorp
24	VW Celebrations at Idle Winds	Centurion
24	SA Endurance Series 3 Hour – East London GP Track	East London
25	Blairgowrie Toy Fair	Blairgowrie

## JULY

30-2 July	Midlands Rally	Nottingham Road, KZN
1/2	1000 Bike Show	Germiston
8/9	Dezzi Raceway Invitational	Port Shepstone
15	Xtreme Festival – Aldo Scribante Race Track	Port Elizabeth
16	Scottburgh Classic Car Show	Scottburgh, KZN
22	Xtreme Festival – Phakisa Freeway	Welkom
29	VCC Car Show Day	Hillcrest

## AUGUST

4-6	Concours SA	Sun City
5	Historic Tour – Dezzi Raceway	Port Shepstone
6	POMC Cars in the Park – Zwartkops	Pretoria
9	Cars in the Park – OFS Vintage Car Club	Bloemfontein
9	Prowl – Durban Early Car Club	Durban
12	Xtreme Festival – Zwartkops Raceway	Pretoria
13	CMC Winter Rally	Germiston
13	Parkhurst Heritage Day	Parkhurst
16-20	Magnum Rally	Hazyview
19	SA Endurance Series 3 Hour – Dezzi Raceway	Port Shepstone

## SEPTEMBER

1-3	Kyalami Festival of Motoring	Kyalami
2/3	Wheels at the Vaal	Vanderbijlpark
3-7	SAVVA National and Rendezvous Tour	Fouriesburg
16	Historic Tour – Zwartkops Raceway	Pretoria
17	Piston Ring Swap Meet	Modderfontein
23	SEFAC Ferrari 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	Kyalami
23	4-Stage – Zwartkops Raceway	Pretoria
24	National Drive It Day	National
24	Blairgowrie Toy Fair	Blairgowrie
30	Xtreme Festival – Kyalami Race Track	Kyalami

## OCTOBER

1	POMC Aircooled Show	Pretoria
1	Classics in the Bay	Cape Town
14	SA Endurance Series 3 Hour – Aldo Scribante Race Track	Port Elizabeth
15	Killarney Classic Car Show	Cape Town
28	Historic Tour – Red Star Raceway	Delmas
29	Studebaker Club Show Day	Irene

## NOVEMBER

4	Xtreme Festival – Kyalami Race Track	Kyalami
4	SA Endurance Series 9 Hour – Phakisa Freeway	Welkom
12-15	SAVVA National and Fairest Cape Rally	Cape Town
25	Xtreme Festival – Zwartkops Raceway	Pretoria
26	Blairgowrie Toy Fair	Blairgowrie

## DECEMBER

2	Historic Tour – Kyalami Race Track	Kyalami
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## MONTHLY MUST DO EVENTS

1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month	Classic Motorcycle Club of Natal	Bluff, Durban
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month	Classic Motorcycle Club Johannesburg	Germiston, Johannesburg
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month	Pretoria Old Motor Club	Silverton, Pretoria
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month	Piston Ring	Modderfontein, Johannesburg
3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month	Cape Vintage Motorcycle Club	Parow North, Cape Town
Last Sunday of the month	Vintage and Veteran Club	Athol Oaklands, Johannesburg
Last Sunday of the month	Southern Cape Old Car Club	Glenwood, George
Last Sunday of the month	The Crankhandle Club	Wynberg, Cape Town
Last Sunday of the month	The Veteran Car Club of South Africa	Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal





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Concours South Africa 2017 will, once again, be happening at Sun City on 5th & 6th August.

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Concours South Africa has a myriad of attractions at this year's event. From the concours competition, classic car conference, hospitality and charity auction to many displays of unique vehicles, detailing products and much more.

#### Concours Competition:

Some of the finest, rarest and most collectible automobiles from 1900 to 1999 will be judged in various concours categories, as well as show & shine, by both local and international experts. Judging panel includes, among others, Robert Coucher - founding editor of Octane magazine, Chris Routledge - owner of Coys of Kensington and Wayne Harley - curator of the Franschoek Motor Museum.

There is still time to enter your vehicle at [www.concourssa.co.za](http://www.concourssa.co.za)

#### Classic Car Conference:

Values in the classic car market have exploded over the past few years and there is a lot of misconceptions around current values, future trends, importing, duties, investing off shore etc. The classic Car Conference will equip you with the tools to make informed judgements and decisions and will be imparted by both international and local industry aficionados.

For information and booking go to [www.concourssa.co.za](http://www.concourssa.co.za)

#### Hospitality:

Enjoy fine cuisine and refreshments in the bespoke VIP Village. Network with industry players, collectors, enthusiasts and celebrities.

Booking and information can be found at [www.concourssa.co.za](http://www.concourssa.co.za)

Packages available for one or two days, private and corporate.

Concours South Africa is unique in that it is the only event where all aspects of the classic car industry come together in one place.

Visit the site [www.concourssa.co.za](http://www.concourssa.co.za) or call one of our organisers directly:

Paul Kennard 0828513300 – [paul@concourssa.co.za](mailto:paul@concourssa.co.za) - for car entries and displays.

Sabrina Morris 0829026244 – [sabrina@eventoptions.co.za](mailto:sabrina@eventoptions.co.za) - for hospitality & accommodation



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# Gumtree's new vintage car category



Jeff Osborne,  
Head of Gumtree  
Automotive

**B**uying and selling vintage cars is a booming business in South Africa.

In response to increased demand, online classifieds site Gumtree SA has introduced a special vintage car category which already boasts over 350 listings of classic and vintage cars.

Gumtree SA's Head of

Automotive, Jeff Osborne, is a vintage car restorer himself and says "the key is to find a sturdy vehicle - and if possible a rare model - that can be restored by giving it an aesthetic overhaul".

He likens the process to the property market where buyers often search for a fixer-upper house which they can turn at a profit through some clever work.

The new category on the site means that consumers will be able to find vintage cars more easily from both dealers and private sellers, drawing more attention to the rare finds and potential bargains.

Osborne believes there is "definitely space in the market for more dealers to get into the vintage car space".





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# DIFFERENT STROKES

Although a number of projects left last month, the shop is by no means empty at the moment with new jobs coming in on a continuous basis. It struck us how many different classic brands were in our shop and just how varied our local classic car scene is. At the moment in this shop alone there are cars originating from Germany, England, Japan, Italy, America and France. The genre of vehicles also varies, from people's car to 2-seater sportscars and luxury coupés to the road-going equivalent of a barge. It shows that no matter your style there's a classic car lid for every pot and we love learning about the cars and working on them. Each time we strip a car we uncover a part of its past life, which

in many cases is not the prettiest sight, but we really enjoy putting the years of experience and old-school techniques to use and hammering out a solution. Each day is a challenge, with work ranging from show cars in need of minor touch-ups to rust buckets that require a lot of cutting and metal shaping to meet the grade. We will share what is on the go at **Dino's**, what cars have come in, how much progress has been made in a month, which cars have gone out and which are on the waiting list. In the world of classic restorations you never know what you will find, so as and when any stumbling blocks occur we will point those out too, in the monthly updates.



Following some extensive work this rare Lancia Aurelia is almost ready for paint. To date it has seen a full strip-down, which revealed some poor rust repairs in the past. These, along with the sills and rear arches, have all been cut out and new metal added. It's seen a complete nose job too, with the fabrication of the grille area.



This MG TD has just arrived and a full restoration will commence. First job is to strip all the trim off and assess what needs to go for refurbishing and what can be re-used. With these bits out the way the body will be stripped to the metal to uncover any hidden issues. Repair of these and then painting follows, before assembly. At a glance it looks like a good, solid car.



It's not only full paint and restorations that find their way through the shop's doors. This Cadillac has suffered a bit of corrosion on the left rear wing and is in for repairs to that section. Careful attention not to damage the period-correct navy blue vinyl means a bit of extra time will be spent on the job, but it's worth keeping the luxury car as per factory.



The Datsun Fairlady is ready for the client to collect. It was a hugely rewarding project, having come in for a full strip and restoration. Sourcing parts and outsourcing the refurbishment of bright work took constant management, but seeing the chrome contrast brilliantly against the bright trim and hopefully the interior that the owner chooses. The car will be collected by the client and assembled at home.



This square-back Alfa Romeo Spider has featured in recent issues, where the process of cutting out rust was shown. All the rotten metal has been replaced and the stripped interior and door jambs have been painted. From here the doors will be hung and the car moved into the spray booth to shoot the matching external red colour.



One Jaguar E-Type leaves and another arrives. A stint on the rotisserie reveals that this one is in a lot better shape than the previous one when it comes to corrosion. A new nose section has been ordered, which although supposedly made to fit will take hours of fine tuning to get a perfect fit. Until it arrives, minor repairs to the bodywork are in progress.



It took months of research to find the correct colour for this 1934 Morgan, but we think the client has made the right choice with this green. It looks outstanding and will contrast brilliantly against the bright trim and hopefully the interior that the owner chooses. The car will be collected by the client and assembled at home.



It is satisfying to look back over the last few months and see how this split-window Volkswagen Beetle has evolved into a desirable classic – from what was essentially a hunk of steel fit for the scrap pile. Heaps of rust was removed and new metal shaped before the paint preparation and painting could be completed. The client will assemble.



Name a part of this Maserati's body and the chances are we have worked on it. This exotic was in a life-threatening state when it arrived. We've replaced the floors, sills, door skins and rear wheel arch sections already with handmade panels. The boot and spare wheel well are next. It is finally starting to show the glorious GT aesthetic.



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# THE GRAND PRIX GURU

**S**urvived by his wife, son, daughter and grandson, South African design consultant, Grand Prix author and *Classic Car Africa* contributor Patrick O'Brien died of a heart attack in France on St Patrick's Day this year. His 1994 book *Grand Prix: A Century of Racing* (AA Racing Ltd, South Africa), was a comprehensive analytical work which treated each season of the first 100 years of racing on a consistent basis, as one cohesive series.

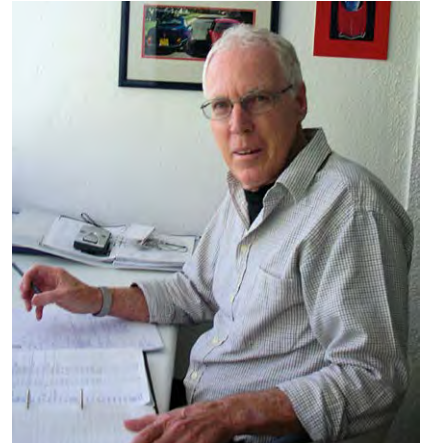
From an early age, he was intrigued by the topic of rating Grand Prix drivers and started to collect and compile school-boyish lists of 'Top Ten' and similar driver assessments by eminent people such as Fangio, Moss, Stewart, and Jenkinson. He attended every Grand Prix race at Kyalami, South Africa, from 1961 until 1993.

From the 1970s onwards, Patrick's freelance articles on Grand Prix racing, sportscars and car design were published in a wide range of Formula One and automotive


magazines and journals, both locally and internationally. His detailed biographies of Franco Scaglione and Federico Formenti (*Automobile Quarterly* 1994, 2008) did much to recast their positions in history and place them amongst the most important car designers of their time.

In 2002, he devised a method of addressing the burning question: 'Who is the fastest driver?' This was based on the realisation that all that matters in Grand Prix racing is the time differentials between competitors, which he termed 'the gap'. His method required separating car and driver performance; something that had not been done before. He spent the next decade writing up an exhaustive historical and performance analysis. The result is his 'Grand Prix Rating System', consisting of one volume for each decade of racing from 1894 to 2016. Just before he died, he revealed his methodology, enabling his system to be replicated and critiqued.

Patrick was always happy to talk about



racing with fellow enthusiasts and, following his move to south-west France in 2010, the Planet F1 and F1 Fanatics forums provided him with a channel to do this. At the time of his death on 17 March 2017, at age 72, he still had so much to say and contribute.

Tributes on the PF1 forum acknowledged him as a universally-respected forum member whose participation in a thread raised the quality of the discussion. Perhaps the single comment of which he would have been most proud is this: "He probably pushed F1 metrics forward further than anybody else has ever done and his contribution will not be forgotten." 

To view Patrick's thoughts visit <http://grandprixratings.blogspot.co.uk>.

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# KNYSNA HEADS THE SHOW



With a strong turnout of stunning and some very rare cars and motorcycles on 30 April, the Knysna Motor Show is now firmly established as one of the premium motor shows in South Africa. If you did not attend it you would have missed out on one of the most exciting motor shows on the calendar, which included everything from spectacular vintage and veteran cars to super cars, not to mention the stunning motorcycle display.

**By Peter Pretorius**

Organised and run by the Garden Route Motor Club and sponsored by Sanlam Private Wealth, the show was again run in exemplary fashion. Despite the blistering heat, around 6 500 people turned out to view the more than 400 exceptional vehicles that were displayed at the event by invitation.

There were 18 MG MMM cars (manufactured between 1929 and 1936) and 15 Micro cars from the 1950s on display. The vintage brigade was spearheaded by Model T Fords, Bentleys, Bugattis and the unbelievable Hispano-Suiza, Packard, Maxwell and many more. Morgan had a range of models dating from 1928 through to 2016 and the racing fans swarmed over the Simola Hillclimb classic display, Lindenbergl Racing's Shelby Mustang, Fairlane and Daytona, a pair of locally-made Barnard BT LMP3 cars

and the ex-Dunkerly Porsche WesBank Modified racer. The Parnel Bruce car collection was again out in full force with some beautifully preserved rarities, and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of GSM Dart and Lotus 7 were celebrated with a host of cars.

If this was not enough a broad range of sports classic cars which included Jaguar, Mercedes, Austin-Healey, Porsche, Triumph, MG, Lotus, Alfa Romeo and many more were complemented by modern supercars like Ferrari, Lamborghini and Audi. The Nelson Mandela Metro University also added a special touch with their winning Eco Car, manufactured from carbon fibre and powered by a 125cc petrol engine, with a fuel efficiency of 127.86km/litre.

Fifty motorcycles ranging from 1914 through to the 1980s proved popular and the sound they made on start-up had the memories flooding in.

The most appealing and beautiful vintage

and veteran car – pre-1940 (Meilleur Vieux Voiture Trophy and accommodation at the Karoo View Cottages in Prince Albert) went to Rudolph Greyvenstein's 1926 Hispano-Suiza. Honours for the best classic car in terms of appearance, cleanliness and originality (Concours d'Elegance Trophy and accommodation at Protea Quays hotel in Knysna) went to Krige Bolton and his 1973 Alfa Romeo Giulia Super 1600, while the best featured one-make car display (Style et Lux Trophy sponsored by Autoglym) went the way of the GSM Club.

Steven Helm took the most appealing and beautiful motorcycle prize (a hydraulic bike lift sponsored by the Motorcycle Showroom – Knysna) with his 1914 Clyno and sidecar outfit.

Records were broken on the day in terms of attendance and the gate takings, which also means that the nominated charities will gain substantially from the proceeds. 📌





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1972 VW Bus



1927 Vauxhall



Fiat 500



1935 Ford Coupe



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Renault Gordini



Cortina GT

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# MX VETS GO INTERNATIONAL

Three veteran Springbok Motocross riders make up the 2017 SA team to take on the challenge at Farleigh Castle UK in September. The team for this historic event consists of 55-year-old Tony Riddell, 46-year-old Ryan Hunt, 49-year-old Collin Dugmore and 39-year-old Andre David. The team will prepare and ship the pre-1989 masterpieces to the UK and World Motocross champion Grant Langston will be managing the outfit at the event. Gavin Williams Global ASP has assisted the effort, covering the entry fees, the bikes, parts and many of the general expenses but are in search of a co-sponsor to handle the airfares, accommodation and shipping.



Interested sponsors can contact Gavin Williams on (021) 702 9300 or e-mail [gwilliams@globalasp.com](mailto:gwilliams@globalasp.com).

## JOZI WINTER WARMER

Car enthusiasts, get ready for the [www.classiccarshow.co.za](http://www.classiccarshow.co.za) Winter Classic Car & Motor Show Sunday on 9 July 2017. Held at Joburg Expo Centre, opposite FNB Stadium, it's open to hot rods, street rods, classic vehicles, muscle cars and vintage cars.

Car exhibitors should arrive before 7am at gate 2 to find that perfect spot. There will be something for everyone, including a range of stalls, a beer garden, kids' activities, live entertainment and helicopter rides. Tickets will be available at the gate for R80 per person, children under 11 at R20. For more information visit [www.classiccarshow.co.za](http://www.classiccarshow.co.za) or to book a commercial stall contact [loraine@classiccars.co.za](mailto:loraine@classiccars.co.za).

## MIDLANDS RALLY CLIMBS

Want to combine a spot of classic regularity rallying with some hill climbing? Then the Midlands Rally, which takes place from 30 June to 2 July is the event for you. Open to cars built before 1999, the run kicks off from the Veteran Car Club grounds (21A Village Road, Kloof), takes in 250 kilometres of the best roads in KZN and finishes up at the Nottingham Road Hotel in the Midlands, which is also where competitors will stay each night.

For more information on regulations or to enter contact [secretary@vccsa.co.za](mailto:secretary@vccsa.co.za).



## FORDS & MORE AT SCOTTBURGH

This year's Scottburgh Classic Car Show, the eighth show organised by the Scottburgh Classic Car Club, will be held on Sunday 16 July at the Scottburgh High School in KZN. As usual it will see a host of marque clubs from around the country participating, but in keeping with the tradition of rotating the featured brand annually, Ford has stepped into this role for 2017.



This means that the 'blue oval' cars will have pride of place in front of the grandstand and feature as the first of many mobile parades throughout the day. Another highlight is the 'Fun & Fashion' parade, which as you may have guessed has partakers dressed to the nines to match their mode of transport.

It's a great day out to show off your classic, enjoy a day amongst great cars and bikes and raise a bit of money for local charities. If 2016 is anything to go by, where the show pulled in 5 000 people and 450 vehicles, then 2017 is a must do and great way to beat the Highveld winter temperatures. Food stalls, a tea garden and beer tent are on hand and for those not in a classic, free shuttle buses will bring you in from the 'modern' parking area – only cars and bikes older than 1975 can enter the display area. But if you have something of a newer age that you think is equally interesting, drop the organisers a line and they might grant you a special invitation. Special accommodation packages are available for the out-of-towners. Visit [www.scottburghclassiccarshow.co.za](http://www.scottburghclassiccarshow.co.za).

## LM RALLY RETURNS

With the 21-year-old Polana Rally coming to an end in 2016, a gaping hole was left open for those wanting to regularly rally into Mozambique with their classic cars. Thankfully a group of enthusiasts has come to the party and from 16 to 18 June the evocatively-named LM Radio Classic Rally will see competitors travelling from South Africa, through Swaziland and ending up in Mozambique.

Following a 7am start from the Portuguese social club in Witbank the route heads towards Belfast, through the Sabie Numbi Gate and in to view the Kruger National Park scenery, before lunching at Malelane. From there it's through the Jeppes Reef border and a night's stay at Piggs Peak Hotel. Day two sees a drive to the Goba border post where an escort will lead crews to a high-speed special stage in the Maputo CBD. Roads will be blocked off and there will be a welcome from the Vice-Minister of Sport and other government officials. With that done and dusted it will be off to the Southern Sun Maputo, where cars will be securely displayed and the winners awarded their spoils at prize giving. Contact [samozrally@gmail.com](mailto:samozrally@gmail.com) for more information and entry details.



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Peter driving his GSM Dart to the 1965 South African Sportscar Championship.

# A LIFE IN THE

# FAST LANE

BY STUART GRANT



Meissner Cortina Mk2.



**F**riday 5 May 2017 was a sad day with the passing of South African motorsport legend Peter Gough. Gough, who continued racing well into his 70s, not only powered his iconic Meissner Escort to a double national saloon car title in the late 1960s but also showed his hand in various saloons and sportscars over the decades.

As a relative youngster my memories of Peter are not of his Escort endeavours but rather watching him behind the wheel of a Porsche 911RS, tussling against Gary Dunkerly's Chevron in historic racing events. I also have a vivid memory of his blue Porsche shooting past me while

entering the dauntingly quick Phakisa Raceway back section at full bull with the front right wheel up in the air, waving as he fed in some opposite lock and tickled the loud pedal. And of course at each race meeting he was accompanied by his Border Collie, always keen to chase an empty plastic bottle or ball.

A few years later I had the pleasure of watching Peter build his then current historic racing Escort engine. Ever friendly, he went about explaining the modifications that had been applied to the cylinder head, but what really struck me was the clinical precision he applied and the cleanliness of the surrounding. This attention to detail, as well as his mechanical skill and driving ability were the factors that put him at the forefront of the game for so many years.

The Gough racing tale started in 1961 when a friend dared him to race at Killarney. His chosen machine was a Fiat 1100. From there it was into a short stint in an unlikely Peugeot 203 before picking up Willie Meissner's father-in-law's GSM Dart – following

as a job a floor cleaner salesman – one he reportedly quit when he was not allowed to take time off to go and race in Johannesburg.

From behind the wheel of the Dart Gough trounced the likes of Austin-Healey Sprites to win the 1965 South African Sportscar Championship. With Adrian Pheiffer (a well-known scribe and PR ace) racing a Lotus 23 type car in the same team, Peter benefitted in terms of publicity and useful contacts. He also took up employment at Selfords, a Ford Dealership owned by Donald Philp, where he excelled, selling 25 to 30 units a month, which meant there was no problem taking leave in order to race.

Following the Dart, Gough raced the ex-Koos Swanepoel Lotus Cortina. He ran the number Y151 on this but within a year the Ford launched the all-new Escort – and the real legend of Y151 was born.

Peter drove to Ford's Port Elizabeth factory, collected a 1300 GT, and then drove it back to the Meissner workshop in Cape Town. There a large number of the Meissner Cortina parts, including the engine, was fitted. The car, also numbered Y151, debuted on track in Bulawayo and despite

**He also took up employment at Selfords, a Ford Dealership owned by Donald Philp, where he excelled, selling 25 to 30 units a month, which meant there was no problem taking leave in order to race**



Y151 in various development stages to keep up with the rule changes.



Selfords Capri Perana.

failing to finish, put a notch on the belt as the first Escort to race anywhere in the world.

The Gough/Y151 pairing then failed to finish in the next two events but with the teething issues sorted a remarkable run of success got underway. Winning 27 races in a row and holding lap records at every circuit in SA and Rhodesia, Peter was crowned the Saloon Car Champion for 1969. With such a record Gough's driving ability was in demand and he was invited to share a Porsche 906 with Peter Gethin in the 1969 Kyalami 9-Hour race.

As the Escort kept winning, the series rules changed. So Meissner kept developing the Escort. A 1600 twin cam motor came in, then a FVC Cosworth unit. When this FVC was banned, he built a 2-litre Lotus unit and the Escort put up against the 5-Litre V8 Mustang.

For 1971 Peter followed the 'there ain't no replacement for displacement' theory and bought a Capri Perana from Selfords for Meissner to build, to suit the Onyx Production Car rules. While the Escort had run in 1 minute 30s at Killarney, Gough managed to get the Perana down to 1:22.6, a record that stood until Tony Viana brought

out the BMW 745i over a decade later.

Illings Mazda were next to call on Gough's skill and put a deal together that saw him sharing a Mazda R100 with Basil van Rooyen at the end of the Springbok Series of endurance events season. Killarney was a cracker, with the small capacity rotary going door handle-to-door handle with the Capri RS3100 of Jochen Mass.

But a week later Peter's racing career came to a sudden end when the interior-mounted, auxiliary fuel tank fitted to the Mazda he was sharing with Basil van Rooyen in a 6-hour race in Bulawayo wasn't closed properly after a pit stop. With fuel swirling around on the floor Peter headed back towards the pits but before he got there the car exploded, engulfing him in smoke and flames.

Peter tried to get the car to a fire post but had to stop alongside the track as the fire intensified. By the time he released his belts the interior door handle had melted and he had to open the door through the window.

With 65% burns he teetered between life and death in a Bulawayo hospital before being flown back to Cape Town in a private plane, his injuries so severe that

no commercial airline would fly him back. It took close on a year and over 100 surgical operations before Peter was back on his feet, returning to work and even qualifying as a pilot – despite failing the DCA medical three times.

When offered a Nissan dealership in Roodepoort, which Philp helped finance, Peter made the move to Johannesburg and excelled at this. While watching a Porsche challenge race on TV (and being a Porsche owner) the idea of returning to racing bit. He made a return to the track, having lost none of his pace and exposing a new generation of spectator to the Gough smoothness and style.

