

July 2020

Issue No. 344



The Journal of The Vintage Sports Car Club of Western Australia (Inc.)

VINTAGE METAL

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THE JUBILEE GRAND PRIX – 1951



PLUS: From the President – Getting Back Together
Rebuilding Austin Healey steering box
Creating a Replica McLaren Austin Seven

July General Meeting – Monday July 6
Light Car Club clubrooms,
opp. 37 Moojebing St, Bayswater

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COVER: The White Mouse, built by Jack Nelson and raced at Narrogin in the 1951 AGP.

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Magazines are in members' inboxes by the last week of the month prior to month of issue.

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**For all commercial advertising contact David Moir
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**NOTE! DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES FOR THE AUGUST 2020 ISSUE IS JULY 15, 2020
ADVERTISING DEADLINE JULY 11, 2020.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We're Getting Back Together

At last we can get back together for a monthly meeting after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions! Elsewhere in this issue (page 7), you have details of our first monthly meeting since March.

Our thanks to Michael Broughton for arranging a short-term lease for these gatherings at the Light Car Club rooms in Bayswater.

Roll up at 6.30 for a 7 pm start, Monday July 6. Note the earlier start time. The Light Car Club Rooms are opposite 37 Moojebing Street, Bayswater. Please send an email to Sheryl on entries@vscwa.com.au to let her know you are coming so we can organise things including free pizzas for all.



Caversham Delays Continue

We needed to find an alternative venue for monthly meetings because we continue to be shut out of our Caversham clubrooms. This is because Peet Ltd and the Department of Communities have delayed the repairs to the ceilings, due to the discovery of asbestos over 6 months ago. Brian Eyre has been working hard with Peet Ltd to get some action, but with little success to date.

We hope that by July, we will know one way or the other whether we will regain the use of the Caversham facility. In the meantime, Dad's Army has resumed its gatherings at the workshop on the last and third last Tuesday of each month and expects to resume Saturday morning meetings on the first Saturday of July.

Club Competition Events To End?

As I mentioned last month, we are concerned that we will be unable to run competition events from next year, unless some members step forward to help with their organisation. This follows Paul Bartlett's advice that he is stepping down for the Competition Secretary role at the end of this year after 7 sterling years in the chair.

We are looking at spreading the role so that we have a separate person to take on each of our four major events – Northam, Albany (with the ACMC), Collie and the Vintage Stampede. Other members could take on the roles of Chair of the Competition Committee, delegate to the State Council of Motorsport Australia (formerly CAMS) etc.

Paul has documented the tasks required to organise each event and is available to discuss the roles. Please give this your serious consideration and give Paul a call to find out more about what's involved – his contact details are on page 2. The future of our club depends on it.

Northam and Albany Wash-up

Your management committee has been working hard to sort out the financial arrangements for this year's cancelled Northam Motor Sport Festival and Albany Classic events. We have been working hard with our sponsors, particularly the respective shire councils and Tourism WA, to obtain some compensation to off-set the money we have lost. At this stage, we are hopeful that both events will come close to breaking even or, at worst, make a small loss.

We are all itching to get our cars out for the next event after lockdown – the Collie Coalfields 500 on October 3 and 4.

Membership Renewals

We are getting a steady stream of membership renewals in response to the notice sent out a few weeks ago by Sheryl, our Admin Officer. You will note that we have avoided an increase in membership fees, although we expect this will be a difficult financial year for the club.

If you have a car on Concessional Licence through our club, it is vital that you pay your membership before 30 June. If not, your car becomes unlicensed as your membership has lapsed. Even if this doesn't apply to you, please renew your membership on time as it will help our club's financial situation.

Glenn Swarbrick

VSCC OF WA CALENDAR 2020

With the clubrooms being closed for urgent ceiling repairs from November 14, 2019, and the discovery of asbestos in the ceiling spaces, club meetings of all kinds in the clubrooms have had to be relocated. The COVID-19 lockdown resulted in the cancellation of all club gatherings, although the Management Committee managed to meet electronically.