WesBank Modified was next on the list with an Owen Ashley-built Opel Kadett V6, the car with which he went on to Class A Championship. The years that followed saw Peter racing in a host of regional events with his Porsche as well as building and preparing similar models for numerous other competitors. When he moved back to Cape Town it was only fitting that he took to the local classic scene with an immaculately prepared and indecently fast Mk1 Ford Escort. **C**

**ON THE RIGHT TRAX**

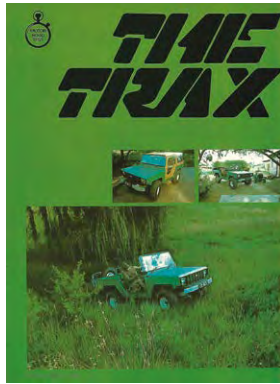
Dear Stuart,

It was with great interest that I read your request for more information on the Interstate TRAX. A very interesting vehicle in the South African context. I managed to find a few articles from the press. This may all be old news to you, but I hope this is of interest. I had to chuckle at the comment in the 'Nuusbrokkie' piece where it is said that Bild am Sonntag considered the Trax to be a 'wêreldleier' among off-road vehicles.

Perhaps of more interest: I have at least one original sales brochure of the TRAX. It contains the usual technical specification and photos, as well as diagrams of the various body styles on offer. Depending on your deadlines, I may be able to send through a scan in time for publication, should you be interested.

Regards,  
Hendrik Nell

*Thank you Hendrik, having scoured through my archives for hours on end I was amazed not to find any real reports on the TRAX, so the scanned articles are an immense help. The comments and propaganda published show that TRAX had a PR cooperation worth every*

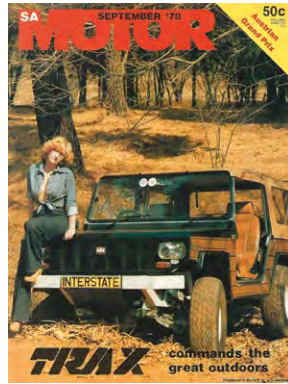


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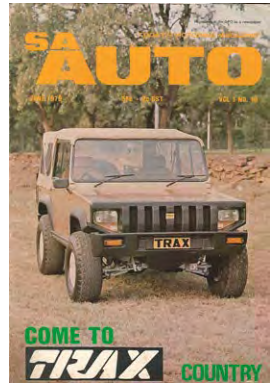
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*cent. I will work through the literature and we will hold off until you 'TRAX' down the sales*

*brochure before publishing a full article. Stuart*

**ON THE WRONG TRAX**

Hi Stuart,

Your reference to the TRAX brought back a long-forgotten memory. I am probably one of the few people who owned one. Having owned well over 100 cars since 1963, the TRAX is certainly the worst car, ahead of the Chev Nomad and the Volvo V70. The TRAX was fitted with a Chrysler Valiant engine, auto transmission, and if I remember correctly, separate hand brakes on each rear wheel to help you get out of the poo (or was that the very similar Nomad?).

There was not a curved piece of metal on the car except for the steel pipe which served as a windscreen surround. The car was lethal at any speed above 30km/h.

In the late 1970s, the Swaziland defence force was supplied with about 10 specially-equipped TRAX combination trailer units, in army colours and fully kitted with bush gear, including a motor cycle, etc. They looked like the real business but all turned over at the first kink in the road. I bought one of the damaged

rolled units with virtually zero mileage at a Swazi government auction and brought it to Joburg with me when I relocated in 1980. I straightened a few dings and the windscreen frame, painted it blue with a black grille, drove it around the block and almost killed myself – and immediately sold it to a farmer who promised never to exceed 30km/h.

It was said to be built in Swaziland, but certainly was not. The Chev Nomad had better road holding, but the doors kept flying open on the Swazi gravel roads, and I learnt to ignore the problem and simply drove with flapping doors. You always needed a Land Rover to pull you out or up, so that was my next car.

Best regards,  
Bo

*Hi Bo,  
Thank you for the 'horse's mouth' TRAX ownership tales. With such a propensity to turn turtle I wonder if any of them have survived for us to find and organise a photoshoot. If we*

*do manage to find one I will make contact to reunite you and your old 'friend', and perhaps get a modern driving impression. Stuart*

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## THE FIRST ISSUE

Hi Stuart,

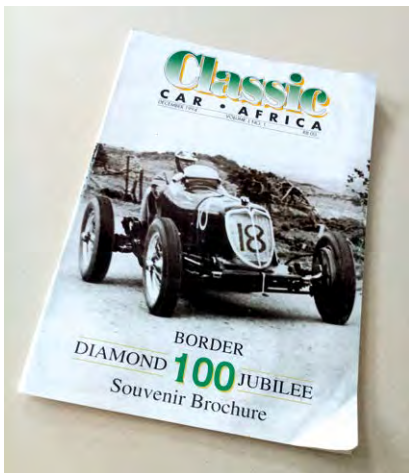
Hope you are keeping well and enjoying this year's Grand Prix so far. Even the sportscar endurance looks interesting. You might recall we chatted some time back and you kindly printed my trip to Spa and Monza.

I was recently reading through my old programmes and came across the attached magazine. I am not sure how up to date you are with the history of your magazine, but could this be a rare copy of the very first edition? It would be interesting to know.

**Best regards,  
Robin Goddard**

*Indeed, Robin, that is the very first issue of Classic Car Africa, as launched at the Border 100 Jubilee races in East London in 1994. It is crazy to think that it is close on 23 years back. The longevity of the publication is down to you, the readers, and we are extremely grateful for this. I managed to find a copy of that first issue and have it framed and ready to hang on the wall.*

Stuart



## MAGIC MOTORSPORT MEMORIES

Hi Stuart,

Got the May 2017 issue of *Classic Car Africa* yesterday and after reading your 'Editor's Point Of View', immediately went to the articles on Renault and Ford Cortina XR6, and as you invited some memories, I thought I'd send you a few from the late '60s and throughout the '70s.

Firstly though, the story about Renault Dauphine, Caravelle, R8 and 10 design was most interesting, informative and another piece of classic car history which is new to me. Having personally seen your R10 without bumpers, it reminded me of I think the only R10 which was raced on the track in The Star Modified Championship, and that was by Phil Adams. There were many street racers around town in their R10 Alconis but Phil's R10 was the modified version of the standard 1100cc. Phil was known for a few things; he once spun off at Brandkop and set the dry grass alight. He and Brian Cook won the 1978 Wynn's 1000 in a Datsun 140Z and he always wore one of Jody Scheckter's early overalls, which he won in an SCC raffle. The R8s raced by Scheckter, Mortimer and many others are legendary and must have contributed hugely to sales. Two memories I have are of Geoff Mortimer telling me how Scheckter would intimidate his opposition at



Kyalami by drifting sideways at Leeukop, just touching the wall to avoid a spin, but without any damage other than breaking a tail light lens. The other was the beautiful Gordini Tony Martin raced from time to time in the late '70s, messing up many a contender's chance of beating Eddie Keizan's BMW 530 in The Star Modified Championship. Regarding the Cortina XR6s, I would like to mention that Tony Viana, Dave Charlton and Len Booysen also raced them with much success. At a Vista 3-Hour in Welkom, Viana was consistently faster than Sarel, two-wheeling every lap through the left hander at the end of the pit straight.

**Regards,  
Cam McKie Thomson**

Hi Cam,

*I have managed to track down an image of the modified Renault R10. It definitely looks a bit 'warmer' than my old 1100 and I can only dream of squeezing enough performance out of the old mill to be competitive on the track – or even at the roadhouse for that matter. I was unaware that Viana, Charlton and Booysen pedalled the Cortina XR6s but can well believe Viana was the man to beat on his home circuit. Thanks for the marvellous motorsport memories.*

Stuart



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hallo Stuart,

First I want to tell you where I come from. I am a clivia flower grower and a regular reader of your magazine. At the clivia club we have a Facebook page managed by one of the club members. On this page anyone can post anything clivia-related and is supported by people from all over the world. All items are screened to filter out all the non-clivia items, which are things like car dealers, prayer requests and dating sites.

What is the possibility of a *Classic Car Africa* Facebook page where all your readers can post photos and short histories and technical date of their vehicles? Once the readers have done their share the clubs can be asked to

follow suit. This can become a full-time job but please count me out as I am over 70 and computer illiterate.

The reason for this is the article on the Speed Six Bentley. A lot was said about the vehicle but a lot of questions remained such as the owner of the car, is it a local, how it came into his possession, etc. It could fill another page or two. On this page you could also keep us updated on things like the bloke in Kya Sand building his own Ferrari as well as the Pontoon Ferrari that was built in Cape Town. The list could go on and on!

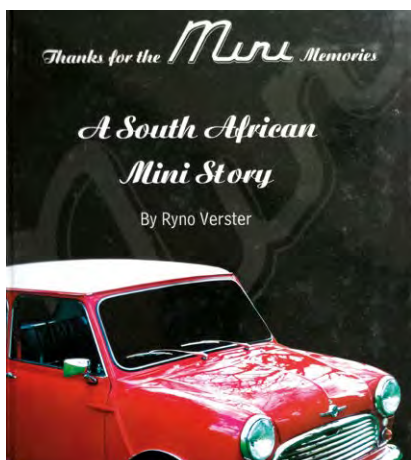
Nice talking to you.

**Kind regards,  
Dawid**

Hello Dawid

*A great idea, thank you. With space an issue in the magazine we have to be selective about how much information we include, but with the advent of the Internet and various social media platforms there is now a possibility to further extend the flow of knowledge into the mainstream. We are busy working on a website that will enable readers to tell us more about their cars – this can be found at [www.classiccarafrika.com](http://www.classiccarafrika.com) and then a click on the 'Submit your story' tab allows the information to be added. Once we have it we will post links to the stories on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts (under the name @ClassicCarZA).*

Stuart



## BOOK HUNTING

Hi,

I am located in the UK and have just purchased an SA-built 1974 Mini Clubman. I am trying to find a copy of a book by Ryno Verster entitled *A South African Mini Story*. I am unable to track one down over here, in new or used condition. Any help would be appreciated.

Regards,

Neil

Hi Neil,

Congrats on your purchase. Ryno's book is the definitive history of Mini in SA, ranging from production and sales figures to special model differences and on to racing, with everything in between. I have sent your mail on to Ryno as he might have some spare copies to ship – or will at least know where you can find one.

Stuart

## CLUTCH REMEDY

Hi Stuart,

There was another use for the old Pyrene fire extinguisher, other than putting out fires. A quick shot of carbon tetrachloride down the bell housing inspection hole was a quick cure for a slipping clutch! The old XK Jags were notorious for rear crankshaft oil seal failure and that oil invariably soaked the clutch plate linings, causing it to slip. A couple of shots with the Pyrene dissolved the oil, allowing a few thousand miles more – before another application was needed. You just had to keep your breathing apparatus out of the way of the fumes! Keep up the great work.

Regards,

Robin Hayes

Hi Robin,

A good trick to remember but I am not sure the health and safety department would approve. Perhaps the Coca-Cola trick is the only safe option we have left for roadside repairs. I wonder if the sugar-free version will do the job?

Stuart

## KEEP IT REAL

Dear Stuart,

The April edition of CCA has been an absorbing read as usual, and from my perspective particularly so with a bit of Renault thrown in, albeit under the mantle of the Lotus Europa. I have the greatest respect for the Toyota twin cam engine which found its way into the car in question, but I feel I must jump to the defence of its original Renault R16TS-based engine, which is maybe a trifle maligned in this article. I can understand that if the engine in the car had effectively been detuned to stock R16TS specs, then it would have left something to be desired in the performance stakes, but the original tuned version of the 807-24 engine specified for the Europa was a 140BHP affair, as opposed to the 70-odd BHP mentioned in the article.

The 807 engine lends itself quite readily to further tuning and with the addition of reinforced conrods and larger inlet valves from the R17, a decent cam and domed pistons it is a tasty proposition as I would like to illustrate from some three-year correspondence from a couple of years back between myself, the owner of a Europa in Australia and Salv Sacco of Motorsport Services UK, who supplied our bits. This is what he had to say: "Regarding the 807/843 engine, it is quite feasible to run this engine to 7250/7500rpm with a wide spread of power. If you can get the Renault 17 Gordini size inlet valves (42mm) it makes life a little easier. Best power that I have seen out of a 1605cc motor (78 mm pistons) is 171BHP with a 7500rpm limit. This ran the big valves, race cam and 45DCOE Webers with 38mm chokes. I have since tried a slightly shorter duration cam with 36mm chokes and found that although peak power was down by



around 6BHP (165BHP), the motor runs much cleaner from around 3800-4000rpm right up to the same peak rpm."

In terms of what the 807 engine in normally-aspirated form is ultimately capable of is difficult to say, but Charly Carcreff in France builds and sells a version which is bored out to 1950cc and churns out 200BHP at 8000rpm... But I will undoubtedly have to concede it would cost rather more than a surplus Toyota twin cam motor.

Best regards,

Carvel Webb

*Good move on springing to the Renault defence, Carvel. The Toyota engine is a brilliant item, I agree, but feel that too many classic engines earned a bad rap in period thanks to poor maintenance and lack of understanding. Take the Triumph Stag and Spitfire for example. The Stag suffered overheating issues, so many swapped out the lump and replaced it with a Rover V8. The Spitfire too saw its original power unit often replaced by the Datsun 1400 when it was deemed difficult to find replacement Triumph parts. With modern thought and technology it is possible to keep your Stag original and cool. And with the advent of the Internet and worldwide delivery, there is a plethora of Spitfire suppliers that can get you the desired parts within a few days and at a reasonable (when compared to buying parts for your modern daily) price.*

Stuart

## LANDY ON THE ROOF

Hi Stuart,

I am hoping that you can help me or point me in the right direction. I am seeking old pics and route schedule of the 1967/68 Roof of Africa Rally. The following is my story. In 1967 I went with my father and a farmer friend on the Roof (Car number 19). We finished in Durban at the lifesaving club. In '68 I competed again, this time the car number was 42 and I had my uncle navigating – he also won the WP Rally Championships in a Peugeot 203 – and the route went up Sani Pass. If my memory serves me correctly, in '67 we finished in 7<sup>th</sup> position. The rain of '68 was insane and the mud had us going sideways down Moteng Pass. We finished

in Maseru, towing a Beetle. After 32 years I have managed to buy back the Land Rover and work has begun to get the vehicle up and running so that I can take the old girl up Sani before it is tarred. It will be 50 years since I last did Sani in this machine.

Regards,

Charles de Villiers

*A brilliant personal story Charles, thank you. I am short on Roof of Africa information but am positive that some of our readers were there competing or watching and will have the information you are after. I will be sure to forward any correspondence I receive.*

Stuart



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# FRENCH ATTRACTION



Citroën's back catalogue impresses as much for its innovative engineering as it does for its broad product base; just compare the company's austere 2CV to the avant-garde DS to get a sense of how wide it was. But those diverse and accomplished models were only possible thanks to the enormous success of its front-wheel-drive Traction Avant says **Graeme Hurst**, who tries out a rare, range-topping 6-cylinder variant.

**Period Photography: Francois Calligé**

If you'd driven through Africa in the early 1950s, you would've been able to identify which colonial power was in charge just from the makes of cars in the traffic. Those countries and protectorates falling under the British Empire would've featured an abundance of humble Austin A40s and Morris Minors, and maybe the odd Riley RM. Quite possibly they'd be used for trips to the library or that ever-so-British establishment, the Post Office, while the car park of the local country club would invariably have sported a few Jaguar MkVIs. Or a Bentley Mk6 if one of Her Majesty's ministers had dropped in for a G&T.

But if you'd plotted your journey through a French colony to the west, you'd likely have been surrounded by Renault 4CVs, Peugeot 203s and Citroën Traction Avants – all against a backdrop rich in colourful cafés and *pâtisseries*. Drive past the *mairie* (town hall) and any state official of substance would likely have been ensconced in the back of a majestic Citroën 15/6 as soon as he left his office. The 15/6 was the Traction Avant range-topper, a 6-cylinder variant that was known as the 'Reine de la Route' – Queen of the Road.

A 6-cylinder engine in a French car? It may not be common knowledge but the model was once the pinnacle of Citroën's automotive tree and a mark of luxury and performance, both before and after World War II. And fittingly it was the transport of choice for Capetonian Francois Calligé's father when he worked for the French government in Algeria in the 1950s. "My father worked in the administration of the

government and he had the use of one," explains Francois, who has owned the featured 1951 example for the last 28 years. "I can remember sitting up front next to the chauffeur – I think I was about 10 years old – and he would always be hooting to keep people away, as to be in a 15/6 was like driving a king," he adds. "My father was always worried, not that there would be an accident, but rather an incident."

In the early 1950s the 15/6 was, of course, a noticeably prestigious step-up from the company's mainstay: the by then ubiquitous 4-cylinder Traction Avant, which was a fixture on just about every French street after the model was launched back in 1934. That year represented a serious sea change for the iconic double chevron badge's founder André Citroën. An engineer by training, he was intrigued by the advancements companies such as Cord had made in the early 1930s in the US with its front-wheel-drive and monocoque construction technology.

Citroën's range up to that point reflected the rest of the automotive industry's thinking: traditional chassis-based designs boasting upright coachwork that typically clothed solid axles and used a prop

If you'd driven through Africa in the early 1950s, you would've been able to identify which colonial power was in charge just from the makes of cars in the traffic



A government 15/6 departing Palais d'Ete in Algeria in the 1950s.



shaft to power the rear wheels. But the company had skirted with bankruptcy in the early 1930s and needed an injection of new ideas to make its products stand out. What's more, a front-wheel-drive format offered a chance to eradicate the prop shaft tunnel and increase interior space while lowering the ride height. And putting the drive through the front wheels improved road holding, while monocoque technology allowed the car to be lighter, improving performance too.

It was this thinking that led to André Citroën's concept for the Traction Avant (which means 'drive from the front'): an

all-steel small, 4-door saloon with the engine longitudinally mounted but driving the front wheels through a gearbox ahead of the engine. Power from the 4-cylinder overhead-valve engine was fed to the front wheels via Hooke joints, with steering initially via a steering box which soon changed to rack and pinion. And the whole car was suspended on torsion bars with telescopic shock absorbers front and back.

Styling-wise it was as much of a radical change, thanks to the efforts of a young Italian called Flaminio Bertoni who joined the carmaker in 1933. His background as a sculptor meant he felt more comfortable working in clay than using a drawing board and so he 'sculpted' the Traction in 3D. The technique would become commonplace in the industry shortly after Bertoni's efforts, which resulted in an elegant, curvaceous, Art Deco-inspired small saloon.

All that was heady stuff for 1934 when the Traction Avant was launched and badged simply as the '7'. It boasted just 1303cc under the bonnet but performance was decidedly pedestrian, so that was soon increased to 1529cc and then again to 1911cc within the first two years. In this form it was known as the 'Onze Légère' (Light Eleven). Production also took place in Britain, at Citroën's Slough plant where the model was badged as a 'Light Fifteen', boasting a wood and leather interior and additional bright work to meet local and colonial market tastes.

A larger take on the Légère – known as the 'Normale' – with the body wider (by four inches) and longer (by 11) followed and was badged 'Big 15' in right-hand-drive Slough format. There were further stretched iterations in the form of the 'Familiale' and 'Commerciale' variants, with the former offering seating for seven (thanks to a pair of fold-up jump seats ahead of the rear seat) while the latter provided a split tailgate

His background as a sculptor meant he felt more comfortable working in clay than using a drawing board and so he 'sculpted' the Traction in 3D



A pair of Traction Avants at an official function at the town hall in Palestro (now Lakhdaria), Algeria.



A Traction Avant photographed on a visit to Diar el Mahcoul near Algiers.

to facilitate commercial use for loading anything from furniture to farm animals.

Citroën was also quick to capitalise on Bertoni's sculpting skills by offering pretty Cabriolet and 'Faux Cabriolet' (coupé) versions. These were offered at a substantial premium and aimed at the elite, as period marketing literature showing lady drivers bedecked in fur stoles attests. There was also the stillborn 22CV, a V8-engined variant.

But production numbers of these variants were only in triple figures, which put strain on the company's finances. Plus, all the new technology the Traction boasted wasn't without teething trouble: Citroën had problems with the rigidity of the monocoque technology, with reports of bodies sagging after just 10 000 miles. Torsion bar technology was relatively new too and the spec on the Traction was prone to snapping – as many a customer found out.

The company was quick to engineer solutions and even invested in a marketing exercise that showed a Traction being

shoved off a cliff to demonstrate that the shell was sturdy enough to allow the doors to still be opened after the car was effectively wrecked. It also backed a private endurance test when, soon after the model's launch, restaurant owner Francois Lecot covered a record 400 000km in one year, with the distance including taking part in the Monte Carlo Rally.

Sadly, the marketing efforts weren't enough to offset the company's plummet into the red, and the brand was under Michelin ownership just a year after the Traction's launch. By then André Citroën had passed away, so he never got to enjoy the fruits of his efforts: more than three quarters of a million Traction Avants rolled out of the company's Quai de Javel plant before the model gave way to the DS in 1956.

The 15/6 made its debut at the 1938 Paris Salon. It was based on the Normale and was a concerted effort by Citroën's owner Michelin to create a premium offering that would appeal to the wealthy elite while

offering greater performance. To meet the latter requirement, Citroën's engineering genius André Lefebvre was tasked with developing a 6-cylinder engine, which he did by in effect 'adding' two cylinders to the Onze's 'four' to create a 2867cc 'six' using the same wet-liner design. Wheelbase-wise it was unchanged over the Normale although the bonnet was longer, with the grille positioned further forward.

One item that wasn't carried over was the gearbox; the aluminium unit of the 4-cylinder wasn't up to handling the torque of the 'six' and it was also too long, meaning it got in the way of the radiator, which needed to be longer than on the 'four' to cope with the added demand on it. Citroën's engineers went back to the drawing board to solve the problem, designing a compact 3-shaft, cast-iron unit to fill the space between the engine and radiator, although space constraints meant the unit still only boasted three speeds.

Power-wise the new engine was good for 76bhp – up from 55bhp on the Onze –



at a lowly 3800rpm and unsurprisingly, the 15/6 had to be beefed up to cope with the added heft (around 250kg over an Onze Normale) and extra oomph. The body had extra strengthening in the *jambonneaux*, as the ham-shaped chassis legs are known in Traction circles. The design of the front suspension cradle was more involved to handle the performance, while the wheels sported wider 185H400 Michelin rubber. Braking was improved too, with dual-cylinder front drums and wider rears.

On the styling front, the 15/6 enjoyed a chrome grille – the Onze’s was body colour – and added body embellishments while the interior was distinctly plusher, with velvet-like upholstery, grab handles, sun visors and map pockets. Across the channel in Slough the 15/6 was badged as the ‘Big 6’ and featured a leather and wood interior and plenty of

On the styling front, the 15/6 enjoyed a chrome grille – the Onze’s was body colour – and added body embellishments while the interior was distinctly plusher, with velvet-like upholstery, grab handles, sun visors and map pockets

chrome too. The finish to both variants was in line with the model’s range-topper position. That position, and the 15/6’s easy 65mph cruising ability and reputation for effortless torque, made it a favourite of the French government, both at home and abroad: “I remember going to the government garage in Algeria and there must have been 20 or 30 -cylinder Tractions, all with the bonnets up having work done,” recalls Francois.

His memories are from after the war which, as with so many iconic automotive designs, curtailed production just as the model was getting into its stride. Just short of 2 500 were assembled before hostilities commenced, but production picked up again as early as 1946 and peaked at over 11 000 cars a year by 1951.

A year on the model gained the big boot (known as the *malle bombée*) that was added across the range to modernise the design and boost luggage space. For 1954 the 15/6 was updated in a different way when it was offered as the ‘15/6 H’. That H stands for ‘Hydraulique’, a self-levelling hydro-pneumatic rear suspension system that gave the Traction an even more impressive ride and was a pre-cursor for the technology packed into the Traction’s replacement, the DS 19, which stunned the automotive world in

1955 with its radical looks and technology. By then more than 47 000 ‘Reine de la Routes’ had been built.