The further easing of restrictions due to COVID-19 means that we can hold our July general meeting at the Light Car Club Rooms. The VSCC Clubrooms at Caversham are still not available for meetings.

July

- 4 Dad's Army Saturday (provisional)
- 6 General Meeting – Light Car Club Rooms, Opp. 37 Moojebing Street, Bayswater –6.30 for 7 pm**
- 14 Dad's Army
- 14 Management Committee
- 18 Terry le May Tribute – Burswood on Swan, 10 am to 1 pm**
- 20 Competition Group
- 28 Dad's Army

August

- 1 Dad's Army Saturday (provisional)
- 3 General Meeting – See July General Meeting
- 11 Dad's Army
- 11 Management Committee
- 17 Competition Group
- 25 Dad's Army

September

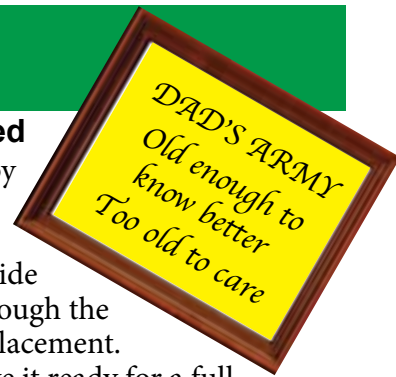
- 5 Dad's Army Saturday (provisional)
- 7 General Meeting – See July General Meeting
- 15 Dad's Army
- 15 Management Committee
- 21 Competition Group
- 29 Dad's Army

October

- 3-4 Collie Coalfields 500 State Regularity Championship Rd 3
State Historic Race Championship
- 5 General Meeting
- 10 Dad's Army Saturday (provisional)
- 11 Brockwell Classic
- 13 Dad's Army
- 13 Management Committee
- 19 Competition Group
- 23-25 Historic Races at Barbagallo WASCC
- 27 Dad's Army

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DAD'S ARMY NEWS



Singer Project Car Has Arrived

The Singer project car organised by Kevin Dorn has arrived at the clubrooms workshop along with many spares that were piled up inside the car. It is a four-seat tourer, although the seats need some repair or even replacement. Dad's Army will be working to have it ready for a full programme of events in 2021. It might even put in an appearance at Jack's Hill and Barbagallo at the beginning of December this year.

Dad's Army members will be discussing just what to do with the Singer. The engine looks good, but who knows what terrors lurk under that shiny rocker cover?



The engine looks remarkably advanced for its age, with a crossflow head, but we need to sort out its idiosyncracies so that we can make it run sweetly and give its maximum performance. At 1308 cc it is quite a big ten horsepower engine. For example the Ford 10 is only 1172 cc.



Some of the decisions that have to be made are whether to build a lightweight body on the full chassis or whether to shorten the chassis and make up a two-seater or single-seater body for it. I don't suggest we go as far as Bob Spikins did with his Bantam Special, but there must be a few options.

Each corner of the Singer is suspended by a quarter-elliptic spring, the result is that the wheelbase lengthens as load comes on the springs then reduces again as the load comes off.

It is fascinating to attempt to predict the effects on the handling of this wheelbase variation as the car leans under cornering loads...



Phil's Kougou

Some might be familiar with the Jaguar based Kougou kit car. On the left is Phil Bolden's Kougou showing off its new paint job of which Phil is justifiably proud.

DAD'S ARMY DATES – 2020

	FIRST SATURDAY	THIRD LAST TUESDAY	LAST TUESDAY
JULY	4 (provisional)	14	28
AUGUST	1 (provisional)	11	25
SEPTEMBER	5 (provisional)	15	29
OCTOBER	10 (provisional)	13	27

EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS



Bentley at Pebble Beach

In the photograph of Peter Briggs' Bentley at Pebble Beach that featured in the June issue, Graeme Cocks was at pains to point out that the occupants of the back seat of the Bentley were himself and Kathy. Sorry Graeme, the American photographer only identified Peter and Robyn in his caption.

John Gordon Bennett Jr

In my story about Luigi Fagioli I mention the Gordon Bennett races that preceded the Grand Prix. John Gordon Bennett Jr, who sponsored the eponymous races, was publisher of the *New York Herald*, which was founded by his father John Gordon Bennett Sr. He did, however, sometimes scandalise New York society.

In 1877, he left New York for Europe after an incident that ended his engagement to socialite Caroline May. It is said that he arrived late and drunk to a party at the May family mansion, then urinated into the grand piano in full view of his hosts. Gives a whole new meaning to tinkling on the piano...

The Gordon Bennett races started in 1900 and were effectively superseded by *Le Grand Prix de l'ACF* in 1906.

Le Grand Prix de l'ACF

After six years of Gordon Bennett races, where each competing country was allowed only three entries, the French had had enough. After all, was France not the home of the motor industry? Should France therefore not have more entries than lesser countries?

L'Automobile Club de France (l'ACF) determined to set up its own race, *Le Grand Prix de l'ACF*, and on the 26th and 27th of June 1906 the first Grand Prix was held. In a race of two parts, the cars had to cover six laps each day of a 103.18 km circuit near Le Mans, giving a combined race distance of 1238.16 km. Lasting for more than 12 hours overall, the race was won by Ferenc Szisz driving for the Renault team. FIAT driver Felice Nazzaro finished second, and Albert Clément was third in a Clément-Bayard.

The following year at Dieppe the first two places were reversed, with Nazzaro's FIAT leading home Szisz's Renault. The next seven cars home were all French, so things were going well for the home team.

However, the third year, again at Dieppe, was a catastrophe for the French with Christian Lautenschlager's Mercedes leading home two Benzes, a Clément-Bayard, a second Mercedes, an Opel and a Benz. Only one French car in the first seven! The ACF picked up its ball and went home.

In 1912 the club was confident enough to run *Le Grand Prix de l'ACF* again, and for two years it went well, at Le Mans and Amiens. Georges Boillot won both races for Peugeot and he was favoured to do it again in 1914 at Lyons, but...Mercedes was back, and so was factory test driver Lautenschlager. In this, the first Grand Prix to be run with a limit on engine size (4½ litres), Boillot fought valiantly, but his ill-handling Peugeot stopped several times for tyres and eventually the engine cried enough leaving three Mercedes driven by Lautenschlager, Louis Wagner and Otto Salzer to fill the first three places ahead of the Peugeot of Jules Goux.

There was no question of racing for the next few years as Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo a week before the race and within a month France and Germany were involved in a much more serious conflict than *Le Grand Prix de l'ACF*.

The Future of the VSCC of WA

We've had a long pause in club activities since the government locked us down to protect us from COVID-19. Now that the restrictions are being lifted, we must look to the future of the VSCC.

For many years, the main source of revenue and publicity for the club has been the round the houses events at Northam and Albany, both of which have been cancelled for 2020. We should also consider that many of our members join the club so that they can compete in those two events.

President Glenn Swarbrick has raised the possibility (see page 3) that the club might not be able to run any competitive events after the end of this year, because Competition Secretary Paul Bartlett is to stand down from that position after the AGM. His last events for the club will be the Jack's Hill Hillclimb and Vintage Twilight Stampede on December 5, so if you have any thoughts of taking on the job of Competition Secretary, please contact Paul to discover exactly what the job entails. Paul's contact details are on page 2.

There are other positions on the VSCC Management Committee that will become vacant in November. If you believe that you have something to offer in the management of the club, give some thought to nominating for the committee at the AGM. Nomination forms will be included in future issues of Vintage Metal or available on the club web site closer to the time of the AGM — but start thinking now. Your club needs you.

Letters to the Editor

Have you nothing to say? I have had no letters to the editor this month. Please have your say in your magazine.

Bob Campbell

VSCC NEWS

CLUB MEETING MONDAY 6TH JULY

The VSCC has negotiated a 3 month lease for the Light Car Club premises, situated opposite 37 Moojebing Street, Bayswater.