Being a then-British colony meant we didn’t get too many Tractions on our roads; those that were here were Slough-built cars and predominately the Light 15 model, with the occasional Big 6 for a buyer with deeper pockets. A few Onze Légères have made it in over the years but the French-built variants are rare, and a 15/6 like Francois’s example possibly unique. “I bought it when we were living in Nice,” explains Francois. “We imported it when we moved here around 20 years ago.”

As a post-war, small-boot example it should technically be black (some pre-war and Belgian-assembled cars were other colours) but Francois’s car wears the cream well. “For a lot of enthusiasts a Traction in anything other than black is a crime, but I like it,” adds Francois who’s full of praise for the local enthusiast expertise he’s called on over the years to keep the car in fine fettle, with major work limited to a rebuild of the engine, drive shafts and clutch unit at different times.

Today his Traction Avant shares his Noordhoek garage with another prestigious (and rare) French car: a 1960 Peugeot 403 Cabriolet, which Francois has owned for 50 years. Both of them fine examples of the French car makers’ efforts to make car owners and passengers feel like royalty. 🇫🇷



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# A (LITTLE) BOAT RACER

Barchettas were very popular in post-war Italy and some boasted a surprising degree of sophistication – like this one built in a ‘small but complete motor works’ in Turin.

**Words and pictures: Mike & Wendy Monk**



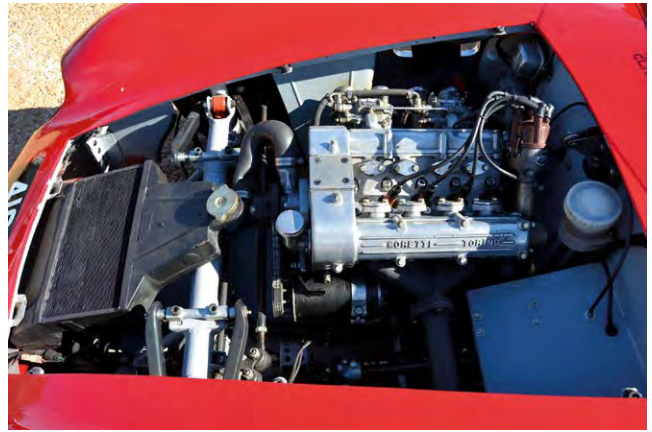
**G**iovanni Moretti was a skilled motorcycle mechanic who started his own workshop called Fabbrica Automobili Moretti SpA at 38 Via Mantova in Turin in 1925, building motorcycles of his own design and with agreements with other manufacturers. He soon expanded his business to building microcars powered by his motorcycle engines, and during the war moved on to making various commercial vehicles, as well as a variety of electric-powered vehicles. His competition background led to the production of small sportscars in 1947, starting with a twin-cylinder 350cc minicar called Cita, before upgrading to barchettas: first a 4-cylinder 600 and then a line of 750s in 1953. The engine was also used in a variety of berlinas, coupés, taxis, monoposto racing cars and commercial vehicles.

The grandiosely-titled 750S Bialbero Spyder Gran Sport barchetta featured here (bialbero means twin-cam) is chassis number 1614. In Italian *barchetta* actually means 'little boat', but the

term referred to an open 2-seater sports/racing car for which weight and wind resistance were kept to a minimum, and any unnecessary equipment or decoration were sacrificed in order to maximise performance.

Engine, transmission and suspension of all these early cars were manufactured by Moretti. The 748cc 4-cylinder (no. 1617) boasted twin overhead camshafts and dual Weber DCOE carburetors, which helped deliver 56kW at 8000rpm. It is thought to have been designed by a moonlighting Maserati engineer, possibly Alberto Massimino, as it bears similarities to pre-war Maserati racing engines. The engine features a cast-iron block and head with valves inclined at a 90-degree included angle, hemispherical combustion chambers, finger-type cam followers, and a crankcase in which the main bearings are carried in what are described as split 'cheeses', an extremely strong construction also used in Moretti's single-cam engines. An adjustable secondary vent at the leading edge of the bonnet feeds air to the engine compartment. The motor was mated with a 4-speed manual gearbox and the car was

In Italian *barchetta* actually means 'little boat', but the term referred to an open 2-seater sports/racing car



capable of topping 100mph (161km/h).

The Gran Sport chassis was an extremely strong welded structure of steel tubes made by Gilco. Suspension was independent up front with a rigid axle at the rear, and drum brakes were fitted all round. Borrani wire-spoke wheels with knock-off hubcaps were shod with 14-inch tyres.

The aluminium bodywork has styling reminiscent of the Maserati 300S, and it was sold to Agostino Gariboldi on 22 April 1955. On 5 June he finished 17<sup>th</sup> and third in class in the GP Mugello. Apparently, the car qualified for the ill-fated 1955 Le Mans 24-Hour but records suggest it did not arrive, a situation that may have been connected with the two factory-entered cars arriving on the grid too late as a result of an accident to the transporter on the way to the race.

Results show that on 19 March 1956 Gariboldi finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the Trofeo Vigorelli at Monza and then on 29 April entered it as car number 212 for the 1956 Mille Miglia, which he completed in 17 hours 26 minutes to finish 159<sup>th</sup> overall and a creditable sixth in class. That same year, on 8 July, he took part in the Coppa d'Oro delle Dolomiti but

failed to finish. In 1957 Gariboldi returned to race in the Mille Miglia on 12 May as car number 328 but again did not finish. Although it likely raced in the Swiss Ollon-Villars hillclimb in the mid-fifties, afterwards this car appears to have been little used and was sold in 1961 to Giuseppe Tagnozi. However, as it had become uncompetitive, it was stored away in the north of Italy and only came to light some 40 years later.

Apparently, the car qualified for the ill-fated 1955 Le Mans 24-Hour but records suggest it did not arrive

### MORETTI AT LE MANS

As mentioned in the main copy, along with Gariboldi's private entry, two Morettis were entered by the factory for the 1955 Le Mans for Lino Fayen/Herman Rogenry and Giorgio Ubezzi/Mesnest Bellanger to drive, but due to an accident involving the transporter on the way to the circuit, the cars rolled onto the grid too late to be allowed to start. The following year two cars were again entered, this time for Marcel Lauga/Jean-Michel Durif and Marceau Esculis/Francois Guiland, the former retiring after 10 hours (62 laps) with engine failure and the latter after 7 hours (22 laps) with electrics failure. Although never finishing the 24-Hour, by virtue of qualifying in period, the cars are eligible to race in the biennial Le Mans Classic race series, which began in 2002.



Run across bottom of both images: Moretti chassis number 1614 competing in the 2002 Mille Miglia with Pablo Dana and Roberto Bindon in the cockpit.

Subsequently, the car was bought and restored to compete in the Mille Miglia in 2001 (car no. 307), 2002 (car no. 265) and 2005 (car no. 301) driven by Swiss Pablo Dana and Argentinian Roberto Bindon. They participated in the inaugural Le Mans Classic race in 2002 (car no. 53) and were provisionally entered in 2004 but did not take part.

Sliding through the small, narrow-opening door down into the sparse cockpit proved less of a challenge than I had imagined. Tiny pedals sprout from the bulkhead, but the outer tubular chassis frame precludes a

left foot rest and I had to tuck my left knee into the hollow door in order to operate the clutch. The accelerator and brake pedals are very close together: narrow driving shoes are the order of the day. The seat cushion lies on the floor with a corner cut away to fit alongside the chassis cross-member. Ignition on, fire up and the little motor bursts into life, the crackling exhaust exiting from under the driver's door.

The remote gearshift has no defined gate and is loose, so finding the 3-4 plane was problematic until I realised just how close it is to the 1-2 plane. With little torque low down the engine needs revs to give of its best but once on the cam, the car feels and sounds quicker than it is – but the sensation merely adds to the enjoyment. The thin, wood-rimmed steering wheel offers excellent control and feedback, turn-in has no vices but brakes need a firm push to be effective. With no protection whatsoever from the shallow, frameless

full-width windscreen, the Moretti offers a classic 'bugs in the teeth' driving experience that any enthusiast would savour. It is said that only around 24 of these models were produced over a two-year period, and only eight are thought to have survived. This car is now part of the Woods Trust collection currently being looked after by FMM.

In the late-1950s financial considerations eventually forced Moretti to engage in a more profitable business and, thanks to his friendship with Fiat boss Gianni Agnelli, turned to modifying Fiats in many forms. This lasted until December 1989 when, after a number of years of decline, the company closed down. But there is no doubt the Moretti 750S is a superb example of post-war Italian barchetta designs and a delight to drive – over short distances – and similar cars have scored numerous class wins in classic events around the world. It may not have conquered Le Mans, but I can only stand back in admiration of Gariboldi lasting more than 17 hours at the wheel of this car on such a gruelling event as the Mille Miglia 61 years ago. 🏁

Subsequently, the car was bought and restored to compete in the Mille Miglia in 2001 (car no. 307), 2002 (car no. 265) and 2005 (car no. 301) driven by Swiss Pablo Dana and Argentinian Roberto Bindon



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# PRETENDER

THE YOUNG



Bugatti's Type 35 ranks as one of the most successful racing cars of all time, winning over 1 000 races in period, averaging 14 race wins per week, scooping the Grand Prix World Championship in 1926 and winning the Targa Florio five years running, from 1925 through 1929. In its Type 35B format Bugatti leads the way as the iconic pre-war machine but with such pedigree comes some serious collectability, making it near impossible for mere mortals to experience the attributes of a 1929 Grand Prix winner today. But wait... maybe there is, as **Stuart Grant** can attest, an option to replicate the past and live like René Dreyfus or Louis Chiron for a day.

**C**limb over the French blue bodywork, slide your legs down past the large, 4-spoke steering wheel and feel out the tight pedal layout with your feet. It's a normal clutch-brake-accelerator layout but the closeness of the left two pedals necessitates the wearing of racing or ballet shoes, so as not to hit both at the same time.

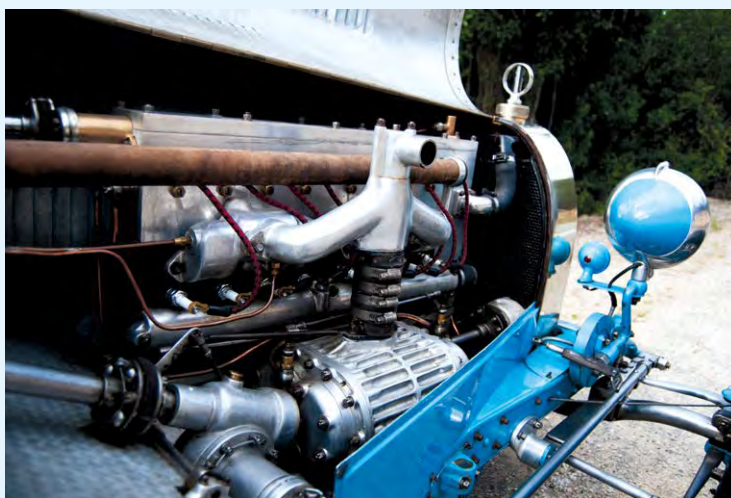
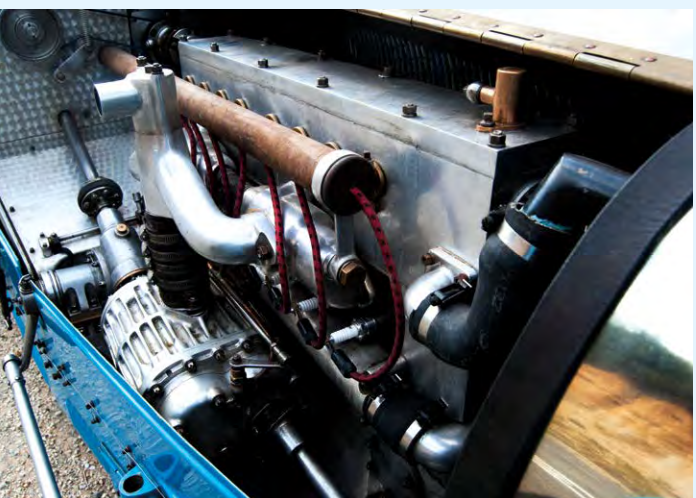
The gear lever sits to your right (outside the cockpit) but it's reassuring to see the lever come through the bodywork, under a flap of leather and into a traditional H-pattern gate alongside your leg. But wait, there's something odd – the lever seems to suffer from dyslexia with first gear located at the

bottom left, second at the top left, third bottom right and fourth up top right. Visions of a tyre-smoking pull-off fade fast as, out of habit, I shift diagonally forward and right... and proceed to go from first straight to fourth!

Neutral is still where it should be, so that's selected to continue with the start routine. Next on the list is to move the dash-mounted ignition-timing lever up to retard the spark for startup. Flip the tap above your right knee to open, unscrew the Ki-Gass knob and give it a few pumps until you hear it squirting fuel directly into the combustion chambers. Close the tap and screw the knob shut.

Open the fuel tap located on the lower right chassis rail. Check the fuel pressure on the gauge seated on the passenger side





dash. If this is low, pressurise the tank by pumping the aluminium handle on the far left – a riding mechanic could help with this, as well as with remembering the routine. Some of us not accustomed to cars of this era might ask why the tank needs to be pressurised. The answer is simple: there is no electrical or mechanical fuel pump. To get the juice flowing, blow air into the petrol tank. This then displaces the liquid and with all seals and valves in place, pushes the

**Yes, believe it or not, Bugatti were at the sharp end of the technology game and despite having a crank handle up front, there is an electrical starter mounted atop the gearbox**

petrol to where it is needed. Think about how your mother told you not to blow into a Liqui-Fruit box and then when you invariably did, how the contents of the box landed on your lap, and you'll understand the theory.

We are still not driving yet, but we are getting close. Find another tap under the left-hand side of the dash and open it as it drip-feeds 2-stroke oil to the Rootes-style supercharger to get its moving parts lubricated. And now all that is left to do is to check the ignition (a beautiful brass switch) is on and push the start button. Yes, believe it or not, Bugatti were at the sharp end of the technology game and despite having a crank handle up front, there is an electrical starter mounted atop the gearbox. You feel the starter motor vibrations through your left leg as it spins

up and drives the ring gear. As the Ki-Gass-sent fuel dumps into the combustion chamber and the magneto-fed sparkplugs shoot out a flame the monster barks into life, sending a puff of black smoke as it burns any excess supercharger oil out the twin tailpipes.

Birds scatter, kids block their ears and dads and granddads get all misty-eyed. Time to pull off. But first a word from the experienced mechanical wizard watching to “advance the timing a bit”. Thankfully the car’s owner has marked the perfect spot for the timing lever on the circular engine-turn polished aluminium dashboard with what looks like Tippex – along with the gearbox H-pattern layout. The car settles into a lumpy idle, but with instructions received to keep the revs high to eliminate the plugs oiling up, I feel out the accelerator pedal.

Just the slightest touch has the rev





counter and acoustic climbing. From the cockpit you can see passers-by stop and stare in awe. With what seems like the entire population watching I depress the tiny clutch pedal. There isn't much movement though; it feels almost like an on-off switch. I take hold of the gear lever and tentatively pull down/left to feel for first gear. The result is an almighty crunching noise and no cog selected. Aha, I've seen this story before with the likes of Hewland racing gearboxes – with no synchros the crashbox needs some assertiveness when it comes to cog swapping. I regroup, grab the lever and in a very deliberate manner, slap the car into gear.

Despite the slight hiccup, my debut pull-off goes very well and once rolling I am able to bury the loud pedal. The car wakes up, not only gathering speed dramatically but also delivering the most magical mechanical noises with the straight-cut gears and

supercharger starting to sing. With the revs in the right spot and that same meaningful attitude shown to the lever, the cog swaps from first to second and then on to third as well. Fourth doesn't come into the equation just yet as the rate at which the car climbs the hill is somewhat terrifying, and the combination of the bumpy ride and lack of seatbelt has me hanging on for dear life.

It's quick, very quick. No surprise when you see that the 2.3-litre straight 8-cylinder motor with blower delivers somewhere between 125 and 140 horses, and the entire car weighs in at 725kg. At first I fight the car as it tracks and wanders across the uneven road surface but eventually I realise that if you relax and go with the flow the ride calms down to a mild panic as the front semi-elliptical and rear ¼ elliptical suspension setup does its job. Until this realisation

**I regroup, grab the lever and in a very deliberate manner, slap the car into gear**



Image: Rob Till.



A few runs under the belt and I am left not only with my mind absolutely blown by the performance achieved by 90-year-old racing technology, but also at just how brave and skilled the drivers of these low-flying projectiles were

hits, the straight-line journey is one of the most daunting ever.

Steering is surprisingly free of play and has a good weight to it but, like the gear selection, takes some oomph to make it work. From the outside the sight of the front wheels' positive camber appears somewhat comical, but the way the car corners is more than admirable. The same goes for the braking department, with a cable-operated system which thanks to an intricate chain-and-sprocket system that equalises braking tension front to rear and side to side automatically, is firm and does a brilliant job of halting the progress.

A few runs under the belt and I am left not only with my mind absolutely blown by the performance achieved by 90-year-old racing technology, but also at just how brave and

skilled the drivers of these low-flying projectiles were. Both car and machine are true heroes and worthy icons.

The definition of a replica is a copy of something that closely resembles the original as far as its shape and appearance. But this replica is not just a look-alike; not just a silhouette that is identical – it is as much a real Bugatti Type 35B as an original one, with this car's parts interchangeable with the real thing – and represents a true reflection of what it was like to drive one. By using the same manufacturing techniques and technologies it's as close as you can get to the real thing, and only the most expert of Bugatti aficionados would be able to tell the difference. It is the ultimate throwback to what many will call the iconic Grand Prix racer. And replica or not, there is no car I have ever driven that is as engaging or as tactile – and that at every turn urges you to drive it and not just go along for the ride. **G**



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# ONE I UNDERNEED NOT OUT

Replicas, recreations and *evoluzioni*... call them what you like but the term is occasionally divisive in our hobby, with those who feel the concept broadens the field and others who consider a copy as nothing more than a perversion of an icon. But a lot of opinion has been swayed by the variation in quality of individual efforts, with plenty of Cobra and Porsche 356 replicas lacking the detail of the original. But 'recreate' a car correctly and the fruits of your workshop skills can enrich the hobby, especially when the real thing is simply unattainable, says **Graeme Hurst**.

**M**ost classic car enthusiasts have bucket list cars and some, like me, even have categories: when it comes to my mental list under the competition banner, the selection and order is quite clear: the Mercedes 300SLR with which Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson won the 1955 Mille Miglia and NUB 120, the 1950 Alpine Rally-winning Jaguar XK 120, would occupy first and second place, with the still fantastically original 1929 Monaco Grand Prix-winning Bugatti Type 35B right behind. Fourth? The Austin-Healey that came first in class at the 1954 Sebring 12 Hours and helped coin the 100S moniker, the badge adorning the most desirable of all Austin-Healey models.

Trouble is that marque founder Donald Healey only made a handful of works cars and 50 customer versions and, if they do change hands, we're talking telephone numbers in hard currency. A well-executed replica would certainly put a big tick on that list and, unlike the 300SLR or Type 35, it's attainable because a barn find 'base' Austin-Healey 100s can still be bought – albeit at a price.

Certainly that's what one of South Africa's leading Healey aficionados, the late Richard Hulse thought when he built up this example around eight years ago. Now in the care of his brother Derek – another Healey expert and stalwart of the Cape classic car scene – it's a well-executed example of how far one can go in attaining the dream but without breaking the bank.

To understand the 100S's background, it's important to rewind to the early 1950s and understand the '100' story. The model was born in response to the British automotive industry's 'export or die' post-war mantra, when steel was in short supply and only available to industries which boosted the country's balance of payments through exports. It was the brainchild of Donald Healey who already had a string of successful, albeit small, production sportscars to his name but was keen to enjoy some of the success that the



likes of MG was having with its TC and TD sportscars over in America.

MG's success (with what was effectively a warmed over pre-war model) across the pond had also caught the attention of Austin boss Len Lord at the same time, and he famously put word out that he was after a design for an affordable sportscar that could leverage off Austin componentry. Frazer-Nash, Jensen and Healey all rose to the challenge, with the deadline for their respective debuts being the 1952 Earls Court Motor Show – then the Geneva or Frankfurt of its day.

Of the three, Donald Healey's offering was by far the standout. It featured a pretty curvaceous body, by the then little-known designer Gerry Coker, clothing a simple-to-produce, semi-monocoque chassis that was formatted to take Austin A90 mechanicals all-round. A keen marketeer, Healey was adamant that the new sportscar must offer 100mph performance – hence the 100 name – and added a sexy fold-flat screen to reduce drag and ensure that, even with Austin's 2.7-litre, 4-cylinder engine, it could comfortably hit 'the ton'.

Healey reckoned it could be profitable with an £850 + tax price tag, and Austin's boss was certainly convinced and famously shook hands at the show on a deal to supply his engine... and so the Austin-Healey name was formed, with a badge for the show car engraved overnight so that the public would know what it was they needed to order: an Austin-Healey 100.

The car was one of the stars of the show and quickly found success in its intended market, although the first version (the BN1) featured some shortcomings, primarily its 3-speed overdrive gearbox which had first where second is usually found, and was a product of the A90's gearbox having its first gear (deemed too low) removed. The revised BN2 version in mid-1955 featured a 4-speed overdrive unit with a conventional gate, along with minor styling tweaks including the extension of the side flash over the rear wings to allow an optional two-tone paint scheme. There was also an optional factory (and retro-fit) 100M version boasting a higher compression engine and bigger carburettors, along with a louvred bonnet, with the M standing for 'Le Mans'.

From the outset, the 100 was campaigned competitively and, just a year after launch, Donald Healey's team at his Warwick Works was developing a version to compete at the 1953 Le Mans 24 Hours. This works variant featured an all-alloy body to reduce weight, and a lightened chassis. The engine was heavily tweaked, featuring larger carburettors, a revised camshaft and a lightened flywheel – all which resulted in 132bhp – a huge step up from the standard 100's 90bhp. The works car also featured a non-overdrive 'box (to save weight) and lightweight racing seats. There was also an oval grille; Donald Healey never having been convinced by the 'squashed trapezoid' version, and a simple Plexiglass wrap-around windscreen, again to save weight which, all-in, was around 90kg less than a road-going 100.

Three cars were constructed, two of which were entered at Le Mans, where they finished a credible 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, with the former co-driven by Maurice Gatsomides of speed trap Gatsometer fame!

A year on the Warwick Works created a second batch of three cars with further



modifications including disc brakes all round (a production first, although the numbers are tiny) and peg-drive wheels, plus a David Brown racing gearbox. The first three cars were retrospectively upgraded. That year the works car that took 14<sup>th</sup> at Le Mans in '53 was entered in the Sebring 12 Hours in Florida, where it surprised the rest of the grid with a class win and third place overall. Ever conscious of the value of the 'win on Sunday; sell on Monday' adage, Donald Healey badged the works cars as a '100S', with the S standing for 'Sebring' and sanctioned a production run of 50 100S models for privateer racers.

The works cars were further modified with the addition of a redesigned, 8-port cylinder head by tuning guru Harry Weslake before the Sebring class-winner, known by its registration NOJ 393, was campaigned in the Carrera Panamericana later that same year.

A year on that same car would sadly achieve infamy for the 100S when it was involved in the catastrophic accident at the 1955 Le Mans, which saw over 80 spectators lose their lives. A lot has been written about that dark day when Pierre

Levegh's 300SLR catapulted into the crowd after it connected with Lance Macklin in the 100S. He maintained that he was taking evasive action after Jaguar D-Type driver Mike Hawthorne braked late to make a last-minute pits entry.