We have ample bitumen parking on the premises, so let's celebrate post COVID-19 with a good turn out of cars, preferably your beloved historic vehicle, if possible.

We can in fact display a vehicle inside, so if any member would like to display their vehicle on the night, please call Michael Broughton on 0418 921 544 or drop him a line on mbroughton356@gmail.com

As an extra inducement, we are providing complementary assorted pizzas and have access to a kitchen and fridge, so feel free to bring along your own alcohol.

For catering and logistical purposes, please drop Sheryl Swarbrick a quick note on entries@vscwa.com.au or ring her on 0416 025 667 by Friday July 3, confirming your attendance.

We will then set up seating and table arrangements, once numbers are confirmed.

May we kindly suggest that members take the trouble to wear their lanyards on the night. Lanyards enable any member to identify another member and are very welcoming for any visitors, guests or potential new members.

The reason we have secured Bayswater for the next 3 months and beyond is the uncertainty of being able to use Caversham as our meeting venue, due to on-going maintenance issues. Even if we were allowed entry in the foreseeable future, our clubroom will be uninhabitable without a lot of hands on volunteer assistance.

Let's aim for a big turn out on the Monday evening July 6 and don't forget to let Sheryl know you are coming by July 3 on entries@vscwa.com.au. Roll up at 6.30 for a 7 pm start. Remember! Free pizzas.

TRIBUTE TO TERRY LE MAY

The VSCC of WA will present a tribute to the late Terry le May, an enthusiastic member of the club for some years until his untimely death from cancer at Easter.

The event will be held at the Burswood On Swan function centre at 1 Camfield Dr, Burswood WA 6100 from 10 am to 1 pm on Saturday July 18.

Terry's wife Megan has rounded up photos and news clippings to put up on screen. The lady who was the celebrant at Terry's funeral will be the MC.

We have a few people who knew Terry well who will talk and any one who would like to speak is welcome. What Terry knew and achieved is unbelievable.

Owen, Terry's son, who missed out on the funeral because of the COVID-19 lockdown, is coming down from Broome for the event.

Terry was a great club member and a true asset to the VSCC of WA. Every member of the club who knew Terry is invited to join in this tribute. Should you have any memorabilia or photos of Terry's remarkable history, please contact Graham Whitehead prior to the event.

Please contact Graeme Whitehead, home phone 08 9279 1061, mobile 0412 919 370, email whiteheadv8@gmail.com, to let him know the names of club members and friends who will be attending. Because we are providing a sausage sizzle, we need confirmation of numbers by Wednesday July 15. There will also be a retro coffee caravan there from 10am, supplying excellent beverages to order.

The location is great for car access and parking, so why not bring along your historic vehicle or car of interest. This would make a great photo opportunity to include in a Terry Le May tribute in our next edition of Vintage Metal.

PS: Please wear your lanyard with pride.

Information Needed

Secretary David Moir received an email from Barry Wise of the Historic Racing Car Club of Queensland asking for information.

Barry said: *'I was wondering if any one in your club would know of a Graham Brown who raced a March formula Atlantic in the early eighties.*

'If so I would appreciate some type of contact as I am researching the history of his old 1981 March 81a /82a.

'Looking forward to a reply.

'Regards Barry Wise HRCC Qld'

Please send any information to Barry at barryjanwise@spin.net.au



Terry le May as many will remember him, working at his bench.

LUIGI DESERVED BETTER

BY BOB CAMPBELL

I am a long time student of Grand Prix racing and two things that never fail to raise my hackles are when Grand Prix racing and Formula One are taken to be synonymous and when it is assumed that Grand Prix racing started with the introduction of the Driver's World Championship in 1950.

To tackle the second first, Grand Prix racing started in 1906, when the Automobile Club of France (ACF) decided that the Gordon Bennett races that had been the premier events previously were insufficiently biased in favour of France. The Gordon Bennett rules admitted equal sized teams from all participating countries and the French, founders of the motor industry, believed that they should be allowed more entries than the others. In 1906 they organised their own race, *Le Grand Prix de l'ACF*, which was the correct title of what we know as the French Grand Prix for more than half a century, and certainly well into the World Championship era.

On the first point, Formula One is merely the modern title for the current set of rules applying to Grand Prix racing. Except, that is, for 1952 and 1953 when Grand Prix racing moved to Formula Two to prevent domination by Ferrari, which didn't work. Grand Prix formulae have restricted weight, engine size, fuel consumption, race length and various combinations of these, but never have they been as restrictive as today.

To get back to my raised hackles, Luigi Fagioli, the veteran Italian driver, was the third of the 'Three Fs' in the Alfa Romeo Grand Prix team of 1950, racing the legendary Tipo 158 Alfettas with Giuseppe Farina and Juan Manuel Fangio. He finished third in that first, 1950 World Drivers Championship. His only Grand Prix in 1951 was the French, in which he shared the winning Alfa Romeo with Fangio to become the oldest winner of a World Championship Grand Prix, at 53 years old, and the only winner of a World Championship Grand Prix to have been born before the twentieth century (born 9 June 1898 at Osimo in the Marche region of central Italy). However, many lists of Grand Prix statistics treat poor old Luigi as though his career had started with his joining the Alfa team in 1950.

In fact, Luigi Fagioli entered his first race in 1925 and his dark looks and fiery temperament soon earned him the soubriquet 'The Abruzzi Robber'.

His first Grand Prix races were in 1931 with Maserati, for whom he won the Monza Grand Prix. In 1932 he won one of the races at the Italian Grand Prix meeting before switching seats with Tazio Nuvolari for 1933 to join the Alfa Romeo team at Scuderia Ferrari. This was a good move leading to wins in the Coppa Acerbo at Pescara, the Comminges race at St Gaudens in Southern France and in the Italian Grand Prix, which netted Fagioli the Italian driver's championship and a drive in the new Mercedes-Benz team for 1934.

Although he pulled out of the Eifelrennen in high dudgeon after being ordered to let von Brauchitsch win, Fagioli won the Coppa Acerbo, shared the win with Caracciola in the Italian Grand Prix and won the Spanish Grand Prix in 1934. Fagioli re-signed for Mercedes-Benz in 1935 when he became the first driver to take a pole to flag win in the Monaco Grand Prix and scored a number of high placings in the other major races. He also pulled out of the Belgian Grand Prix in a repeat of the 1934 Eifelrennen dispute.

Third at Tripoli and a shared fourth with Herman Lang in Switzerland were Fagioli's best placings in 1936 with the short wheelbase Mercedes-Benz and 1937 saw him at the wheel of an Auto Union at Tripoli, where he finished fifth ahead of Caracciola then attempted to brain his rival, whom he accused of blocking him during the race, with a hurled wheel hammer. He is said to have attempted to attack Caracciola with a knife when the hammer missed, only to be restrained by Mercedes team manager Alfred Neubauer and mechanic Wilhelm Sebastian.

Increasingly painful rheumatism put a premature end to Fagioli's pre-war career, but he was back in 1950 with Alfa Romeo, which brings us back to where we started. In 1952, with no Alfa Romeo team in Grand Prix racing, he turned to sports car racing. He broke a leg and one hand when he crashed his Lancia Aurelia in practice for the 1952 Monaco Grand Prix (a sports car race that year) and died from complications a few days later.

Modern statistical collections tend to short change Luigi Fagioli, a driver who mixed it with the best there was in the 1930s, including Nuvolari and Caracciola, and deserved much better than a 'one shared win' entry in any listing of Grand Prix drivers.



Luigi Fagioli at the wheel of a Mercedes-Benz W25C in 1936

STEERING BOX SURGERY

BY DAVID MOIR

David Moir describes the work on his Austin Healey while in social isolation.



Above: The steering box internals laid bare and the tray of goo drained from the box.