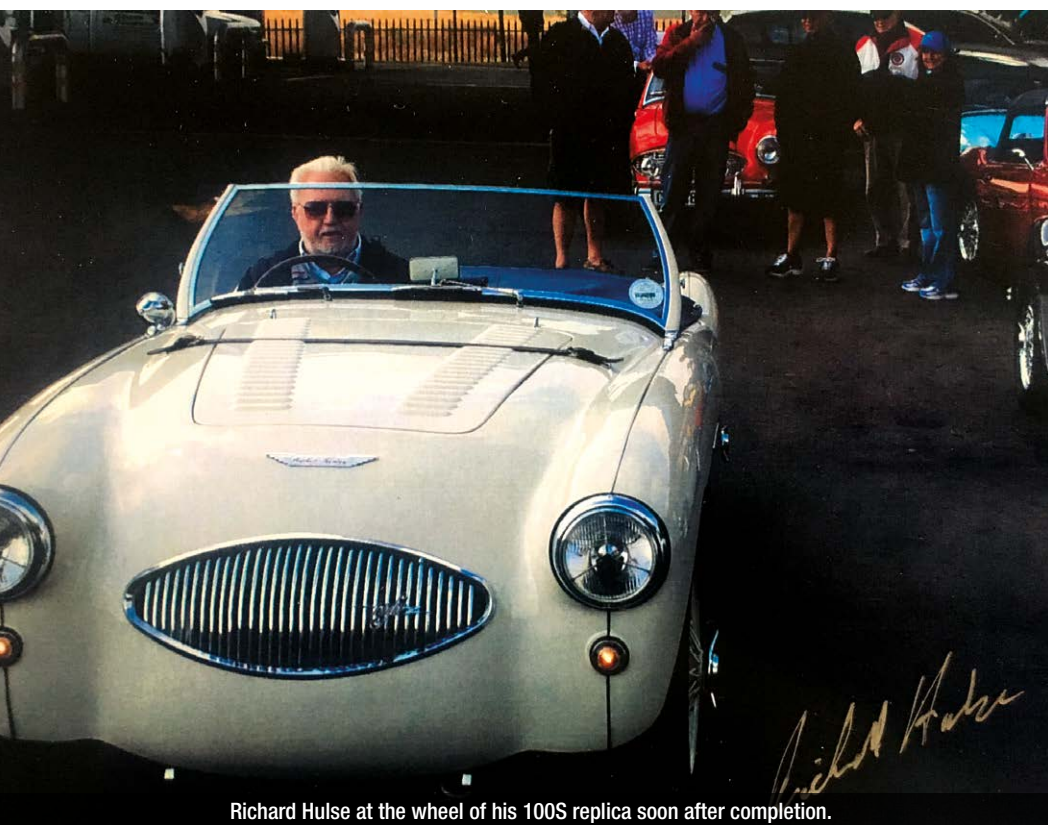
That tragedy famously spelled the end of official competition for Mercedes-Benz in motorsport for close on 40 years. Donald Healey's private 100S customers continued to campaign their cars, and NOJ 393 itself raced in a few fixtures after it was released by the French authorities and repaired. Meanwhile the works' focus turned to rallying, with huge success with the 100/6 and later 3000 variants.

But the 100S has always been the standout racing icon in Healey circles and, in recent years, an array of factory-spec parts have been developed by marque specialists, allowing enthusiasts to recreate the excitement of the hugely exciting original. It was that parts supply that sparked Richard's interest when the time came to restore

a BN1 he owned.

"Richard paid 25 grand for it about 30 years ago but it was a basket case. And it just stood in his workshop for years and years and then when he decided to restore it, he realised that the body was beyond repair," explains Derek. "And it had stuff missing, including the gearbox." That was the catalyst for using it to create a 100S but Richard certainly wasn't new to the restoration scene, having built up a pair of fast-road 3000 Mkl cars with clubmate Vic Hickel, as well as running the spares division of the local Healey club. Both he and Derek had umpteen big Healeys and Sprites over

But the 100S has always been the standout racing icon in Healey circles and, in recent years, an array of factory-spec parts have been developed by marque specialists, allowing enthusiasts to recreate the excitement



Richard Hulse at the wheel of his 100S replica soon after completion.



the years since they founded the club in the early 1970s.

For the 100S project, Richard turned to marque expert Steve Norton of Cape International in the UK for a 100S body kit, which he had shipped out. With the kit, all the body panels are alloy whereas on a standard 100, the alloy sections are limited to the front and rear shrouds. "The kit itself was around R90k at the time but it took half that again to fit it correctly as the panels are supplied without the returns on the edges, so there was a lot of fettling to get it all to fit properly," recalls Derek.

Mechanically the engine was all there but the cylinder head was finished so Richard called on Denis Welch – another well-known specialist in the UK – for a fast-road alloy 100M head. Technically it should be a copy of the Weslake head, but that's huge money (around R110k once you've paid shipping and duty) and the 100M head is perfectly adequate performance wise.

That might sound a bit criminal but the reality is that the original was long gone and a 100S-correct 4-speed is like hen's teeth

One item that's decidedly non-original is the gearbox, which is a Toyota 5-speed unit. That might sound a bit criminal but the reality is that the original was long gone and a 100S-correct 4-speed is like hen's teeth. BN1 3-speed units are more available but that 'box is not that much fun to use and so Richard was persuaded to upgrade the transmission. "I convinced him to go for a 27R unit – and it makes the car so much more usable," explains Derek, who says it's doing just 2800rpm at 120km/h.

Technically the Hulse car falls short in some areas, the windscreen being the most obvious part as it retains the fold-flat item but, as any 100 owner will attest, having the screen down (which is what the 100S low-cut Plexiglass unit will feel like) on a regular basis isn't all that much fun, and most 100S replicas retain the standard item. Ditto the soft top which Richard retained, but again this makes the car a practical classic. It should also have disc brakes but then the early works cars used drums, and Richard had access to a set of period-correct aluminum finned drums so opted to use those – although Derek finds them too 'grabby' in regular use and is looking to

upgrade to a set of discs.

And if you want to be really picky, the car should have 54-spoke wire wheels (or the peg-drive alloys which were retro-fitted to the Le Mans cars) in place of the 60-spoke items it currently wears. The difference is hardly noticeable yet hugely sensible, as Derek well knows: he once had wire wheel failure while giving a 100/6 stick around Cape Town's hospital bend.

But there are other items that are correct, including the Le Mans-style filler cap and the alloy cockpit tonneau, which lessens drag at speed and really raises the level of detail that Richard set out to achieve. The colour scheme is typical 100S too and, for me, the Hulse 100S ticks plenty of boxes as far as 'recreating' the aesthetics of the original while having to keep an eye on the cheque book. Importantly it emulates the character of the original as – like a genuine 100S – it's based on a Healey 100 chassis and engine. That means the aural dynamics generated by its alloy body and big 4-pot engine, as well as the handling derived through its steering box and live-axle suspension, are near spot on. And that's something no glass fibre Cobra kit featuring Jaguar or modern BMW independent suspension can possibly deliver. **C**





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MESSERSCHMITT KR200





# LOW FLYING

Microcars were a popular solution to Europe's post-war transportation needs and this particular version, as **Mike and Wendy Monk** discuss, had some fighter plane connections.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a... cabin scooter! And it does not take a superman to drive it, but there is a link to the skies. The KR200 is a bubble car – the KR stands for 'kabinroller', effectively a scooter with a cabin – designed by aircraft engineer Fritz Fend and produced by Messerschmitt from 1955 to 1964. Post-war, the German aircraft manufacturer was temporarily not allowed to manufacture aircraft and had turned its resources to producing other commodities. In 1952, Fend approached Messerschmitt with the idea of manufacturing small motor vehicles in its factory in Regensburg, and the go-ahead was given.

Based on Fend's 'Flitzer' invalid carriage, the KR175 is a cross between a scooter and an aircraft fuselage. The design appeared in 1953 and featured tandem seating accessed

by a hatch that opened upward and to the right. The standard version had a canopy made from a large Plexiglass dome with a cut-out at the front for a small, flat, glass windscreen with a manually-operated wiper, and a cut-out on either side to carry the frames for the sliding windows. The front wheel arches were faired in. The KR175 was powered by an air-cooled 174cc Fichtel & Sachs single-cylinder, 2-stroke engine mounted in front of the rear wheel. It produced just 6.7kW at 5250rpm. It was started with a pull rope but there was an option of an electric starter, which became standard in 1954. The KR175 had a twist-grip accelerator and gears were selected with a hand clutch. All three wheels had cable-operated brakes actuated by the single pedal. A handbrake was provided.



Irreverently dubbed 'Snow White's Coffin' (Schneewittchensarg) in Germany, around 15 000 units were sold before the KR175 was replaced in 1955 with the KR200 that boasted an engine capacity increase to 191cc

Irreverently dubbed 'Snow White's Coffin' (Schneewittchensarg) in Germany, around 15 000 units were sold before the KR175 was replaced in 1955 with the KR200 that boasted an engine capacity increase to 191cc. Power was increased to 7.6kW at a giddy 6000rpm, which helped improve top speed to anything up to 105km/h – depending on the weight of the occupants, of course. Claimed fuel consumption was 3.2 litres/100km. The engine had two sets of contact breaker points: to be able to reverse, the engine had to be stopped and restarted, the crankshaft rotating in the opposite direction, which was effected by pushing the key further into the ignition switch. An offshoot of this set-up was that

the KR200's transmission then provided the same ratios in reverse.

There were numerous styling changes both to the body and the mechanicals. The canopy design was improved and an electric windscreen wiper was fitted. The front track was widened, the wheel arches now had cut-outs and conventional pedals

were adopted. At the back, the suspension and engine mounting were reworked and hydraulic shock absorbers were fitted at all three wheels. The KR200 sold for DM2 500 – little more than half the price of a VW Beetle – and reportedly almost 12 000 units were sold in its first year.

In order to prove the KR200's durability, in 1955 Messerschmitt prepared a KR200 for an attempt to break the 24-hour speed record for 3-wheeled vehicles under 250cc. It had a special single-seat, low-drag body and a highly modified engine. The throttle, brake and clutch cables were duplicated but the suspension, steering and braking components were stock standard. On August 29-30 the car was run for 24 hours at the famous Hockenheim Ring race circuit situated in Germany's Rhine Valley and broke 22 international speed records in its class, including the coveted 24-hour speed record that it set at 103km/h.

The Franschoek Motor Museum's KR200 is a 1957 model, so is fairly civilised in terms of controls. When first approaching the car I tower over it and wonder if I'll ever fit into the cockpit. But after raising the canopy and stepping inside fighter-pilot fashion, I'm amazed to find that once



seated with front seat set right back on its runners, my feet are nowhere near the pedals. It is surprisingly comfortable too, and the view out is practically 360-degrees thanks to the thin glass framework. And, providing passengers are not too big or wide at the hip, there is actually space for two people to squeeze in side-by-side behind the driver, a bit like an enclosed Dicky seat – or +2 in more modern parlance. Legs can be stretched out either side of the central front seat. Maybe this is where Gordon Murray got the idea for his McLaren F1 road car...

Instrumentation? A speedo reading to 80mph – and a clock, making it easy to calculate just how long it will take to reach your destination at the speed you are travelling. Steering is by a simple, ivory, aircraft-like handlebar that swivels the steering column about its axis from the horizontal (straight-ahead) position. The mechanism is connected directly to the track rods of the front wheels, providing an instantaneous response. I quickly discover that small, measured steering inputs are the order of the day to avoid weaving about, with the 4.00x8-inch tyres responding immediately to the

slightest driver input. You can almost think it through corners – remember Clint Eastwood in *Firefox* anyone? – and with a wheel at each (three!) corner, handling is as if on rails.

The gearbox is a sequential non-synchro 4-speed and, once fired up and first gear engaged via the slightly vague lever mounted on the right side of the cockpit, it's A for Away, with the usual 2-stroke blat from the exhaust. Light – kerb weight is around 230kg – and low to the ground (120cm to the top of the bubble), the KR's rubber suspension provides a comfortable ride, far more forgiving than a kart, and as the kilometres build up, the grin factor grows proportionately. Cruising along with the roof off and enjoying all the sights, sounds and smells of the surrounding terrain can be as much fun trundling along at 50km/h in a KR as it is at more than twice the speed in a modern roadster.

At 2.03m long and 1.22m wide there is a slight feeling of vulnerability when driving the KR in today's heavy traffic, but its novelty value generally ensures being given a wide berth anyway. In the

context of its time the KR Messerschmitts fulfilled a need, and anyone who witnessed the dazzling array of microcars on display at this year's Knysna Motor Show will appreciate the variety of designs that were available. They most certainly provided affordable transport for the masses.

In 1956 after West Germany had joined NATO, Messerschmitt was allowed to manufacture aircraft again and lost interest in the KR, so a snappily-titled company called Fahrzeug und Maschinenbau GmbH Regensburg (FMR) was set up to continue production. Other models were subsequently introduced, including the 'Kabrio' and a roadster. However, production ceased in 1964 after some 40 000 had been sold as the demand for basic transport had diminished as the country's economy boomed. But in its time, the KR successfully answered a nation's need. 🇩🇪

At 2.03m long and 1.22m wide there is a slight feeling of vulnerability when driving the KR in today's heavy traffic



# SMALL BOX OF TRICKS

Take a group of South African motorsport enthusiasts in the late 1960s, turn the topic to saloon car racing, and the conversation would no doubt have resounded with names such as Lotus Cortina, Mini Cooper, Alfa GTV, Ford Mustang and... Renault Gordini. **Carvel Webb** reflects on, and pays tribute to, the Gordini 1300.

**Images by Etienne Fouche**

It is 50 years since this little car sprang to prominence on the local scene, becoming a household name when talking racing and rallying. It is the purpose of this article to revisit this urban legend, to examine what made it so special and pay tribute to its role in furthering the development of local engineering and driving skills. No apology is made for the random mix of imperial and metric terms, as that was the language of the day during which this tale unfolded. Kilometres per hour were starting to permeate but kilowatts and newton metres were still somewhat foreign concepts.

The story begins a few years earlier, with the launch in 1962 of Renault's R8 saloon as a replacement for the dated Dauphine. The R8 was a small, comfortable 4-seater, following the Renault practice of the time with a rear engine slung behind the back axle, independent coil spring suspension all round, and innovative features like disc brakes on all four wheels and a 4-speed, all synchromesh gearbox. The newly developed engine (dubbed 'Sierra') was a tough five main bearing design, initially 956cc but quickly upgraded to 1108cc, with a cast-iron block, wet sleeves and an alloy wedge design 8-port cylinder head developing some 40-odd horsepower. The R8's performance potential was soon realised and R8s started appearing in local club races. Simple modifications such as bolting the 956cc head onto the 1108cc block to up the compression ratio, a high lift cam, a branch exhaust and a twin choke Weber carburettor created a sporty saloon which was competitive, but could be used as a family car during the week.

In 1964 this all took a further turn for the better from the enthusiasts' point of view when, in what many believe to be a response to the development of

the Mini Cooper, Renault approached Amédée Gordini (with whom they had had a long-standing relationship) to work his magic on the R8. The result was the R1134 model R8 1108cc Gordini. The basis of the conversion was the development of a crossflow cylinder head with hemispherical combustion chambers and twin overhead rocker shafts, but with the rockers driven by short-angled pushrods running off the existing single block-mounted camshaft. Twin Solex side-draught carburettors and a tuned branch exhaust completed the picture, more than doubling the power output to 96BHP at 6750rpm.

Although campaigned reasonably successfully in the European Rally circuit of 1965 and 1966, the 1108cc was forced to compete in the 1300cc class and suffered significant weight and power disadvantages compared to its main rivals. Further development ensued, culminating in the release of the R1135 model R8 Gordini 1300 late in 1966, which burst onto the motorsport scene in full force during 1967 – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Crossflow cylinder head with twin overhead rocker shafts driven by the single block-mounted camshaft.



## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE 'HEART OF THE MATTER'

In standard form the 1300 Gordini engine (type 812) was a 1255cc, based on the 1108cc Sierra block and 72mm stroke crankshaft, but with the bore stretched to 74.5mm. Twin 40DCOE Weber side-draught carburettors replaced the Solex items and developed either 110BHP or 103BHP at 6750rpm, depending on which specification was quoted. Maximum torque of 85lbs-ft at 5000rpm was given.

The cylinder head was based on the R1134 1108cc model but with larger 35mm inlet valves. In order to accommodate the relatively large valves Gordini's approach featured spark plug chambers recessed into the head, and linked to the combustion chamber by two small flame ports. This had the added advantage of spreading the flame front during ignition, resulting in a very effective design. However, this feature also proved to be a bit of a heartache for years to come, in that if the engine overheated the head would more than likely crack in the area between the valves and the flame ports. It is a tribute to South African engineering expertise that pioneering work was done in the early days of MIG aluminium welding by the likes of Frank Shearsby, enabling the repair of otherwise scrap heads.

However, all this wouldn't have worked if it weren't for the equally innovative overhead rocker shaft arrangement driven via short-angled pushrods by the existing block-mounted camshaft. This provided many advantages of a double overhead camshaft arrangement, but was considerably cheaper and simpler – and easier to adjust. This head and rocker shaft design served Renault well and the principle was adopted for the engines used in the R16TS, R12 Gordini, R5 Gordini and Alpine, Alpine A110 and Renault-supplied engines for the Lotus Europa and others.

The Gordini engine wasn't just a Sierra block with a fancy head, though. The block was bored with a 2mm offset to accommodate the larger cylinder sleeves, which together with the higher output necessitated the development of thicker section conrods with a corresponding 2mm offset big end. Pistons were domed, with pockets cut out for the valves, and compression ratio ranged from 10.5:1 (standard) to 11.5:1 and higher for sport and racing.

To accommodate the more stressful demands the camshaft was fitted with phosphor bronze bearing bushes and wider cam lobes as well as wider cam followers, which reduced the initial valve train acceleration shock on the flank of the cam and enabled quite a phenomenal rev range. A larger capacity oil pump and full flow oil cooler were fitted, the lighter flywheel was dowelled to the crankshaft, and a balanced heavy-duty clutch plate was fitted to the flywheel. A 4-into-2-into-1 branch

manifold with slightly unequal lengths to give a spread around the max torque range was fitted, and to handle the electrical demands the Gordini was fitted with a Motorola alternator. Larger diameter crank and water pump pulleys found a home, driven by a 12mm (as opposed to 10mm) fan belt. The cooling fan went from four to six blades to help a thicker core radiator stay cool.



Domed pistons with pockets cut out for the valves.



To accommodate the relatively large valves the spark plugs were recessed into the head, and linked to the combustion chamber by two small flame ports.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

In 1968 a factory 1296cc kit was made available to fully exploit the limits of the 1300cc class. Locally the likes of John Conchie, 'Puddles' Adler and 'Pee Wee' Buys joined forces to form the famous Alconi tuning business and their 701B road-race and IR8 full-race camshafts saw power outputs approaching the 140BHP mark, with the sturdy short-stroke engine revving freely to anything from 7500rpm to 8500rpm, depending on the state of tune.

With the advent of the 1289cc production engine in the R10 saloon in 1968, Alconi and others pounced on the opportunity presented by the new, longer 77mm stroke crankshaft and extended the capacity of the Gordini engine to 1480cc, which with larger inlet valves of 38mm saw power outputs approaching 160BHP.

## GETTING THE HORSES ON THE ROAD (OR TRACK)

The other mechanical component contributing to its success was the Gordini's 5-speed, close-ratio gearbox. This type 353 box was based closely on the standard type 330 found in the R8/R10 saloons but obtained its extra gears by using lengthened primary and secondary shafts which protruded through the end of the case and onto which were mounted the extra two cogs with the necessary selector mechanism – all this covered with a cast-aluminium cover. The 5-speed box is therefore easily distinguishable as it looks like the standard 4-speed version with a hump on the end. One weak point in the original 330 design proved to be the differential which, as many owners of modified R8s found out, could shred its innards – particularly under shock loading experienced with tyre slip and grip through fast corners.

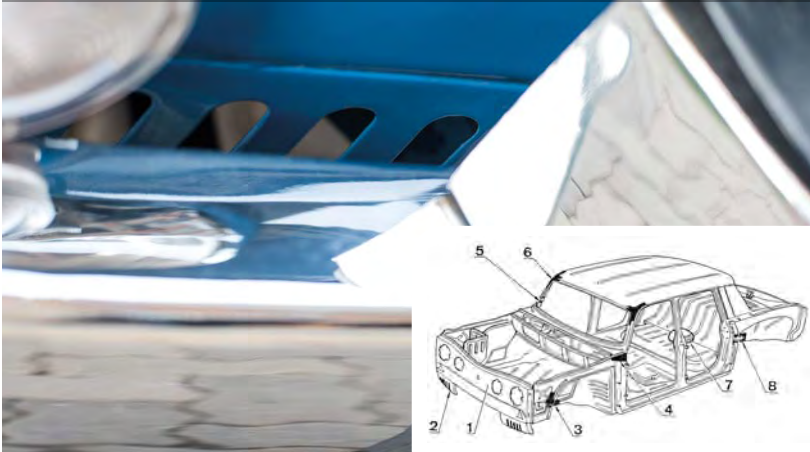
Gordini's answer to this was both simple, elegant and effective – he fitted four planet wheels into the differential casing in place of two, effectively doubling the number of teeth in engagement at any one point. This modification, together with uprated universal joints and half shafts, handled most of what could be thrown at it at the time.



## WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE CAR?

Apart from its engine and gearbox the R8 Gordini enjoyed the ministrations of Monsieur Gordini in many other aspects, transforming this unsuspecting runabout into a true sport saloon. He even added a touch of luxury to give it a mini gran tourer flavour.

The lower front body panel was pierced with vertical slots to enhance airflow to the front disc brakes.



The body was stiffened in strategic places (3, 4, 5, 6 and 8) and a hump added under the rear seat (7) to accommodate the 5-speed gearbox.

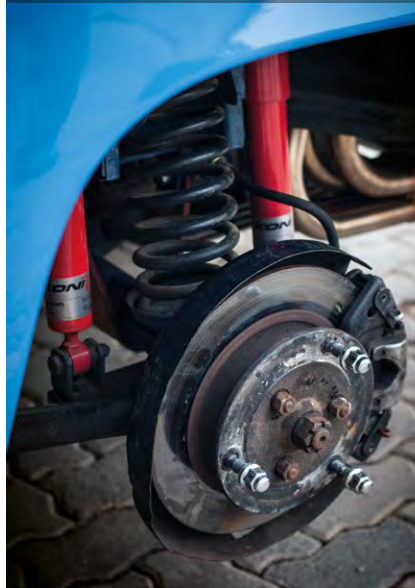
## BODY

The body shell was stiffened in strategic places, the front panel was modified to accept two additional quartz iodine driving lights, the lower section was pierced with vertical slots to enhance the flow of air to the front disc brakes and the floor pan under the rear seat acquired a hump to accommodate the 5-speed box. All the removable panels (doors, mudguards, engine lid, bonnet, and rear panel) were made of a thinner gauge material to 'add lightness', as Colin Chapman would have said. A stiffening brace was bolted across the width of the car between the rear chassis frames to increase structural rigidity and the rear cross member supporting the engine was almost doubled in thickness, with 'U' sections welded in.

## SUSPENSION

One of the most obvious rear suspension changes was the quadruple shock absorber arrangement with twin shocks either side of the rear coil springs. The springs themselves were different, being borrowed from the R1093 Dauphine. These were 25mm shorter, with a flex rate of 24% as opposed to 27%, and included a 10mm spacer in the top of the spring well. The swing axle design of the regular R8 included suspension travel-limiting straps and these were beefed up from 25mm to 50mm for Gordini use. At the front end shorter (25mm) and thicker (13.5mm compared to 12.5mm) springs with an 18% flex rate compared to 24% were used and the anti-roll bar mountings were reinforced with an additional bracing strap.

The most obvious rear suspension change: twin shocks either side of the rear coil spring.



Rear suspension travel-limiting straps were beefed up from 25mm to 50mm.



Front disc thickness was increased and brake deflector plates were flared for better cooling.



## BRAKES

When the R8 was introduced it caused a bit of a stir with the inclusion of disc brakes on all four wheels. Gordini then waved his wand and the discs were increased in thickness from 6.5mm to 7.5mm and later 8mm, the master cylinder bore grew from 19mm to 22mm and a remote booster was added in the front trunk compartment. In addition, the front brake deflector plates were modified to include an air scoop for additional cooling (fed by the mentioned slots in the front body panel).

## STEERING

The rack-and-pinion steering of the R8 was a pleasure to use, so apart from an appealing sport steering wheel and a ratio reduction from 20:1 to 17:1 with an eye on its envisaged competition role, everything was left as it was.

## LIGHTING

The R8G R1134 1108cc model had already seen the enhancement of the front headlights from 5" to 7" Cibie units, but this was further augmented with new twin quartz iodine long-range driving lights, which gave the 1300 Gordini its signature four-eyed look. Again with an eye on motorsport, wiring was incorporated for additional fog lights which could be fitted to the bumper brackets. A selector switch on the dash allowed for either 'fog' or 'driving' lights to be energised, although this was changed from 1969 onwards to a double switch arrangement so that both could be selected simultaneously.

## FUEL

Although the Gordini could return quite respectable fuel consumption figures when cruising, the twin 40DCOE Webers were thirsty when driven enthusiastically (is there any other way?). Consequently, an additional fuel tank was included in the front trunk, which while doing little for the luggage capacity certainly worked wonders for its long-range capability. It also had the advantage that in club competition on weekends the back tank could be left empty to even up the weight distribution slightly. A selector switch on the dash allowed the fuel gauge to register either of the tanks and a tap on the floor next to the gear lever facilitated easy change over.

## INSTRUMENTATION

The Gordini dash is joy for any car enthusiast, with a full complement of instruments, switches and warning lights confronting *le pilote*. The left-hand drive and right-hand drive layouts were not a mirror image however, and our right-hand drive version had an inviting blank space between the rev counter and the air vent, which almost universally was seized by its owners for the incorporation of an almost obligatory oil pressure gauge.

## HORNS AND HORNS!

In standard trim the R8 sported single and later twin electric diaphragm hooters, but it was felt that these were not up to clearing the way through the forest stages on the European rally circuit. So Gordini increased the cacophony with a set of powerful compressor-driven air horns that gave a signature initial mild beep of the electric hooters, followed half a second later by the resounding blast of the air horns.



New twin quartz iodine long-range driving lights gave the 1300 Gordini its signature look.



An additional fuel tank and remote booster were included in the front trunk.



Gordinis got a full complement of instruments and warning lights.

## THE ROAD AND TRACK

The exploits of the R8G have become legendary – almost to the degree of suffering from a bit of ‘the older I get the faster I was’, but it was undoubtedly a giant-killer in its day. My enduring memory is as a student watching Spencer Shultze howling down the old Kyalami main straight (the sound from the straight through exhaust music to my ears) during the Onyx Production Car events of the Rand Autumn Trophy meeting in 1968. He was ahead of Dirk Marais’s V8 Sunbeam Tiger and Peter Markham’s Alfa Sprint and was changing up to 5<sup>th</sup> through the ‘Kink’, before disappearing down to Crowthorne Corner.

I had the opportunity – as we did back then – to have a close look under the engine lid in the pits while Spencer was fettling things between heats and immediately fell in love with the thing, although I had to wait another four long years before I could afford to lay my hands on one.

It was in 1969 that Gordini cemented its place in SA motorsport history when, at the Rand Daily Mail Nine Hour, a 1300cc Gordini driven by Scamp Porter and Geoff Mortimer passed a Ferrari and a Porsche 917 on Kyalami’s main straight – and clinched first saloon car home and 4<sup>th</sup> overall honours. Granted, it was influenced by a typical Highveld thunderstorm and the cars were aquaplaning all over the track, but the fans loved it.

The further development of the car, culminating in supercharged versions campaigning against Meissner Escorts and Ford Mustangs, is arguably as famous – together with the exploits of one emerging youngster, in a similar car, with the name of Jody...

On the road it was no less impressive. At a time when the average small 4-cylinder saloon would wend its way to 100km/h in anything from 15 to 20 seconds, the Gordini’s 0-100 time of around 11 seconds was astounding. With a modicum of tuning (the almost as iconic 701 camshaft from Alconi *et al*) and smaller 13-inch AMW rims, this dropped to just under 10 seconds. To put this into perspective, this was in the same league as the BMW big sixes, and even the Jaguar XK120. My car had this cam fitted with a couple of other stage 1 tweaks which resulted in an extra 20BHP, peaking at 7500rpm according to the Alconi dynamometer. I recall indulging in a mild late night robot-to-robot dice down a relatively deserted West Street in Durban with the owner of the then newly-introduced Honda Four. At the end of the fourth stretch he leapt off his bike and came striding across towards me. My worry that he was upset fell away as he got close. With a huge grin on his face he demanded: “You’ve got to show me the engine of this damn thing – now!”



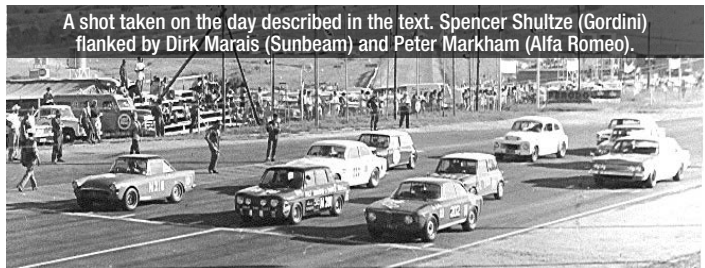
Scamp Porter ahead of Geoff Mortimer.



Scamp Porter and Jody Scheckter.



Scamp Porter.



A shot taken on the day described in the text. Spencer Shultze (Gordini) flanked by Dirk Marais (Sunbeam) and Peter Markham (Alfa Romeo).

## G FOR GRIEF?

After its heyday in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s the Gordini continued to soldier on in historic and club competition events. But due to the scarcity of spares and lack of information on the intricacies of its engine, more and more Gordinis were seen with replacement ‘wedge’ engines or 16TS conversions, as opposed to the original 812 engines. Renowned Renault expert and tuning guru Ian Schwartz wrote a fascinating article (with the above title) on the subject at the time, which outlined many of the pitfalls which could face the unwary when fiddling with the original engine.

Scarcity of original workshop manuals also proved a problem and it was not unusual to find engines with conrods or pistons the wrong way round, incorrect valve geometry, incorrectly assembled rocker gear, oval valve guides, warped and/or leaking cylinder liners and a host of other challenges.

Another less understood gremlin was overheating. The Gordini cooling system relied on the vortex effect of the car in motion to suck hot air out of the engine bay through the aperture between the bottom of the rear panel and the engine bay bottom covers. The Gordini engine bay was clearly designed to be worked on by French mechanics of small stature and double-jointed wrists, with the result that many owners removed these bottom cover plates from the engine bay to facilitate access to the carb linkage, oil filter, oil cooler hoses, fuel pump, or coil. However, leaving these plates off results in air being forced into the engine bay in the opposite direction to what the fan is trying to achieve, which would result in chronic overheating and damage – particularly to the cylinder head.

The Gordini’s original competition history and proud record in both sprint and endurance events is a testimony to the soundness of its fundamental design, but as one commentator put it, “there are over 40 different ways to assemble a Gordini engine, only one of which is correct!”

So the message is clear: restoration of a reliable Gordini engine is possible – just make sure you have of all the necessary information and be aware of its idiosyncrasies before you start. I wrote an article some years ago covering the 812 engine assembly essentials which, together with Ian’s original treatise, are available from the editor at [stuart@classiccarafrika.com](mailto:stuart@classiccarafrika.com).



A sporting steering wheel framed the full complement of Jaeger gauges.

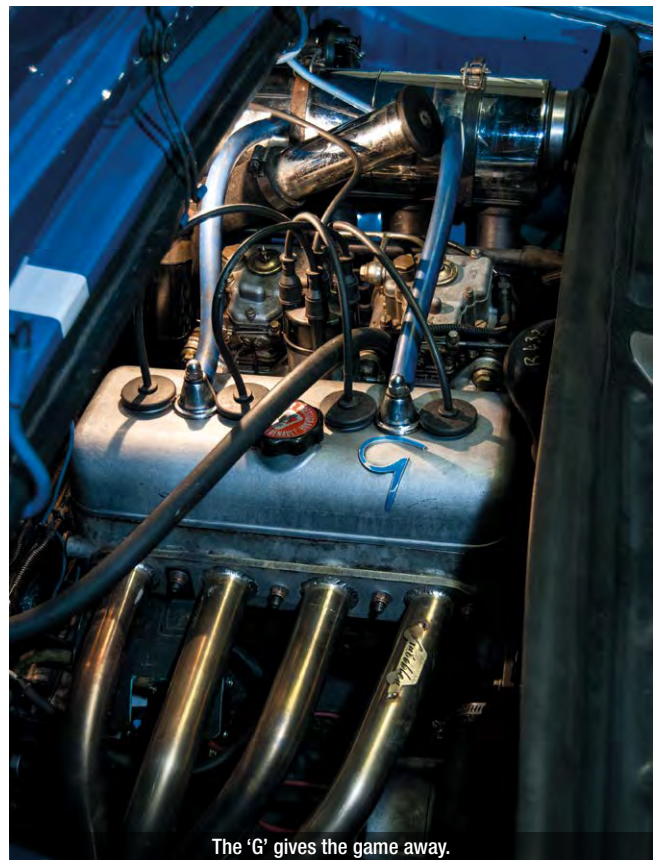
### THE R8 GORDINI TODAY

Some 294 examples of the 1300cc Gordini were assembled and sold in South Africa, which given the consumption of a fair number of these in competition has meant that only a few original examples survive today. Compared to the modern 'hot hatch' its performance in standard trim might be considered rather mild, but we need to remember that at the time the 0-100km/h sprint time and 175km/h top speed was phenomenal – the essence of a sporting family saloon – and was on a par with the Mini Cooper, Lotus Cortina and Alfa GT of the day. Owners today are more concerned with originality than its potential as a performance car, but this is not to say it is not capable of holding its own in modern company.

Following a spares drought for many years, parts can now be sourced from specialist suppliers in Belgium (RAG) and France (Mecaparts), which means that most restoration and preservation work can be tackled successfully, albeit at a price. With modern metal spray and Mig welding techniques, even many of those precious cylinder heads thought to be scrap can be recovered and brought up to original spec. And if you want more, opt for the legendary factory 1296cc performance kit which will result in a very sporty performance, even by today's standards, with 0-100km/h times well down into the sub-10 second bracket.

What many owners the world over have done is put the original motor safely on one side and enlisted the services of an R9 or R11 block, crank, conrods and other bits to build a 1397cc 'wedge' performance motor. Or they source the head and associated parts from the R5 Alpine/Gordini (type 840) which looks similar to the original 812 engine. Engines of up to 1550cc can be built, with normally-aspirated power outputs in the 170BHP region. This sort of figure requires gearbox and drivetrain attention though, like what was done by Dave Wheeler and Frans Cronje, who fit R16TS type 336 gearbox internals into a 330 gearbox.


Another popular engine alternative is the 16TS motor. The bell housing bolts straight onto the 330 or 353 gearbox but the removal of the rear-mounted fuel tank and fitment of a front-mounted radiator is necessary.



The 'G' gives the game away.

### QUO VADIS?

We are privileged to have a comparatively high surviving population of R8 Gordinis in South Africa compared to many other countries, courtesy of its local assembly programme and its popularity in local motorsport circles in its heyday. It is up to us to maintain and conserve this motoring heritage; the breeding ground for some of our best drivers, engineering and tuning skills.

Not bad for what started as a little 44BHP runabout... 



Smaller optional 13-inch AMW alloy wheels dropped the 0-100km/h to under 10 seconds.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My love affair with this little blue car would not have been possible without the inspiration, help, encouragement, advice and support of many people over the last 45 years. Principal amongst these are the following:

Spencer Shultze, 'Puddles' Adler and the late 'Pee Wee' Buys (then at Alconi and who motivated and helped me to keep going despite a litany of seized gearboxes, broken crankshafts, cracked cylinder heads and snapped half axles), Scamp Porter ('Mr Renault'), Bunny Wentzel (who convinced me of the merits of the short-stroke 1340cc configuration), Salv Sacco (Motor Sport services UK), Dave Wheeler (gearbox genius), Jean Yves Lardinois (RAG in Belgium), Jimmy Brink and team (Mico SA), Wally Vorlauffer (in between his Jaguars), Frans Cronje (New Zealand), the late Nic Erasmus (Erasmus Renault in Johannesburg) and Frank Shearsby (pioneer wizard with a Mig welder).

If I have left anybody out I apologise unreservedly and will make it up on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary – if I am still around!

# THE X-FACTOR



Back in the late 1970s a small boy living on the KZN South Coast lost his heart to a tiny Italian sportscar – a silver Fiat X1/9. For a five-year-old, Brenton Boshoff displayed impeccable taste because that car, designed by Bertone when the Italian company was on peak form, is still considered gorgeous today. “It was the first sportscar I ever saw,” says Brenton, who hails from Amanzimtoti, “and I was gobsmacked by the way it looked. I’ve wanted one ever since.” **Gavin Foster** catches up with Brenton.

**F**iat X1/9s have never been thick upon the ground in South Africa, so over the next couple of decades Brenton came across few in the flesh. In 2000 he found one for sale in Johannesburg and rushed off to view it, only to find out that it was far from the original of his dreams. Then, nine long years later, word travelled to ‘Toti that there was another X1/9 for sale on the Reef, and this seemed promising, so he shot off once

Then, nine long years later, word travelled to ‘Toti that there was another X1/9 for sale on the Reef, and this seemed promising, so he shot off once again to have a look

again to have a look. “It needed work but this time it was all original,” he says. “I don’t think the car had ever been driven hard but it had been a little neglected.” Brenton bought the car, with just 80 000km on the clock, and set off to drive his new-found treasure home to the coast. “It was mechanically sound, it handled beautifully and it and felt very good until about half-way to Van Reenen’s Pass,” he remembers. “Then a vibration kicked in that very quickly grew worse.” A quick check revealed that one of the ageing tyres had developed a bubble that was causing all the trouble, so on went the spare wheel and all went well from there on.

Brenton drove the car for a few months before sending it in to a panel beater for a respray, which turned into a cautionary lesson in trust when rebuilding classic

cars. “Unfortunately the guy I gave it to didn’t do a particularly good job. I knew I’d have to get it done properly at a later stage, and I wanted to do the interior at the same time, so it took a while before I could get around to it. Then last year, I decided to get everything done at once – the bodywork, the electrics, the mechanicals and the interior.”

It turned out that Brenton was much better at finding good cars than he was at sourcing reliable panel beaters. Early last year he entrusted the X1/9 he’d spent 30 years finding to a ‘Toti body shop that went bung before the job was even properly started. “The panel beater was dragging his heels on it. I used to check up twice a week but wasn’t having much joy and then he went under. He called me one day and said sorry, he’d gone bankrupt and there would be no further work done. I’d already paid him R18 000 and the work he’d done

# Fiat X1-9 sports convertible

Arriving by air specially for CAR's test assessment, this beautiful (and driveable) little masterpiece typifies the new spirit at Fiat South Africa...

Fiat, Bertone and Abarth — one of the world's top motor manufacturers, a brilliant stylist, and a supreme engine tuning works. Combine those three, and the result must be superlative. In this case, the superlative result is the wedge-shaped Fiat X1-9, a fantastic little sports two-seater which is to be released in South Africa soon, as a special assembled model from the Fiat plant at Rosslyn, Pretoria.

The X1-9 is being introduced in small volume, we are told, to symbolise the new driving spirit behind Fiat South Africa — and as a rare treat for the few hundred motorists who will own it.

**MID ENGINE LAYOUT**

The X1-9 is probably the most singular production car coming out of Italy — a country famed for its motor coachwork. Based on the mechanicals of the popular Fiat 128, with some modifications by Abarth, it was conceived by Bertone as a baby sports car. It is a real

Bertone design, through-and-through: the engine was changed from its frontal position on the 128 models to a central mounting, inside the wheelbase — the position chosen for engines on single-seat racing cars of all kinds, and generally acknowledged to give the finest balance.

The coachwork is a distinct wedge, exciting to look at, with a big spoiler, raked windscreen and manx tail giving it among the finest aerodynamics of any road car.

It is pure two-seater, with only the spare wheel between the driver's back and the engine compartment firewall, with low seats, cockpit-style equipment and what are almost racing-style controls.

The occupants sit almost at floor level, and get down into the car. But it is surprisingly spacious, with lots of leg length and a semi-reclining driving posture which is commanding and comfortable.

The test car — specially flown to the Cape from the Rand just before Christ-

mas for this test — was an imported left-hand-drive model with a fair distance behind it, but in tip-top condition. In local production, we are told, the car will have right-hand-drive to suit local conditions.

The pedals are somewhat cramped at the end of the foot tunnel, but we had no difficulty with them — and a woman test driver who took the X1-9 for a 50-km run said this car "really turned me on!"

**CONVERTIBLE TOP**

An unusual feature of the car is that it is a convertible with removable roof panels which stows in the front trunk space. It is held in place by two clips above the windscreen. The rear quarter-panels are fixed, and incorporate a broad roll-bar as part of a clever safety-cage design.

Because of this convertible feature, an extra-strong floor panel structure is needed for rigidity, resulting in a fairly heavy



Test car arrives: the Fiat X1-9 was flown to the Cape specially for this test, and is seen arriving at D F Malan Airport by Safair Hercules transport. The car was made available for test by the owner Mr G W Havenga, of Bracken Park.



**IMPERIAL DATA**

Major performance features of this Road Test are summarised below in Imperial measures, for comparative purposes:

<b>ACCELERATION FROM REST (seconds):</b>	
0-60	14.1
0-100	28.2
<b>MAXIMUM SPEED (m.p.h.):</b>	
Top speed	96.9
<b>FUEL ECONOMY (m.p.g.):</b>	
40 m.p.h.	47.5
60 m.p.h.	43.3
80 m.p.h.	36.2

Abarth magnesium-alloy wheels, which are an option overseas, with low-profile Dunlop SP Sport "Formula 70" radials. In this form, the game little engine develops 66 kW SAE — about 15 per cent more than the standard Fiat 128 engine, and 12 per cent up on the overseas Rally model. (South Africa's Rally has the standard engine).

**PERFORMANCE**  
The X1-9 is far more than a beautiful toy — it can be a pretty thrilling road car, as well. And yet — because of its inherent economy — it is the sort of sports car which will not be unpopular with the guardians of South African's petrol reserves.

Sitting low in the form-hugging driving seat, gripping the four-spoked sports steering wheel and with a neat array of instruments in front of him, the driver can gun this little car through the gears: lots of wheelspin at the start, smooth and quick shifts, and the healthy roar as revs climb to the red-line point at 6000 rpm.

**KEY FIGURES**

1 km sprint	36.3 seconds
Terminal speed	132.5 km/h
Fuel tank capacity	48 litres
Fuel range at 80	6.5
Fuel range at 90	7.38 km
Litres/100 km at 90	7.1
Fuel range at 80	672 km
Engine revs per km	2 225
National list price	about R9 000 (to be announced later.)



I wasn't particularly handy up till then but we tackled it step by step and I learnt a LOT — I now know pretty well everything there is to know about the car

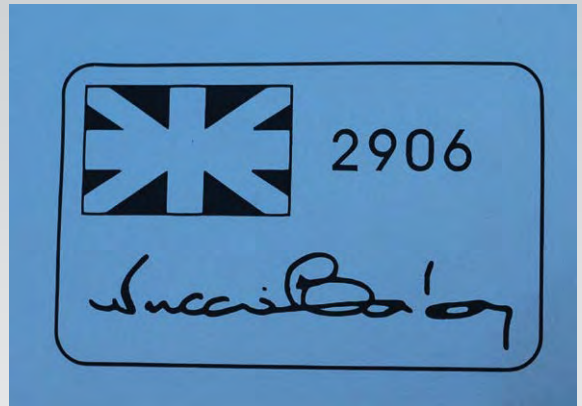
was worth nowhere near that. He'd cut out a few bits and pieces and started sanding the body down but that was it. He hadn't even done *that* particularly well. Anyway, I had to literally pick my car up in pieces. I carted what I could away in my Citi Golf and had the rest towed to another panel beater, whose role was simply to reassemble everything so I could ensure that the car was complete with no chance of parts getting lost." That was when Brenton found out the windows had all gone AWOL. The panel beater who'd folded had got one of the auto glass companies to strip them out and they were missing.

It was clearly time to change tactics and consider moving a step or two closer to DIY. Brenton had a friend who was knowledgeable about classic cars and — ta-ra — had a small panel beating business. Brenton approached him for 'unofficial'

help with the project after hours and the car ended up in another obliging friend's well-equipped double garage. There the team worked on it over weekends for only six months. "I wasn't particularly handy up till then but we tackled it step by step and I learnt a LOT — I now know pretty well everything there is to know about the car. Because I wanted to do the interior I had to strip everything — the dash, the seats — everything came out. Early on I had to spend hours on the phone trying to find which glass merchants had my windows, and luckily, because this was probably the only X1-9 in Durban, I eventually traced them to a place in Clairwood. They were very helpful. Then we thoroughly checked the car all over again for rust — I was pedantic about that — and we rust-proofed it properly because that wasn't originally very well done in the factory. Luckily there wasn't much rot. I was

also lucky in that we didn't need much in the way of parts. The only place you get those these days is in the USA where the X1-9 has a large following, and they're very expensive with the current exchange rates. After the respray I took the car in for the upholsterers to do their part. I couldn't get the original deck-chair cloth for the seats but I wouldn't have used that anyway — we used vinyl. Last of all came the stickers. The place that made them in 'Toti was closed for Christmas but I took the Fiat to them in mid-January and they did a great job."

While all this was going on the mechanicals had a good looking at. "I'd had an overheating issue and blown a head gasket so the motor was fitted with new rings and valve guides while that was being attended to. The rest was still mechanically good — it was a classic example of a good, low mileage car that had ended up being neglected. It now sleeps



under a blanket at night and doesn't get taken out in the rain. The suspension and brakes are fine and the handling's brilliant. I only take it out on nice sunny days when there's little traffic, and usually go down the coast to Scottburgh or Margate. It likes to be driven and I've put on another 40 000km or so in seven years. I've had it up to 160km/h and it feels good – they're apparently good for 168km/h or 105mph."

Carrozzeria Bertone was on a roll going into the '70s, having styled and produced iconic cars for Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Aston Martin, Ferrari, Iso, Lancia, Mercedes-Benz and many other upmarket manufacturers. The niche-market Fiat 850 Spider that they'd crafted and launched for the Italian automotive giant in 1965 had sold 140

When the time arrived to replace the Fiat 850 Spider Bertone was a shoo-in to do the design and styling, as well as build the coachwork, and as usual he got the job done

000 by 1972, lifting production to 120 units daily. Head honcho Nuccio Bertone had also formed a partnership with Ferruccio Lamborghini that saw Bertone responsible for the birth of the Lamborghini Miura in 1966, and the Bertone-designed Alfa Romeo Montreal and Fiat Dino Coupé both arrived in '67. When the time arrived to replace the Fiat 850 Spider Bertone was a shoo-in to do the design and styling, as well as build the coachwork, and as usual he got the job done – stunningly. Fiat was due to soon launch their first transverse-engined front-wheel-drive car, the 128, that was known during development as the Fiat X1/1. Bertone took the transversely-mounted engine and drivetrain from the little family car and mounted them amidships, just behind the driver, for the new sports car.

Something had to be done about finding an appropriate name for the new car. Because the drive did not go to the front wheels as it did in the X1/1 aka Fiat 128, Fiat could not call the new car the 128 Spider, so they stuck with the X1/9 project name, and a legend was born.

The new car debuted on 23 November 1972 and production commenced at the same time, but it was to be another four years before right-hand-drive models were introduced. The bodies were produced by Bertoni in Turin, and then shifted to Fiat's plant in Lingotto for final assembly. The 1290cc 4-cylinder single overhead camshaft engine gained an aluminium sump to match the alloy cylinder head, and, later on, a twin-choke Weber 32 DMTR carburettor. Capacity was later increased by lengthening the stroke to give 1.5 litres and 55kW, and with the added capacity came an extra ratio in the gearbox, making the little car a 5-speeder.

The media took to it in droves, and much-respected *Autocar* named the mid-engined X1/9 the 'baby Ferrari'. It could never be that, of course. Not with a tiny 1.3-litre 4-cylinder engine that offered a paltry 66.5hp – around 50kW – in the state of tune allowed in its biggest market, the USA. In Europe it was bestowed with a more generous 75hp (56kW). The Fiat was also rather heavy for what it was; the USA was at the time implementing new safety standards, thanks to safety crusader





Ralph Nader's meddling, and they insisted that increasingly more demanding crash and rollover tests should be carried out exactly the same for all cars, whether open or closed tops. That's the reason the robust little Fiat is a Targa top rather than a conventional convertible. Ironically, the Fiat X1/9 and the Volvo 240 series were the only cars to pass the new testing regimen, and when the Americans discovered that every single one of their own cars would fail the proposed new rollover test, the new standards were hastily dropped.