Below: The empty but clean steering box.



The 'lockdown' provided the perfect opportunity to tackle some projects on my Austin Healey 100 BN1 which I had been putting off for several years. In particular, the steering box was the only major component which I had not overhauled in the first 49 years of my ownership of this car. The steering was OK with only a minor amount of 'slop' but it had always had a slow leak of oil/grease out of the bottom seal, on to the lower wishbone and chassis.

So before tackling the job, I checked that parts were available and found that AH Spares and Ahead 4 Healeys could supply bearings and seals for the BN1/early BN2 steering box. I also consulted our 100 guru, Graeme Shearer, on whether any special tools were needed. On Graeme's advice that nothing special was required and that any idiot could do it, I felt I was fully prepared.

I had also decided to replace the water pump which was showing signs of wear. This provided a reason to remove the radiator and drain and flush the cooling system, which hadn't been done for God knows how long. And, with the radiator out of the way, removing the steering column and steering box would be a lot easier.

So those bits were removed, followed by the steering track rod, tie rods and idler. Then the grille came out, the steering wheel came off and I undid the mounting for the steering column (behind the dash) and the three bolts holding the steering box to the chassis.

I was then faced with the task of pulling the whole thing out through the grille opening, wondering whether I'd left enough room between the front of the car and my workbench. To my surprise, it came out with a bit of waggling and I was then faced with stripping the box to find out what needed fixing.

The box came apart quite easily and the worst part was cleaning out the 50+-year-old mixture of grease and oil which had been lubricating the box. Thankfully the worm was in good condition (because you can't get new ones) but the peg, bearings and seals needed replacing.

So I went online and ordered those bits from Ahead 4 Healeys. Shortly afterwards, I got a reply acknowledging they had received my order but saying that I should expect some delay because they were working from home due to the COVID-19 restrictions in the UK.

I left it a week or so before asking for an estimate of when my order would be dispatched. I was pleased to get a response saying that the order had just been made up and was on its way, with a predicted delivery date of around two weeks.

I then filled my time stripping and cleaning the other steering

parts, replacing the water pump (with a new one I had bought last year from AH Spares) and flushing the engine block and radiator.

Ten days after confirmation of my order, I was pleasantly surprised that the parts had arrived early so I set about re-assembling the steering box, following the scant instructions in the workshop manual.

I then filled the box with Penrite Steering Box Lube (see below) and gave it a coat of paint. At the time of writing, I have re-installed the steering box in the chassis (see below). The next job will be to re-connect the steering linkage and adjust the steering box to try to achieve minimal free-play but the correct pre-load.



Above: The new water pump installed (and painted black as I'd run out of the correct engine paint)

Below: The main parts replaced are: left - the steering column bearings, centre - the dust seal (upper) and oil seal (lower) and right - the steering peg and its two sets of bearings. (the worn parts are shown as I forgot to photograph the new bits before assembly)



Left: The Penrite Steering Box Lube mentioned above.

Below: The refurbished steering box in its gleaming new paint, ready for reinstallation.

Bottom: Wangling the steering column and box back into place in the car.



Know the Feeling

A sporting motorist was thundering through town one night when there was an all too familiar noise from under the bonnet and the engine stopped.

He pulled over and parked under a street light, opening the bonnet in the vain hope that he might be able to fix it. A local gent, who had drink taken, hove to alongside him and peering under the bonnet asked, 'What's up?' The miserable motorist sighed, 'Piston broke.'

'Know 'xactly how you feel,' quoth the inebriated one, and tottered off into the night.