The Fiat X1/9 was a big seller in the USA from 1973 until production stopped in 1989, by which time it was being built only under the Bertone rather than Fiat name. The car was far ahead of its time, and a great many of the 150 000 Fiat (1973-1982) and 50 000 Bertone (1982-1989) X1/9s had much more powerful engines fitted, turning them into excellent race cars. Those that were left standard were also surprising practical. They handled well, looked great, the two luggage compartments up front and behind the engine could swallow a reasonable amount of luggage, they were reliable, and they were cheap to run. And,

for those who wanted al fresco driving, the roof panel could be removed in a jiffy and stowed away inside the front bonnet without taking up any space.

The first of about 3 500 Fiat X1/9s arrived in South Africa in December 1976 and was flown from Brakpan, of all places, to Cape Town by Hercules especially for a road test that appeared in *Car* magazine in February 1977. The engine had seemingly been breathed upon in the intervening years because *Car* reflected the 1.3-litre engine's output as 66kW at 6000 rpm and 97Nm of torque at 4000. The reviewer says that the extra power came courtesy of Abarth for a camshaft and exhaust system, and Weber for the twin-choke carburettors. *Car* recorded a 0-100km/h time of 14.1 seconds and top speed of 96.9mph (155km/h) and gave the car's purchase price as R6 000. Perhaps the biggest accolade came from a female test driver who's quoted as somewhat enthusiastically saying: "This car really turns me on!"

Brenton's car is a limited-edition 'Serie Speciale' model

introduced in 1977 for the European markets. Each car was individually numbered, with the relevant sticker also reflecting Bertone's signature and the flag of the country the car was intended for. Brenton's, number 2906, sports a Union Jack. The Serie Speciale cars also came with Bertone Cromodora alloy wheels, matching carry bags, and striped seats from something called 'deck-chair cloth'.

Brenton spent a long time looking for his car and then went to great pains to get it back into peak condition. There are probably fewer than a dozen left in South Africa, so his little car is about as rare as it gets. I don't know what it's cost him, but for a shining example of a car that's generally recognised as one of Bertone's best ever, I'd say he picked up a bargain. 🇬

The Fiat X1/9 was a big seller in the USA from 1973 until production stopped in 1989, by which time it was being built only under the Bertone rather than Fiat name

1973 WYNN'S SOUTHERN SUN RALLY



Elbie Odendaal/Christo Kuun (Ford Fairmont GT).

Roelof Fekken/Robbie Broekmeyer (Toyota GSL).



Melanie McGlew/Val Humphries (Peugeot 504Ti).






# RALLYING IN STYLE

In his message to competitors and rally followers in the programme, Francis Tucker of the organising SCC warned that this rally would be “the most demanding South African event that rally crews have ever faced... all those who finish will enjoy a feeling of great achievement”.

**By David Pearson**

**Images by Roger Swan from the [www.motoprint.co.za](http://www.motoprint.co.za) collection**



**T**he initial idea came from Wynn's, who wanted an event for show room-spec cars that would demonstrate the quality and strength of South African-produced vehicles. When deciding into which class a car fell, the organisers were guided by ‘the public’s acceptance of a car as being large, medium or small, and its price and capacity. Special performance versions of medium and small saloons have been uprated to a higher class at the discretion of the Organisers’ – with a capital ‘O’. Simpler times.

**Class A:**

Performance cars and V8 commercials

**Class B:**

Family saloons and 6-cylinder commercials

**Class C:**

Medium saloons and light commercials

**Class D:**

Small saloons and small-capacity commercials

Prizes and awards were nothing less than driving to-die-for:

**First overall:**

To both driver and navigator – two air tickets on BOAC (the parent of what is now British Airways) plus R500 spending money.

**Class winners:**

For both driver and navigator plus wives – two

weeks at a Southern Sun hotel in South Africa. While the class winners were rather primly restricted to taking their wives on holiday, this did not apply to the overall winners, who seemed free to share with whomsoever they wished.

There were also trophies and cash awards for second to fifth overall, and trophies for the winning club and manufacturer.

All competitors enjoyed five nights’ complimentary, world-class accommodation and 80 gallons of free petrol (ironically just six months before a fuel crisis brought all SA motorsport to a halt!) in addition to a chance of winning the lavish prizes on offer.

The rally comprised about 3000km of daylight driving from Cape Town to Johannesburg, almost all on gravel, with overnight stops at Southern Sun’s finest.

The final entry list comprised 67 cars, with a healthy manufacturer interest and the cream of rally drivers taking part, with big names such as Giv Piazza-Musso (Alfa), Elbie Odendaal (Fairmont GT), Louis Cloete (Chevrolet SS), the Fekken brothers Harry, Roelof and Lambert, Jan Hettema (Chevrolet) and Jannie Kuun (Volvo), backed up by most of rallying’s top regulars. From motor racing came luminaries such as Eddie Keizan navigated by Harvey Thomas of *The Star*, John Love in a Fiat 128 with John Christopher from East London’s



DI/NA Ogilvie (Mercedes-Benz 220).



Eddie Keizan/Harvey Thomas (Mazda RX2 Coupé).



Jannie Kuun/Kassie Kasselmann (Volvo 164).



Louis Cloete/Geoff Mortimer (Chevrolet SS) roll Naude's Nek. Competitors asked the crew to pivot the car on its roof to allow them to pass.



John Love/John Christopher (Fiat 128).



Mike Gillam/Christian Ellenberger (Austin Apache).

*Daily Dispatch*, Jackie Pretorius and Basil van Rooyen. A good proportion of the entry was made up of club rallyists, and even included some total newcomers.

Scrutiny, documentation and a special test took place in Cape Town on Wednesday 16 May, with accommodation for all competitors at the President Hotel. The rally started the next morning and took competitors to Plettenberg Bay, with the route covering a number of the legendary passes along the way. The day's rallying ended at the Beacon Isle Hotel in Plett.

Regulations allowed crews to only work on their cars for 15 minutes at the end of each day and for 10 minutes before leaving in the morning. That evening in the bar, rally types gleefully listened to their racing counterparts' baptism of fire into the rough stuff. Dick Crosbie, navigating for Bernie

Marriner, head of the Ford Rally squad, and himself part of that team, recalls: "John Love reckoned he had never had to drive so hard, and for so long, and with such intensity, ever." Jackie Pretorius, navigated by his buddy Bobbie Badenhorst in a 1300 Escort, put it in his inimitable way, "I would rather die in front of 30 000 people at Kyalami than in front of six or seven baboons on a mountain pass."

This writer has a treasure trove of photos from the event but has searched in vain for information on the precise route and full results and therefore has relied on a few comments on a Facebook post on the rally.

Commenting on a photo of a BMW 2000 SA, Wim Verhagen posted: "Ook my eerste standaard rally kar. BMW 2004. Die agtervenster was geneig om uit te val. Die bakwerk was seker nie gemaak vir daai

hammerings nie." (Also my first standard rally car. BMW 2004. The back window was inclined to fall out. The body was definitely not made for these hammerings). Norman Clark, now living in Australia, squeezed into the event from the reserve entry list, and navigated by his friend Alan de Kock, drove his very new Alfa on its – and his – very first rally.

The second night's stop was at the New Elizabeth Hotel on the beachfront in Port Elizabeth and the next day's route went into some really tough parts of the Eastern Cape. It was close to Naude's Nek that one of the most experienced crews, Louis Cloete navigated by Geoff Mortimer in a Chev SS, came unstuck. Leon Joubert, also now living in Oz, and navigating for his old friend Andre Liebenberg in a Valiant, remembers when they arrived



Natie Ferreira/Roger Gush (Mazda) outside the Beacon Isle Hotel in Plettenberg Bay.



Andre Liebenberg/Leon Joubert (Valiant Charger).



Elbie Odendaal/Christo Kuun (Ford Fairmont GT).



Louis Cloete/Geoff Mortimer (Chevrolet SS) work on flipping the car back onto its wheels.




JW Williams/TB Stratton (Ford Ranchero V8).



Giv Piazza-Musso/Reg Ridden (Alfa Romeo Berlina) watched on by Magdel Steyn on the right.

on the scene. "Geoff looked a little rough around the edges. Not a situation he was used to dealing with. This was on Naude's Nek. Hilarious. We tried to pivot the Chev on its roof to allow enough room to pass, and asked Geoff and Louis to please pivot it back and therefore block the next car... no luck."

The rally finally ended at the Sunnyside Park Hotel in Johannesburg on Sunday 20 May, with the results and prize giving that evening. Lambert Fekken, with his national rally partner Johan Borman, took top honours in a Cortina 2000 LDV.

Any further information regarding this event, such as the route followed, full results or any anecdotes that would add to the full history of this rally would be appreciated. Please write to The Editor, *Classic Car Africa* or email the author at [davidp@wol.co.za](mailto:davidp@wol.co.za). 



Louis Cloete/Geoff Mortimer (Chevrolet SS) righted after rolling on Naude's Nek.

# GOING WITH THE FLO

What does the woman who was given the title of 'The First Movie Star' have in common with your car's indicator and brake light? You will probably be surprised by the answer. **Sivan Goren** discovers the largely unknown and stranger-than-fiction story of the remarkable Florence Lawrence.



**C**ars, money, adventure, tragedy – much like the plot of one of her many movies, Florence Lawrence's life story reads like a melodramatic fictional script. She was born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1886 to a carriage-building father and mother who was a vaudevillian actress, so it was unsurprising that the young Florence ventured into acting herself. She made her movie debut in 1906 and in the following years, as the number of her roles increased, she came to be known as the first movie star and would eventually appear in almost 300 films.

The movie industry was growing rapidly at the time and Florence's career flourished, which also meant the bucks started rolling in. Although the company she worked for, Biograph Studios, refused to put her name on any of her movie credits (studios at the time were afraid that once actors received on-screen credit, their salary demands

would rise), she nonetheless started attracting a fan base and became known as 'The Biograph Girl'. Earning a hefty \$500 a week, it wasn't long before the movie star could buy her very own automobile – at the time considered somewhat extravagant, not to mention unusual, for a woman. Florence loved cars and driving and there's even photographic evidence of her in a Lozier open tourer in 1912.

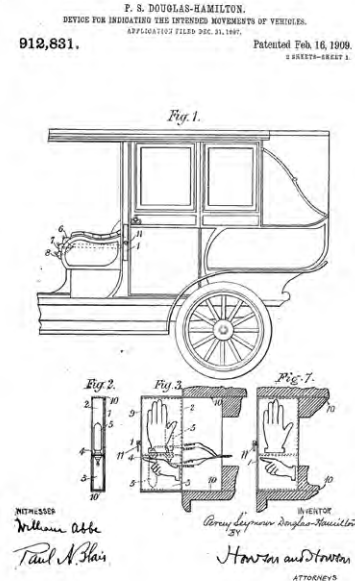
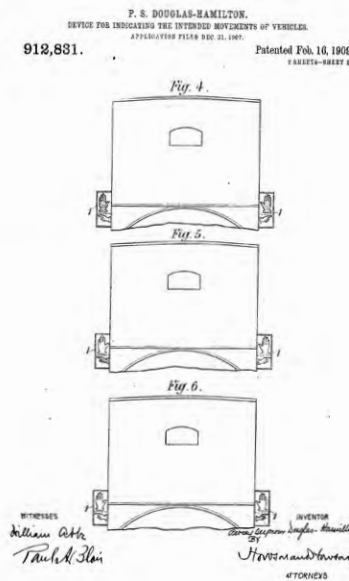
But it wasn't only being behind the wheel that she enjoyed – it was also sticking her head under the bonnet. In between drives, Florence endeavoured to learn all that she could about her car's various mechanisms and how they all worked. She seemed to think of her car as an almost sentient being, and in 1920, when driving had become a symbol of women's liberation, told a reporter: "A car to me is something that is almost human, something that responds to kindness and understanding and care, just as people do. The average woman does her own repairing. She is curious enough to investigate every little creak and squeak of her car, and to remedy it."

It was probably a combination of her love of cars and her frequent driving of them that caused her to start thinking of a solution for a major safety issue inherent in cars at the time – that of a lack of signalling or warning

mechanisms. So in 1914, after years of tinkering and investigating countless 'squawks', she invented an early version of the modern-day car indicator: a signalling arm that showed which way a driver was intending to turn. A button was pressed and a flag would be raised (and subsequently lowered) – one on the left side and one on the right side of the car – to show other drivers where the car was headed. But apart from this, she also developed a device which signalled to other motorists that the car was slowing or stopping: when depressing the brake, a small sign reading 'STOP' would pop up in the rear of the car. Basic, certainly. Ingenious? Definitely.

She never patented her inventions, though. Lawrence's mother tried to get patents for her daughter's inventions down the line, but by then it was too late as other companies were quick to claim ownership and receive patents for similar designs. And it seems that Lawrence was not the very first person to come up with a turn signal anyway. In 1909, a British man named Percy Douglas-Hamilton patented a set of hands – one attached to each side of the car – which could be illuminated to indicate a coming turn. Thereafter a number of other patents followed: in 1925, Edgar Walz Jr. patented a light with two arrows and a brake light and in the late '30s, Joseph Bell patented the first electrical device that flashed. It was only in 1939, though, that

**Earning a hefty \$500 a week, it wasn't long before the movie star could buy her very own automobile—at the time considered somewhat extravagant, not to mention unusual, for a woman**



Buick introduced turn signals as a standard feature, but even then electrical turn signals didn't become widespread until the early-to-mid-1950s. Hard to imagine that before that people relied mostly on a host of makeshift and accessory devices or plain old hand signalling, an art form that these days is reserved mostly for certain very specific, er, messages.

But back to Florence Lawrence. Although Percy Douglas-Hamilton seems to be the first person who invented a turn-signalling device, the truth is that it is highly unlikely that Lawrence knew about it. And while Lawrence also failed to claim the first patent, it appears that she thought up her invention entirely independently. Amazingly, it is also claimed that Lawrence invented another useful motoring device that would one day become a standard feature – an electric windscreen wiper system – but was unable to patent that, either. Another woman by the name of Mary Anderson was the one who eventually did. As a result, Lawrence never saw a cent for any of her inventions.

But this was just the start of Florence's misfortunes. Apart from a string of failed marriages (the last one to an abusive alcoholic), her work began to dry up after suffering severe burns and a fractured spine in a staged studio fire in which she was attempting to save a fellow actor. Despite having plastic surgery to repair the damage, she found herself more and more relegated

to work as an extra. And while she had made quite a large amount of money during her movie star days, most of it was lost in the stock market crash of 1929, helped along by some disastrous business ventures. To add insult to injury, in 1937 she was diagnosed with myelofibrosis, a rare disease that was incurable at the time.

Lawrence eventually moved into a home on Westbourne Drive in West Hollywood with a studio worker named Bob Brinlow. Despite her health steadily declining and the fact that she developed severe depression, she still soldiered on and tried to keep working. But on 28 December 1938, after calling in sick, Lawrence took a bizarre and extremely deadly combination of cough syrup and ant paste. She left an oddly offhand yet suitably dramatic suicide note to her unfortunate house mate that read:

*Dear Bob,*

*Call Dr. Wilson. I am tired. Hope this works. Good bye, my darling. They can't cure me, so let it go at that.*

*Lovingly, Florence – P.S. You've all been swell guys. Everything is yours.*

Tragically, having died alone, the once stellar actress was buried in an unmarked grave in the Hollywood Cemetery. It

## Lawrence's mother tried to get patents for her daughter's inventions down the line, but by then it was too late as other companies were quick to claim ownership

remained unmarked until, in 1991, a kindly British actor who chose to remain anonymous paid for a memorial marker for her grave. And so an astonishing life came to an end in an astonishing way.

Ok, great story, I hear you say, but Florence Lawrence is not technically the one the world owes these brilliant inventions to... so what's the big deal? True, but despite her name having being somewhat erased from the motoring history books, she actually represents something far more significant. Her ingenuity and passion for the automobile – not to mention the fact that she did all her own mechanical work at a time when most women did not even drive a car – made her a true motoring pioneer. And women's lib and all that other important stuff aside, it strikes me that at heart she was as much a petrolhead as any man around – past and present.

As Florence herself once said: "There are as many women driving cars as men. And infinitely better drivers they make too."

I have to say, Ms Lawrence, I can only agree. 🇸

# ON THE HILL BUT NOT OVER IT

By Colin Mileman | Images: Rob Till



Chris Champion (Austin-Healey 3000).

The eighth annual Jaguar Simola Hillclimb took place in Knysna from 5 to 7 May and once again the Classic Car Friday event set the tone for an action-packed three days of racing.

Widely regarded as South Africa's premier motorsport lifestyle event, this year's running lived up to its proud reputation, producing a simply dazzling array of road and race-bred machinery, along with drivers of equally esteemed pedigree.

Close to 60 classic car entries made it to the start, with South African racing legend

**Staying true to form two-time winner Franco Scribante dominated the proceedings from start to finish in his immaculately prepared 1970 Chevron B19**

and former Daytona 24-Hour winner Tony Martin serving the ceremonial role of Grand Marshal and waving the drivers off for their 1.9km Hillclimb attack.

Staying true to form two-time winner Franco Scribante dominated the proceedings from start to finish in his immaculately prepared 1970 Chevron B19. He was untouchable throughout the day, topping the time sheets in all three practice sessions, as well as the two qualifying runs leading up to the class finals.

Hot and sunny conditions greeted the competitors, but the temperature dropped in the afternoon as the clouds rolled in, leading to a brief rain shower just as the class finals were due to begin. Scribante set his fastest time of the day in the second qualifying session, setting a blistering mark of 41.554 sec and an average speed of 164.6km/h. Although he seemed

well on track to beat his own Classic Car Friday record of 41.432 sec in the day's remaining two runs, this was not to be due to the changed damp and cool conditions.

Nevertheless, his class final time of 41.671 sec remained very impressive, beating Charles Arton to win Class H5 by 1.8 sec – despite Arton shaving over 2.4 sec off his winning time from 2015 in the completely restored and rebuilt 1979 March Formula Atlantic single-seater. Peter Jenkins powered his 1971 Chevron B19 to third in class.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the 'Golden Oldies' it was Stuart Grant that took the class win in H1, driving Rodney Green's Pur Sang Bugatti Type 35B to victory with a time of 1 min 02.813 sec, some 12.5 sec ahead of second-placed Roger Lewis (1958 MG 'Hedgehog'), with Jacques Steenkamp ending third in the 1935 Riley Sports Special.

Malcolm Uytendogaart led the way in Class H2 in his Ford V8-powered Sunbeam Tiger with a time of 56.667 sec, followed by





Johannes Pickard (Aston Martin Ulster).



Trevor Tuck (Alfa Romeo Giulia).



Graeme Nathan (BMW CSI).



Clive Corder (Lola T70 Mk3B replica).



Enzo Kuun (Datsun 240Z).



Franco Scribante (Chevron B19).



Kai Goddard (BMW 325i).



Charles Arton (March 79B).

a brace of Jaguar E-Types, comprising Ron Hollis and Alexander Krahe.

The H3 class was won by Gavin Rooke in a 1970 Porsche 911 on 55.238 sec, ahead of Anton Rollino (MGB GT V8) and Craig Wessels. It was an all-British affair in H4, with Chris Champion taking the win in the 1959 Austin-Healey 3000 (58.969 sec) from Rodney Green (1964 MGB) and Ashley Ellis (1965 Austin-Healey Sprite).

Trevor Tuck powered his spotless Alfa Romeo Giulia to 52.272 seconds to claim Class H6, beating Francis Cusens (1978 Lancia Beta) and Peter Kaye-Eddie (1966 BMW 2002). There was a fantastic duel in Class H7, with local Knysna resident Brent Watts getting the upper hand for a change on rivals Graeme Nathan (1972 BMW CSI) and Enzo Kuun (1972 Datsun 240Z), taking the win with a time of 47.650 sec.

Thundering Ford V8 power dominated Class H8, with Justin Price taking the laurels in his Shelby Daytona Coupé (48.698 sec),

relegating Josh Dovey (Ginetta G4R) and Michiel Simons (1980 Ford GT40 replica) to the runner-up positions.

#### ALL-OR-NOTHING TOP 10 SHOOTOUT


The day's thrilling practice and qualifying action set the scene for the final Top 10 Shootout, which would determine the winner of the Classic Conqueror title for 2017.

Josh Dovey set off first in the slightly greasy afternoon conditions, and set a respectable time of 50.490 sec to slot into eighth position. Peter Lindenberg was next in the 1965 Shelby Mustang GT350, scything his way into 7<sup>th</sup> (50.121 sec). Graeme Nathan did one of the most spectacular pre-start line burnouts in his BMW CSI, and was rewarded with the fifth best time of 49.064 sec – which, remarkably, was his quickest run of the day.

Former rally champion Kuun managed a time of 51.009 sec in the sleek Datsun, relegating him to 10<sup>th</sup> place, just behind

rival Brent Watts (50.841 sec). Price set off in the seventh slot and rocketed the mighty Daytona to fourth place with his fastest time of the day too on 48.545 sec.

Ultimately it was down to the expected top three runners in the two Chevron sports racing cars and the agile March. Jenkins set a final time of 47.568 seconds. Arton managed to trounce him and snatched second place, crossing the line in 44.925 sec. Franco Scribante then didn't disappoint, stopping the clock on 42.795 to secure his third Classic Conqueror title.

The special Spirit of Dave Charlton Award recognises the person that reflects Dave Charlton's spirit of impeccable attention to detail, meticulous preparation and commendable performance. This year the Classic Car Friday Spirit of Dave Charlton Award went to Dickon Daggitt, who is a legend in the classic car fraternity, and is the consultant engineer for the Franschoek Motor Museum. 

# STICKING POINT

BY RACEY LACEY




**D**o you remember the days when bumper stickers on cars were as common as sheep in the Karoo? Back then they were almost like a status symbol (bumper stickers, not sheep – though in certain parts sheep were and still are that too). But I have come to the conclusion that social media platforms like Facebook are guilty of the murder of the bumper sticker – lock, stock and smoking barrel. Before you relegate me to the conspiracy theorist sect, read on.

In the not-so-distant past, people's opinions stared you in the face while sitting in traffic; from a swanky Jaguar XJ6 cheekily declaring 'Golfers do it with little balls' to a tatty old Datsun proclaiming that 'Dolphins should be free'. Long before Mark Zuckerberg was even wearing Pampers, let alone raking in bazillions for Facebook, people's 'statuses' were emblazoned on their cars' bumpers for the world to see.

These days, indignant animal rights activists post links with

gory pictures that strongly encourage veganism and share Ricky Gervais's latest rant on their page – no 'BAN ANIMAL TESTING!' stickers on their Toyota Priuses. Pro-banting diehards can now join like-minded online groups and have long, cyber discussions extolling the virtues of adding a block of butter to their coffee in the morning. Can you imagine if banting had been mainstream back in the day... rear windows would have been chock-a-block (no blocks of choc though) with stickers screaming 'Grain is insane!' or 'Fat is fab!'

Gone too are the days of old Kombis plastered with dozens of stickers that created a sort of map of a lifetime of road trips. Alas, bumper stickers bearing catch phrases like 'Stilbaai is kriklik lekker!' or 'I ♥ Paternoster' are things of the past. Back then it was usual to drive past station wagons with their family road stories stuck all over them but let's face it, most travellers of today would never dream of sullyng their pristine Range Rover Sports with the equivalent of an adhesive postcard. These days the closest we get is having our timelines littered with 'check-

Long before Mark Zuckerberg was even wearing Pampers, let alone raking in bazillions for Facebook, people's 'statuses' were emblazoned on their cars' bumpers for the world to see




ins' recording people's every move, with Facebook helpfully ensuring that you will be endlessly updated with riveting information like: '(Insert person's name here) is eating bacon & eggs at Wimpy Bloemfontein' (usually accompanied by a picture of said bacon & eggs and invariably also one of the person obligingly posing *with* the bacon & eggs in question).

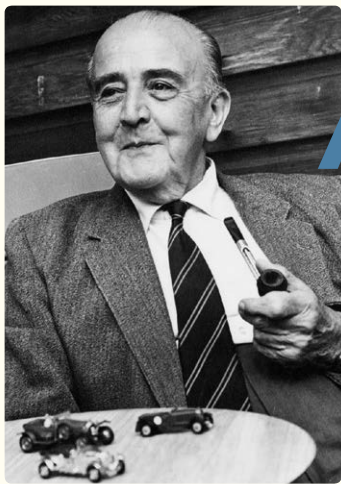
Even marketing using bumper stickers is a lost art. I remember a competition run once by a local company: if your car was spotted sporting its unique promotional bumper sticker, you stood a chance of winning a Porsche 356 replica. Who didn't stick one of these gaudy and uncool stickers on their car? No one, that's who. Needless to say, these promotions caused palpable nationwide excitement that, in my humble opinion, is missing from modern-day marketing. These days clicking a 'like' button creates a frenzy of back-slapping in the offices of the PR companies hired by these companies, but not so much as a flutter anywhere else.

So what has replaced the humble bumper sticker in this day and age? Apart

from weird cosmetic appendages, like giant eyelashes fluttering over car headlights, we have another (equally bewildering if you ask me) addition to the modern car: the stick family. In this case social media clearly is not sufficient information wise and a huge amount of money has been made from printing out adhesive stick people, meant to represent every member of the family, pets included – although you are not likely ever to see *them* in these cars.

Once in a while, though, I come across a sticker (or the modern equivalent of a bumper sticker: one of those little signs that is suction-cupped onto the rear window) that says something like 'I'm not drunk... just avoiding potholes', which make me smile because it is a true reflection of the South African style of commentary on our times that, although light-hearted on the surface, still cuts to the bone. It makes me hopeful that although social media is probably here for the foreseeable future, maybe our colourful bumper sticker culture has not died out completely. 

Needless to say, these promotions caused palpable nationwide excitement that, in my humble opinion, is missing from modern-day marketing



# A TRUCK FOR THE TRACK

**Jake Venter's** fictitious interview personality this month is Walter Owen Bentley (1888 – 1971), the man behind the brand that carries his family name.

**W.O.** was born on 16 September 1888 at Hampstead in London, the youngest of nine children. His father, Alfred, who by that time was a retired businessman, sent the boy to public school in Bristol. Afterwards he spent a year at King's College in London studying mechanical engineering, but he was far too practical to enjoy theory and calculations. In fact, he became one of the best examples of a hands-on engineer, as opposed to a theoretician. He

subsequently served a premium apprenticeship with the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). He married his first wife Leonie in 1914, but she died during the worldwide flu epidemic in 1919. In 1920 he married Audrey but they were divorced in 1931. He married Margaret in 1934, and she survived him, but died in 1989. They had no children.

I interviewed WO, as he was known, at his home in Woking, Surrey in October 1968, when he was 80.

## THE INTERVIEW

**My knock brought** Margaret to the door and she escorted me to the sitting room, where the great man was waiting for me.

**JAKE:** I would like to ask most of my questions about some of the engineering features in your Bentley designs, rather than business affairs, racing successes or even your other design work for Lagonda, Aston Martin and others. The latter would supply enough material for another interview.

**WO:** That's fine with me. Engineering talk is always entertaining.

**JAKE:** You started your working life in steam. It must have been hard and dirty work.

**WO:** It certainly was, but as a child I used to watch steam trains go by and I was determined to be part of that world. I served a five-year apprenticeship with the LNWR and towards the end of my training was posted to the running sheds at King's Cross. Here I was occasionally taken on as assistant stoker on a locomotive. It was extremely tiring, but pure bliss. There is nothing – not even going flat-out in a racing car – that

compares with the sensation of rushing along the rails with that soothing mechanical rhythm beating away continuously. You feel the steel floor quivering from the incredible torque delivered by the huge pistons. My longest trip was from London to Leeds and back. I had to shovel a total of seven tonnes of coal into the boiler to supply enough steam for the 400-mile round trip.

**JAKE:** You must have been extremely fit.

**WO:** I certainly was! I've tried for many years to keep myself in good trim but time takes its toll.

**JAKE:** You turned to internal combustion engines eventually. Why?

**WO:** By the summer of 1910 I had served my time with the LNWR, and reluctantly realised that there were only a few well-paid jobs on the railways. I was 22 and eager to try something different. I had been involved in regularity trials and racing on two wheels, and rather liked the idea of working on something smaller than a locomotive. I found a job as

second assistant to the general manager of the National Motor Cab Company.

**JAKE:** This must have been a very boring time for you.

**WO:** On the contrary; I found the job fascinating. Dealing with taxi drivers taught me a lot about dealing with people, and the 2-cylinder French Unic taxis that were used all over London were an object lesson in the importance of uncomplicated engineering.

**JAKE:** How long did you stay there?

**WO:** Only two years. HM (Horace Milner), one of my brothers, decided to give up farming and wanted me to go into business with him. I naturally opted for the motor trade with the result that we bought the concession for DFP (Doriet, Flandrin et Parent) cars. At the time it was a well-known French make with some sporting pretensions.

**JAKE:** I believe you raced these cars very successfully until the start of WWI.

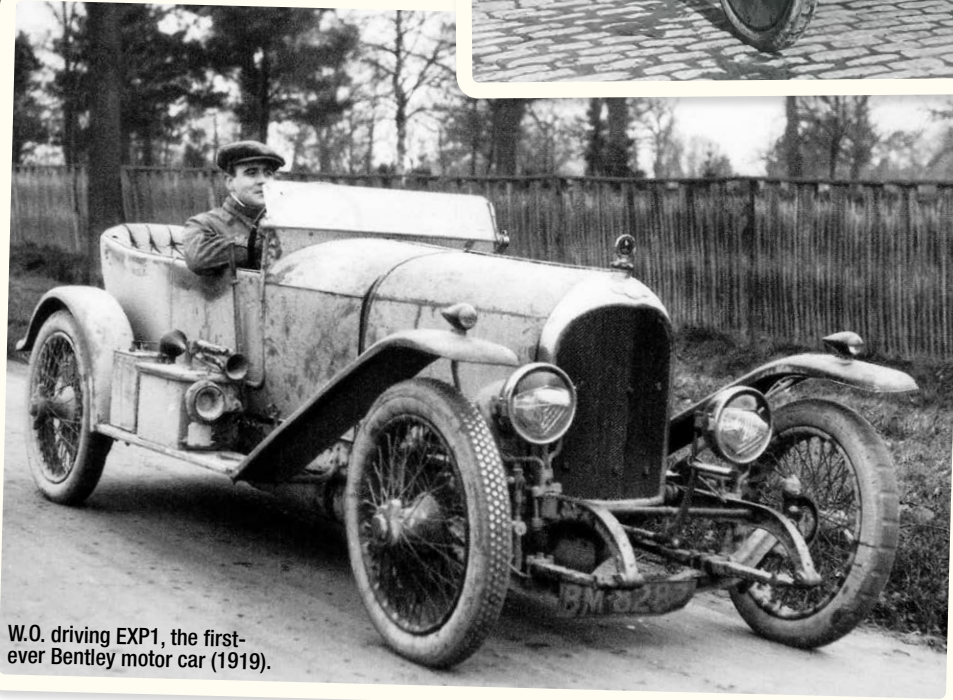
**WO:** Yes, I modified them extensively and



1928 Le Mans 24 Hour winner.



Bentley in a DFP racer (1914).



W.O. driving EXP1, the first-ever Bentley motor car (1919).

the results I achieved served as another learning experience.

**JAKE:** At the start of the war you were selling cars, but by the end you were celebrated as the designer of one of the best aero engines of the period. How did that come about?

**WO:** I was very lucky. Sometime before the war, on one of my visits to the DFP factory in France, I saw an aluminium paperweight in the form of a small piston. I immediately saw that if it could be made to last in an engine, there would be a power gain because of the decrease in piston mass as well as temperature due to aluminium's superior heat-conducting properties. The French engineers laughed at me but I persuaded DFP to make me a few sets of pistons for the model I used in competitions. The pistons performed as I expected, once we got the clearance right, and I used them for two years without any problems.

**JAKE:** Are you telling me that nobody used aluminium pistons in those days?

**WO:** Not that I know of. Pistons were either cast in iron or forged in steel. The result was that when the war broke out I convinced myself that aluminium pistons could help to win the war, and I was determined to find the correct person to tell. After many enquiries I went to see Commander Wilfred Briggs, who was tasked with building up an engine department for the RNAS (Royal Naval Air Service). He not only believed my story but gave me a commission in the RNAS. My job was to liaise with the various aero engine manufacturers and persuade them to use aluminium pistons.

**JAKE:** That must have been a very difficult assignment.

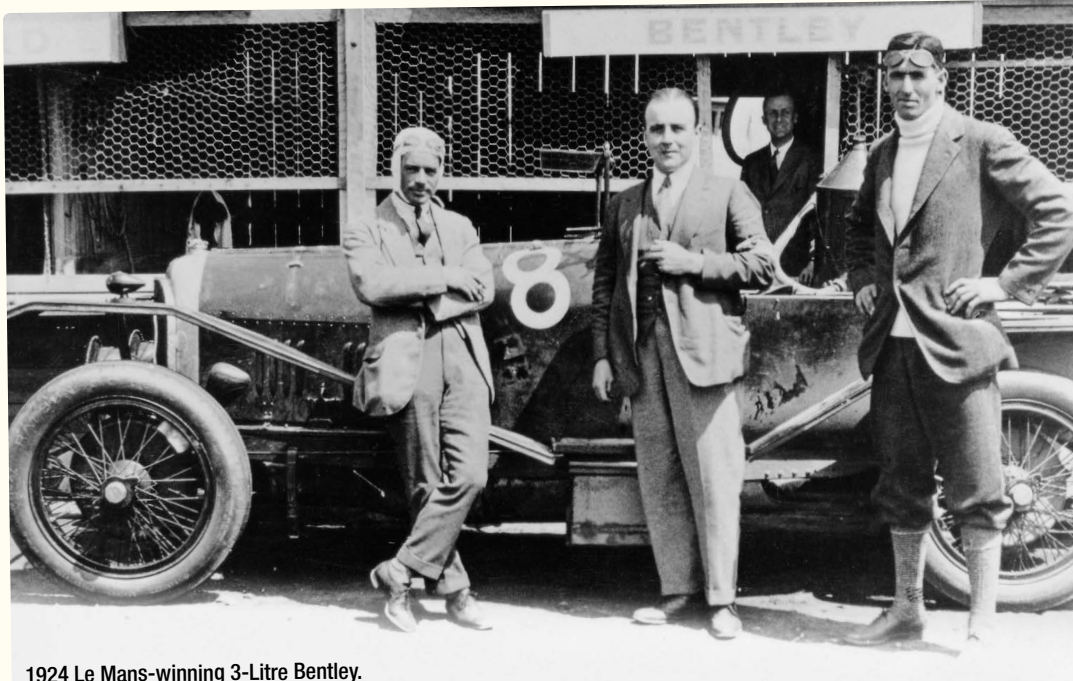
**WO:** Yes and no. At the time Rolls-Royce were manufacturing Renault aero engines under licence, but I persuaded them to experiment with aluminium pistons. Consequently, the Eagle, their first aero engine, used aluminium pistons. The management at Sunbeam was also easy to persuade, but the engineers at Gwynne

(a well-known make from the '20s) were very uncooperative. England needed more aero engines in a hurry, and in frustration Commander Briggs asked me to design an aero engine. I was flabbergasted but was told to go the Humber factory in Coventry and use their staff and facilities. The result was the BR1 (Bentley Rotary 1) and a bigger version, the BR2. By the end of the war they were being produced by Humber, Daimler and Crossley at a rate of 120 a week.

**JAKE:** You must have been chuffed.

**WO:** Not during the war. I was so astonished that my first attempt had been successful that it was only after the war that I felt a glow of satisfaction. The government awarded me an MBE for my war effort and after a legal battle that left me disgusted, I was awarded 8 000 British pounds for the aluminium piston idea.

**JAKE:** After the war you started Bentley Motors Limited at Cricklewood, near London. When did the idea to design a car first occur to you?



1924 Le Mans-winning 3-Litre Bentley.

**WO:** In 1918, when the BR series of engines were in full production. I thought that since I could design an engine it would be a lot of fun to design a complete car. At the time many sporting designs could go fast enough for a short time, but overheated when they cruised near their maximum speeds. My idea with was to produce cars that were properly cooled and lightly stressed so that they could cruise at high speed.

**JAKE:** You showed your first product, the 3-litre, at the London Motor Show in 1919 but the first car was only delivered two years later. Why did it take so long?

**WO:** The engine of the first car was a mock-up, built from metal and wooden parts. It took us a long time to iron all the bugs out because I was determined that the car should be very reliable.

**JAKE:** What were the main features of your first automotive engine?

**WO:** It had four cylinders and utilised a shaft and bevel gears to drive the single overhead camshaft. This gave us pent-roof combustion chambers, fed by four valves per cylinder. We also fitted two spark plugs per cylinder, and two carburetors. Bore and stroke were 80 by 149mm, and the cast-iron engine block

and cylinder head were cast as one unit. This bolted onto an aluminium crankcase.

**JAKE:** Most of it sounds very modern, apart from the very long stroke.

**WO:** The long stroke was chosen to promote the low-speed torque that improves drivability.

**JAKE:** Did you get any ideas from other designs?

**WO:** The two best pre-war engines were the 1912 GP Peugeot, designed by Ernest Henri, and the 1914 GP Mercedes, designed by Paul Daimler. The Peugeot had twin overhead camshafts, which I thought was too complicated and noisy, but the Mercedes had a shaft-driven single overhead camshaft layout that really appealed to me. I was able to examine this engine in great detail because the war broke out soon after the French GP and the winning car was on display in Merc's London showroom. The moment I heard this, I persuaded Commander Briggs to give me the authority to seize it and it was taken to the experimental department at Rolls-Royce where we could study it at leisure. Consequently, Rolls-Royce also used this layout on most of their aero engines.

**JAKE:** I believe the early 3-litres were fitted with 2-wheel brakes. Some other cars had 2-wheel brakes since before WWI. Why?

**WO:** At the time we had no experience of braked front wheels. We felt that hard braking may interfere with the steering action, but by 1924 we had

enough experience to offer front-wheel brakes on all our cars.

**JAKE:** This brings us to your next model, the 4.5-litre. I suppose it's very much like a bigger version of the 3-litre?

**WO:** Yes, that's true. There were a number of smaller changes, but the biggest change was the bore. It was increased to 100mm, and the stroke reduced to 140mm. The result was that this model was as unstressed as the 3-litre, and just as reliable.

**JAKE:** I hate to ask you the next question, but can you say anything good about the blower 4.5-litre model?

**WO:** No. I was against supercharging from the start. Our engines were designed for reliability, smoothness, silence, and sheer power output – in that order. Fitting a blower goes against these principles. It was the racing driver Tim Birkin's idea, and he persuaded our chairman Barney Barnato to get the cars built, while the Hon Dorothy Paget funded the project. The blower model was too unreliable to win any important races and this dismal record helped to sink Bentley Motors.

**JAKE:** I expect the mention of the 6.5-litre model will cheer you up again.

**WO:** Yes. It was, in some ways, our best model. In luxury form it was not as heavy as the 8-litre, and in the lightweight Speed Six form it was by far the most successful Bentley in long-distance racing. It won at Le Mans in 1929 and 1930, as well as a number of other long-distance races. Both engine and car were refined versions of the 4.5-litre model. The bore and stroke were

Our engines were designed for reliability, smoothness, silence, and sheer power output – in that order. Fitting a blower goes against these principles



Bentley was a keen pre-WWI racer.



W.O. with two of 'his' cars – Bentley to the left and DFP to the right.

the same, but we added two more cylinders and fitted a quieter camshaft drive. We fitted what is essentially a little crankshaft on the end of the camshaft, and a similar little crankshaft on the end of the engine crankshaft. The journals were 120 degrees apart, and the two cranks were linked by three long connecting rods to give a totally silent camshaft drive.

**JAKE:** What an ingenious idea. Was it also used on the 8-litre engine?

**WO:** Yes. This engine was essentially a 6.5-litre unit bored out from 100 to 110mm, while the stroke remained the same at 140mm. The car was designed for the carriage trade and everything was done to make it as smooth and silent as possible. This model came out after the depression and was the wrong car for the social conditions of the time, but we did give Rolls-Royce a fright.

**JAKE:** Dare I mention the 4-litre that was hastily cobbled together in 1930?

**WO:** The less you say about it the better. It used a Harry Ricardo-designed pushrod engine fitted to a shortened 8-litre chassis because the directors thought it could compete with the 20/25 Rolls-Royce. It couldn't, and Bentley Motors folded soon after it went on sale.

**JAKE:** That brings us to the end of the Bentley Motors saga. I must thank you for taking the time to rake over old coals.

**WO:** It was my pleasure.

We exchanged greetings and I left. 📍

The car was designed for the carriage trade and everything was done to make it as smooth and silent as possible. This model came out after the depression and was the wrong car for the social conditions of the time, but we did give Rolls-Royce a fright

- Bentley Motors went bankrupt in 1931, mainly as a result of the depression, and there was tussle between Napier and Rolls-Royce to acquire the company. Rolls-Royce won and after an 18-month break started to sell a performance version of their smallest model as a Bentley. One of the terms of the deal was that Bentley himself had to work for Rolls-Royce from 1 May 1932 until the end of April 1935. He was kept away from any design work but was asked to test prototypes and production cars.
- In June 1935 a Lagonda M45R Rapide won the Le Mans 24-Hour race and a week later the struggling company found a new investor. They appointed WO as technical director and he got his own back on Rolls-Royce by persuading some of the best RR engineers to join him. Among them was the brilliant Stewart Tresilian who had a hand in designing an overhead camshaft version of the RR Phantom III V12. It did not go into production but when WO asked Tresilian to design a V12 engine for Lagonda, he was able to do so in a very short time. This model was launched in 1937 and was sold in small numbers until the outbreak of WWII. Two hastily-built racing versions came 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> at Le Mans in 1939.
- After the war Bentley designed a double overhead cam 2.6-litre 6-cylinder engine for Lagonda that was also used by Aston Martin. This came about because David Brown, who already owned Aston Martin, bought Lagonda in 1947. The capacity was later increased to three litres.
- Bentley later moved to Armstrong Siddeley, where he designed another 3-litre engine, but it was never produced.
- In 1947 Bentley was asked to become the patron of the Bentley Driver's Club. The activities of the club helped him to forget the many disappointments that he suffered after his company went under. He died on Friday, 13 August 1971, shortly before his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

# HUNTING TOP SPEED



Test driver Ken Miles completing the first test at Riverside Raceway. The new car clocked 299km/h that day but there was more in hand.

The Shelby Daytona Coupé was built to go racing. Loosely based on the AC Cobra's chassis and running gear, six cars were built to take on the likes of Ferrari's 250 GTO in the GT class during 1964 and '65. It was an aerodynamic response to Shelby noticing that the Ferraris were almost 50km/h quicker than his open-top AC Cobra down the Mulsanne straight at Le Mans – and it worked, earning his company the title as the first American constructor to win an FIA World Sportscar Class Championship – this being in 1965, with the GT III class under its belt.

**W**ith the pre-chicane Mulsane section of straight such a large portion of the Le Mans circuit, this speed deficiency meant that the AC Cobra lost in the region of 10 seconds per lap to the Ferrari, despite having a power/acceleration advantage over the prancing horse.

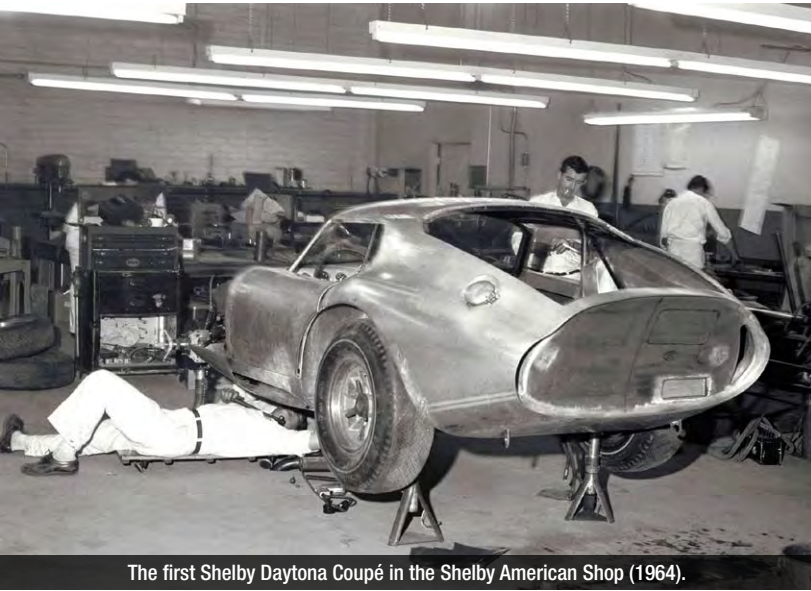
To solve the issue Shelby called on Pete Brock to design a more slippery Cobra coupé, while Bob Negstad was roped in to redesign the suspension. With a proposed sketch done on the floor of the Shelby American workshop, Brock then removed

the bodywork from the roadster that was crashed at the 1963 Le Mans race and placed a seat and steering wheel where he felt they should be. Driver Ken Miles then sat in the mock-up, and using scrap wood and gaffer tape the windscreen area was designed, before interspaced wooden formers and a hand-beaten aluminium body were formed.

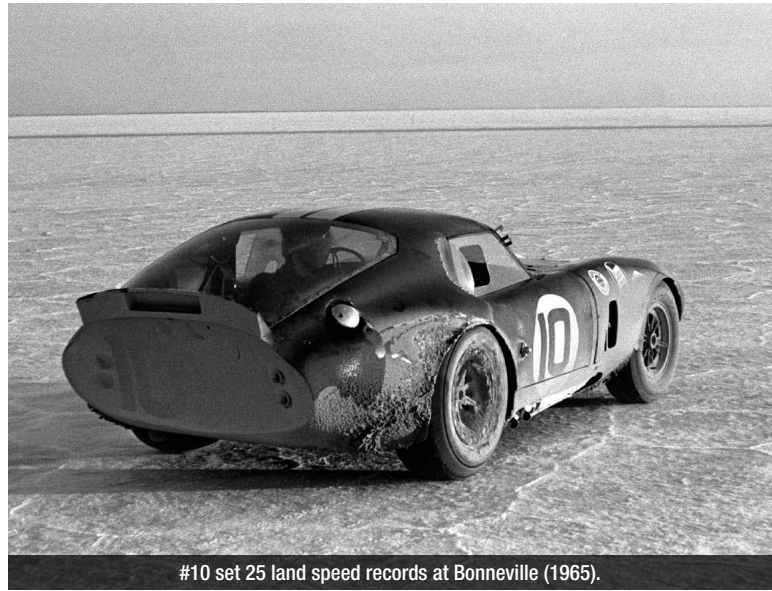
When aerodynamics consultants from Convair were called in they said that the tail needed to be extended by almost a metre but Brock refused this thought and Miles took the car to the Riverside Raceway, where he clocked 299km/h on the 1.6km straight – significantly faster than the 253km/h the original roadster Cobras had topped out

To solve the issue Shelby called on Pete Brock to design a more slippery Cobra coupé, while Bob Negstad was roped in to redesign the suspension





The first Shelby Daytona Coupé in the Shelby American Shop (1964).



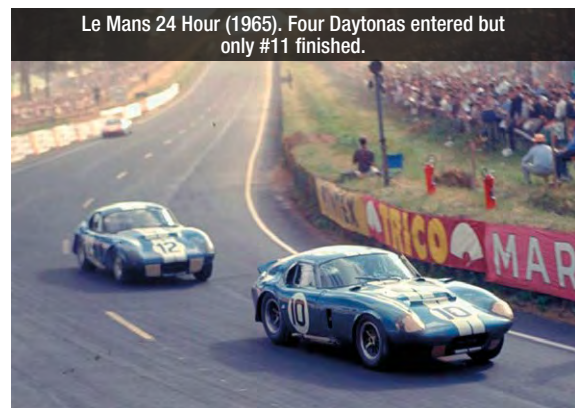
#10 set 25 land speed records at Bonneville (1965).



Lew Spencer/Phil Hill/Jim Adams at Sebring (1965).



Jo Schlesser/Hal Keck take 2<sup>nd</sup> overall and 1<sup>st</sup> in GT at the Daytona Continental 2 000km Race (1965).



Le Mans 24 Hour (1965). Four Daytonas entered but only #11 finished.

at. It wasn't all plain sailing though with the steering going light when 260km/h came up. A month more of extensive development was carried out before Miles signed off the design, with the car good for 310km/h. In its debut race, the Daytona Continental 2000 held at the Daytona Speedway on 16 February 1964, the car (Chassis number CSX2287) with Dave MacDonald at the wheel secured pole position, with a time of 2:08.200 and average speed of 171km/h.

Five more Daytona Coupés were built (not at Shelby American but rather Carrozzeria Gransport in Modena, Italy) and the list of drivers and race meetings reads as a who's who in the racing world. With such pedigree and rarity the Shelby Daytona Coupé holds a

firm spot at the sharp end of the collectable (read: unobtainable) list of race cars. So how is it we see a pair of Lindenberg Racing coupés competing on our local Historic Tour and other events?

The answer comes from Port Elizabeth, and the Hi-Tech Automotive operation. From its 25 000m<sup>2</sup> factory, Hi-Tech produces not only these brutal coupé recreations but also GT40 and 1963 Corvette Grand Sport continuation vehicles, which are distributed globally by Superformance.

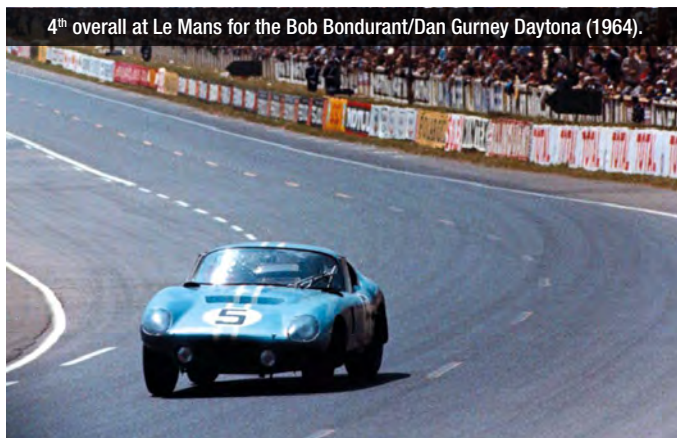
Known as the Brock Coupé, Superformance Coupé or Superformance Shelby Daytona Coupé, the

A month more of extensive development was carried out before Miles signed off the design, with the car good for 310km/h



Hi-Tech body was designed by Pete Brock and the chassis by Bob Negstad (yes the same chaps that penned the original race cars) and is regarded as the most authentic continuation of the original – the only modern coupé eligible for the Shelby Registry, other than the original six.

Peter Lindenberg was the main Lindenberg Daytona Coupé protagonist in 2016 but he teamed up with his daughter Paige in early 2017, and Djurk Venter joined the party with a second car. For the 2017 Jaguar Simola Knysna Hillclimb Justin Price (son of Jimmy Price, the man behind Hi-Tech Automotive) impressed at the wheel of one of the coupés, putting in a 48.5 second run to walk away with class victory and fourth overall. To see more of these masterful continuation cars in action, head to our calendar on page 6 and look up the next round of the Historic Tour. 📅



## THE DRIVERS

Dave MacDonald	Hal Keck
Bob Holbert	Jack Sears
Jo Schlessler	Dick Thompson
Phil Hill	André Simon
Jochen Neerpasch	Allen Grant
Chris Amon	Rick Muther
Innes Ireland	John Timanus
André Simon	Lew Spencer
Maurice Dupeyron	Jim Adams
Bob Johnson	Phil Hill
Tom Payne	Jack Sears
Dan Gurney	John Whitmore
Bob Bondurant	Peter Sutcliffe
Maurice Trintignant	Peter Harper
Bernard de St. Auban	Frank Gardner

## THE HIGHLIGHTS

- 1964: 12 Hours of Sebring (GT class win, fourth overall)
- 1964: 24 Hours of Le Mans (GT class win, fourth overall)
- 1964: RAC Tourist Trophy (GT class win)
- 1964: Tour de France Automobile (GT class win)
- 1965: 24 Hours of Daytona (GT class win)
- 1965: 12 Hours of Sebring (GT class win)
- 1965: Italian Grand Prix at Monza (GT class win)
- 1965: Nürburgring 1000km (GT class win)
- 1965: 12 Hours of Reims (GT class win to clinch 1965 World Sportsscar Championship)
- 1965: Enna-Pergusa (GT class win)
- 1965: 25 land speed records at Bonneville



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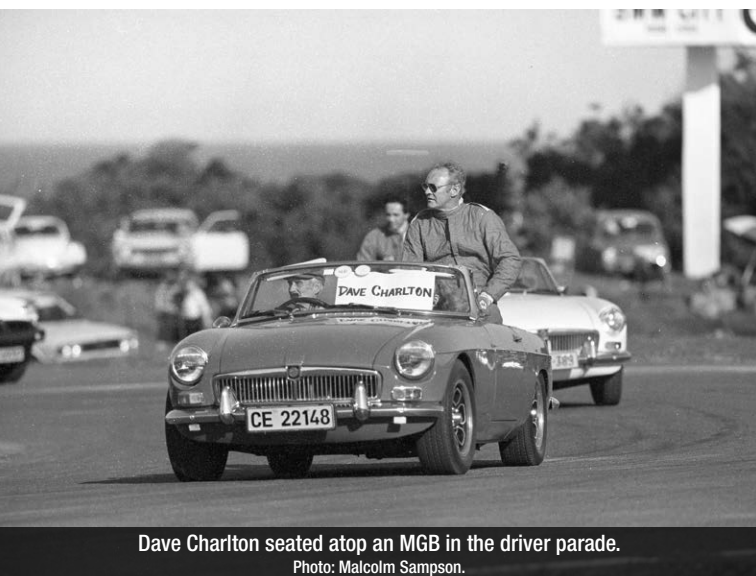
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# BRUT FORCE & PROMOTION

By David Pearson | Images: [www.motoprint.co.za](http://www.motoprint.co.za) collection



Dave Charlton seated atop an MGB in the driver parade.  
Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Ian Scheckter (March 838) followed by Wayne Taylor (Lant).  
Photo: Malcolm Sampson.

First prize: a holiday in Mauritius for two, sponsored by a deodorant brand that also has in its portfolio a product for women who love men. Add in a main street closed for a party, a bevy of beauties popping out of the roof of a mighty limo borrowed for the occasion from the Austrian Ambassador to South Africa, and you would have to think this was all a mega-supermarket or TV channel beano.

Not so. This was all part of the promotional razzmatazz for the 11 August 1984 Brut GP, a race for F2 cars run on the famous seaside East London circuit which had been the venue for World Championship Grand Prix in 1962, 1963 and 1965.

Graham Duxbury, F2 champion in 1982, and Ian Scheckter, the 1983 winner, had felt for some time that the F2 series was under promoted, and decided to put their money where their mouths were and run a race with what they felt was the kind of promotion the series needed. Dux brought in his 1982 sponsor Brut, a cooperative MSA (yes, them) gave the OK for a non-championship race on 11 August and the local organisers pitched in with a will.

For the record, the Ian Scheckter-Charlie Harris motorcycle dealership was in the street that was closed for the Friday night shindig and the stretch limo came about by the good offices of the owner of Hekro, one of F2's most enthusiastic sponsors!

With Dux at the promotional reins, and local star Ian Scheckter as co-promoter, a fully-representative entry of F2 cars and

Graham Duxbury, F2 champion in 1982, and Ian Scheckter, the 1983 winner, had felt for some time that the F2 series was under promoted, and decided to put their money where their mouths were



Klaus Grogor (March 832). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Trevor van Rooyen (Maurer). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Brian Ferris (Ralt RT4). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Kenny Critchfield (March 802). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.

drivers was attracted to the seaside circuit. However, quick single-seaters had been absent since 1969, when John Love had set a lap record of 1 min 24.4 in his Gunston Lotus 49, and the modern breed of ground effect cars and their drivers found the track narrow and bumpy. Despite this, everyone got down to being real racers. Dux also introduced Indy-style single car qualifying, each competitor doing one warm-up lap, two qualifying efforts and a slow down.

Predictably, it was local hero Ian Scheckter, in the Gunston March 832, whose track experience consisted of dicing in a Mazda saloon in 1981, who came out tops with a time fully five seconds off the 1969 time of Love in a 3-litre Cosworth-powered car. Wayne Taylor, ex-East Londoner in a Rack-Rite Lant, pushed Ian hard but had to settle for second spot. Behind these two

came the Maurers of Trevor van Rooyen and Tony Martin, Trevor in the DAW car and Tony in his BP-liveried version.

The GP was run over two ten-lap heats and reigning champion Scheckter made his intentions clear from the get-go, jumping into an immediate lead and taking the chequered flag over seven seconds clear. Behind him, Taylor led the Maurers of Martin and Van Rooyen, with rookie Ken Critchfield holding a surprising fourth in a Scope Engineering-sponsored March 802. Sadly, this was not to last, Ken losing the clutch after just four laps and spinning off at the final corner hairpin. Taylor was also having problems with a flat battery, causing the Mazda engine to cut out at awkward moments and this resulted in a time-losing

However, quick single-seaters had been absent since 1969, when John Love had set a lap record of 1 min 24.4 in his Gunston Lotus 49



Tony Martin (Maurer MM83). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Trevor van Rooyen (Suzuki 250) in 1969. Photo: David Pearson.



Dave Charlton (F5000 Lola) in 1969. Photo: David Pearson.



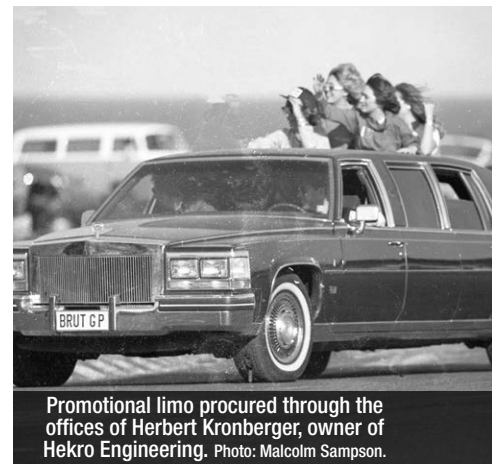
Ian Scheckter (March 832). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Billy Maloney (Lant). Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Wayne Taylor and Ian Scheckter. Photo: Malcolm Sampson.



Promotional limo procured through the offices of Herbert Kronberger, owner of Hekro Engineering. Photo: Malcolm Sampson.

spin. The Martin, Van Rooyen scrap was resolved in favour of Martin, with Van Rooyen holding on to third and a delayed Bernard Tilanus in a Camec-liveried Ralt RT4 fourth. Dave Charlton, who had last raced here in 1969, in the F5000 Lola 'SAS Oranje', made a real charge after having to avoid Tilanus's spin and drove a good race to fifth ahead of a misfiring Wayne Taylor. Incidentally, Trevor van Rooyen also competed at the selfsame 1969 meeting as Charlton, but in the 250cc motorcycle race on a Suzuki.

For Ian, heat two was very much more of the same. He went off the line into a lead he never looked like losing, with Tony Martin and Trevor van Rooyen again the best of the rest. Martin held down second place until lap eight, when Van Rooyen got by and extended his lead to finish second overall by just 0.2 seconds after the combined 20 laps. Wayne Taylor again had battery problems in heat two and missed out on a final top placing, ending up eighth on aggregate. Klaus Grogor in a similar March 832 to Scheckter – with eye-catching Southern Suns sponsorship – was fifth in heat two and overall, and Braam Smith (Lant) sixth.

The top six were the only drivers to cover the full 20 laps. Keith Horwood in the oldest of the Maurers (an MM81) took seventh, Wayne Taylor was eighth and Billy

Maloney ninth after a fraught practice. Billy had rattled his own March along the pit Armco during practice, damaging the suspension, but Mel Lahner came to his rescue with the loan of his spare partially-built Lant, which by dint of some prodigious labour was readied just in time for the start of heat one. Ian Scheckter won overall by nearly 15 seconds. 🏆

## RESULTS, TWO 10-LAP HEATS COMBINED

1	Ian Scheckter	March 832
2	Trevor van Rooyen	Maurer MM82
3	Tony Martin	Maurer MM83
4	Bernard Tilanus	Ralt RT4
5	Klaus Grogor	March 832
6	Braam Smith	Lant
7	Keith Horwood	Maurer MM81
8	Wayne Taylor	Lant
9	Billy Maloney	Lant

New outright lap record: Ian Scheckter March 832 1 min 19.4 secs. All cars Mazda powered.

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# CLASSICS RALLY TOGETHER

Lee Rose/Elvene Coetzee (Ford Escort RS).  
Photo: Johan Niemand

The South African Rally season is in full swing and classic rally cars have made a welcome appearance on the scene once again. Spectators young and old; technocrats and historic buffs alike have been treated to some thrilling action already on the first two National Championship rallies of 2017. **Terry Illman** reports from the hot seat.

**T**he unmistakable sound of Ford BDA engines and the sight of other historic rally cars such as the Toyota Corolla, Datsun SSS Coupé, VW Golf and a BMW being driven on gravel rally stages with aggressive intent stirs the passions of those of us who grew up with these cars, and a new generation of rally spectators as well.

Half of the cars entered in the first two events are rear-wheel-drive, dyed-

in-the-wool rally cars, conforming to the specifications of their era and spectacular to watch. Crewed by enthusiasts of the sport, the rear-wheel-drive cars provide a spectacle that has rekindled the love for these old cars. To hear the crowd reacting to the tyre squealing, sliding, tight hairpin turns and short straight acceleration bursts of cars like Nico Nienaber's very rapid Toyota Corolla, that whipped through the night tar stages of Sabie town square on Friday night, was music for the soul. Sitting in the start

control awaiting our start time, we could hear the car noises and the reaction of the large number of spectators as the earlier competitors got the crowd roaring.

For 2017, the NRC Classic Class (CNRC) is an official support class in the 2017 National Rally Championship. Eligible vehicles are two-wheel-drive, naturally-aspirated sedans built before 31 December 1985. The body shape of the cars must accurately reflect the silhouette of the original model, or as homologated for rallying, and the engine

Crewed by enthusiasts of the sport, the rear-wheel-drive cars provide a spectacle that has rekindled the love for these old cars

## TOUR NATAL RALLY 10 AND 11 MARCH 2017

1 <sup>ST</sup>	Lee Rose and Elvene Coetzee	Ford Escort RS
2 <sup>ND</sup>	Roelof Coertse and Nico Swartz	Ford Escort Mk2
3 <sup>RD</sup>	Ashley McKenzie and Les McKenzie	Ford Escort Mk1

## YORK RALLY 21 AND 22 APRIL 2017

1 <sup>ST</sup>	Lee Rose and Elvene Coetzee	Ford Escort RS
2 <sup>ND</sup>	Roelof Coertse and Barry White	Ford Escort Mk2
3 <sup>RD</sup>	Hubi von Moltke and Terry Illman	VW Golf GTI





Roelof Coertse/Barry White (Ford Escort Mk2)  
Photo: Sue Vacy-Lyle



Etienne Malherbe/Matt Kohler (Datsun SSS).  
Photo: Sue Vacy-Lyle



Nico Nienaber/Gert Janse van Rensburg (Toyota Corolla).  
Photo: Johan Niemand



Hubi von Moltke/Terry Illman (VW Golf GTI).  
Photo: Johan Niemand

used must originate from the marque of the original chassis. Thus, by way of example, Roelof Coertse is campaigning a 1978 Ford Escort Mk II fitted with a Ford ZETEC engine.

The season so far has been dominated by the Ford Escorts. For the record, the podia for the Tour Natal Rally and the York Rally are as follows: Lee Rose has dominated both events thus far with his immaculately prepared Ford Escort Mk2 RS. A seasoned campaigner, originally from Kenya, who competed on his first KZN event in March, Lee said: "The Natal Rally was very well organised and the stages were fantastic. The car ran faultlessly for day 1 and half of day 2."


Rose's car refused to fire at the start of the last stage and the voltmeter was only registering 8V. They managed to bump start the car and completed the stage very carefully, keeping one eye on the road and one on the voltmeter. The crew then experienced a very stressful 30km liaison section back to the finish (given the traffic on the road) and they eventually coasted in to the finish, the engine misfiring and eventually

dying on the line. Diagnosis: a lug that had broken off the starter motor.

On the York Rally Lee experienced some brake issues, which they managed to resolve on the shake-down stage. Apart from that, he tells me that the event was trouble free. This was his second go on the popular Sabie event, having competed in the 25<sup>th</sup> and final Sasol Rally last year.

With some well-known rally personalities entering the Classic Class, old bonds are being rekindled and there is a new spirit amongst this group. Four Verlaque family members, including Lola and Megan (aka The Rally Chicks) competed in the York, multiple National Rally Champion co-driver Elvene Coetzee is reading the notes for Lee Rose, Tutankhamun remembers the McKenzies and the list goes on... we hope to see some more past competitors bringing their mounts out to thrill the crowds.

In future issues we will present a full rally report for the classic events – an exciting prospect with entry numbers expected to grow. Watch this space.

Rally on! 

With some well-known rally personalities entering the Classic Class, old bonds are being rekindled and there is a new spirit amongst this group

# ON THE RISE

WORDS & IMAGES: GAVIN FOSTER



Rob Ralph (Suzuki 1100) leads Tommy Schoeman (BSA 750cc Rocket 3).



Mac McKenzie (Triumph Trident).



Regular Alfa man Paul Manegold (Alfa Romeo Giulia).



Long-time Hesketh racer Meredith Willis (Mk2 Ford Escort).



72-year-old Adrian Moore (Lotus 7).



Peter ter Wolbeek (Renault R8 Gordini). He last raced at Roy Hesketh more than a quarter of a century ago.



Grant Duckham (Mk2 Ford Escort) lining up a Formula Vee.




21-year-old Mechanical Engineering student Nikita Nel (Mk1 Ford Escort) followed by her father, Thys (Ford Anglia).

For 35 years after Pietermaritzburg's great Roy Hesketh circuit was forced to close in 1980, KwaZulu-Natal's multitude of motorsport fans bewailed the lack of a proper

racetrack in the province. A seemingly endless parade of well-meaning folk and more than a couple of scoundrels loomed over the horizon and then faded away quietly. Most had good intentions, but others had their eyes on the till as they asked for funds to get the job done. At the same time Kyalami and Roy Hesketh were each stolen at least twice!

Anyway, Kyalami's in the hands of the good and the honest again, and Hesketh, well, Hesketh's blown away in the wind. But while all this has been going on, a man called Des Gutzeit quietly dedicated a large chunk of his

farm and around R50 million of his own cash to building a brand-new 2.8km racetrack with a 900 metre straight, just an hour away from Durban, near Port Shepstone. Dezzi Raceway is now in its third year of being operational, and the classic car and bike brigade are finally getting involved. The pics here are from the club meeting on 8 April, where the Retro Class now runs regularly alongside the saloons, and the special event for bikes that ran on 29 April as part of the South Coast Bike Fest. There were only perhaps a dozen classic bikes mixed up in the field, but we anticipate that more of the old racers hibernating in KZN will be putting in an appearance soon. Now we need more spectators! 

But while all this has been going on, a man called Des Gutzeit quietly dedicated a large chunk of his farm and around R50 million of his own cash to building a brand-new 2.8km racetrack with a 900 metre straight

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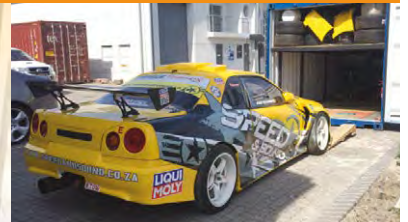
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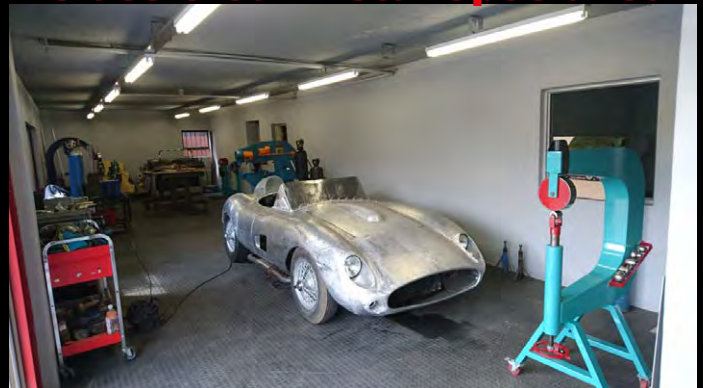
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By Howard Johnston

**Y**our article on the Bitter CD in the April issue, 'Best coupé at the London Motor Show', brought back fond memories. As the owner of an Opel GT 1900 'mini Corvette' with pop-up lights, I had seen a small article on the Bitter CD launched at the Geneva Motor Show in 1974 in the *SA Car* magazine.

Years later I saw an ad for a Bitter for sale on auction. The car was in poor condition: three shades of silver paint, running with lawnmower spark plugs and plug leads taped together with insulation tape. But it was complete. I was lucky to purchase the Bitter for R16 000 (its third party disc was issued as a Maserati) and this was the start of a 12-year love affair.

As far as I could find out, it was imported for the MD of General Motors in Port Elizabeth. Then I believe it was owned by Kallie Knoetze, the famous South African boxer. A doctor owned the Bitter when it was repossessed and sold on auction.

My first lucky break was going into an exhaust shop on Beyers Naudé Drive in Johannesburg and asking if they made custom exhausts for Chev V8s. "What car?" I was asked. "You won't know it – a Bitter CD," was my reply. To my astonishment I

discovered that the man behind the counter had worked in Schwelm in Austria fitting shock absorbers to the Bitters!

Another stroke of good fortune befell me when, as an architect, I designed a home for Bilstein guru Ted Garstang – who then imported shock absorbers and a complete front suspension and springs for the CD. A side rear window and new rubber bumpers were also sourced from Bitter, and imported via Ted. Mechanical repairs were done in Greenside by Roger Mills.

When funds allowed, the car was sent to Park Central Panel Beaters (on a mine dump in Booysens) for a complete back-to-bare-metal respray. Then, disaster – Park Central Panel Beaters went into liquidation. Luckily Ted heard of this the day before, and managed to 'free' the Bitter before the liquidators locked the workshop. The Bitter arrived at my home with the doors and bonnet in the back of Ted's bakkie, the windscreen in the back seat, and with a box of parts. The primer coat had been applied.

But many parts were missing, and after greasing the palm of the security guard on a Sunday, access was gained and a fibreglass bin with the magic word 'Bitter' was located amongst the E-Type and Rolls, which were trapped in the workshop. Still missing were the door cards and the little steel pieces between the pop-up lights

The car was in poor condition: three shades of silver paint, running with lawnmower spark plugs and plug leads taped together with insulation tape





and the front bumper. These missing items were locally made.

A friend, Frank Cotchie, helped to reassemble the Bitter, which was then sent to another panel beater to be painted in Lancia blue, to match the Lancia Gamma coupé which my wife drove at that time. Then disaster struck again when the blue paint started to bubble as a result of a reaction with the primer. So another respray followed, with the colour now BMW metallic silver/blue. What could have been another disaster when the windscreen cracked while being removed was averted when a call to PG Glass produced another miracle – they had a Bitter windscreen in stock!

The love affair with this big exotic V8 coupé with pop-up lights continued... even a trip to Swaziland took longer than expected due to the traffic jam the Bitter caused at the border post. Whenever I filled up with petrol (which was often with a Corvette 350 V8 motor with 'butterfly heads' running through a 3-speed auto), a crowd would gather asking what car it was.

During the 12 years that I was privileged to own the Bitter, I read an article that claimed that there was a plan at some stage to bring in Bitter bodies in white to SA and assemble and fit the engines and transmissions from locally-produced GM products. If true, a missed opportunity to produce a super car in SA.

The Bitter was then passed on to my

brother David Johnston, and then sold. Years later I saw the car for sale in Parktown North, with a cracked windscreen and the leather-covered dash damaged from the sun. Regrettably I passed up the opportunity to repurchase my dream.

I have relived my dream of owning powerful coupés with pop-up lights with a BMW 850 V12 6-speed manual, a Porsche 928S4, two BMW 840ci sports (one is my current dream car, alongside a 1998 Jaguar XK8 convertible) and along the way an Aston Martin Lagonda wedge with, you guessed it, pop-up lights.

But the Bitter was the car I should not have sold – or should I have kept the Sunbeam Tiger, or the Datsun 240Z (x2), or the Merc 560sec (x2), or the BMW 635 csi (x3), or the Lancia Fulvia Coupé, or the Volvo 544 B18 Sport (x2), or the Alfa Spyder? All these are amongst the 34 cars I have had the privilege of owning.

My wife has actively supported and joined in my love affair with classic cars – and has been rewarded with stylish coupés such as the Fulvia, Gamma, 635, 560SEC and now a 1993 Mercedes S600 V12 coupé for the last 13 years – gives new meaning to 'Gran's taxi!' 🇿



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