HILLCLIMB SPECIAL FOR SALE

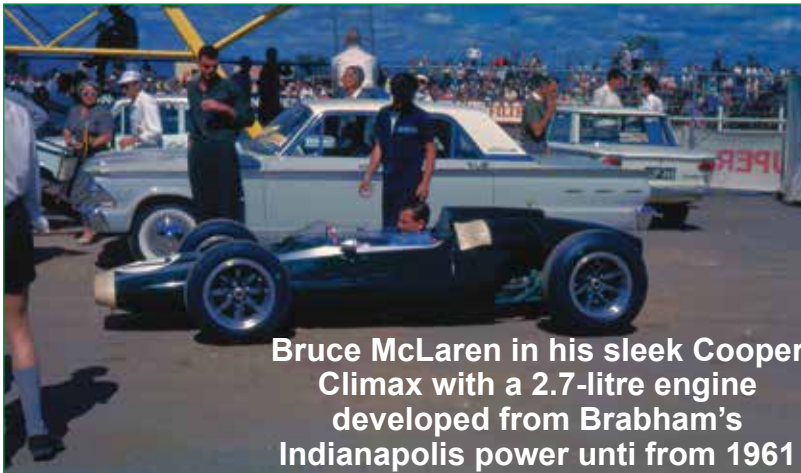
This hillclimb special is based on a copy of a 1983 Van Diemen Formula Ford chassis, modified to take a Kawasaki 1400GTR engine. It has 150 bhp and there is a spare gearbox with the car. Everything that shows in the photographs is included.

It was built by and for Craig Brattke, but Craig says: 'Was to be my hillclimb special, but age is slowing me down, so it needs to go.'

Priced at \$10,000 (negotiable)
Call Craig on 0408 913 926 to negotiate



THE 1962 AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX AT CAVERSHAM



Bruce McLaren in his sleek Cooper Climax with a 2.7-litre engine developed from Brabham's Indianapolis power unit from 1961

The 1962 AGP at Caversham was the last Grand Prix of the era when the race moved from state to state, a different location each year. After 1962 it became part of the Tasman Series of races and was run at tracks on the eastern seaboard.

Leading contenders in the 1962 race were former Cooper team-mates Bruce McLaren and Jack Brabham, Bruce in a neat slim-line Cooper Climax and Brabham in the first Brabham car to race in Australia. Brabham's BT-4 was being built to debut in New Zealand, but the build was rushed through and the car air-freighted to WA for the AGP.

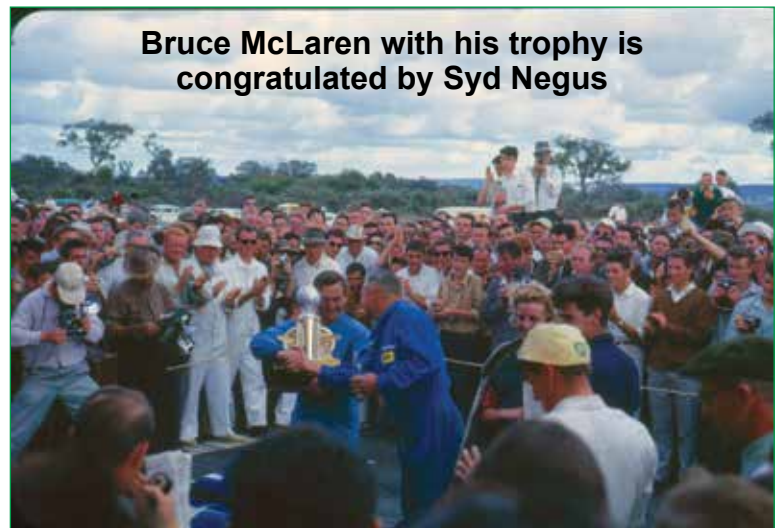
Eastern States starters were Bib Stillwell, Lex Davison, John Youl, Bill Patterson, (all Cooper

Climaxes) and Arnold Glass (BRM Scarab). Glass's car was one of the rear-engined BRM P48 F1 cars from 1960 with the 3.9-litre Buick V8 that had come to Australia in the back of the rear-engined Scarab single-seater in early 1962 to be raced by Chuck Daigh at Sandown.

Both McLaren and Brabham started out with 2.7-litre Climax engines, as did Lex Davison, the other Climaxes being 2.5-litre. Brabham's engine proved to have been poorly assembled and a gudgeon pin scored a cylinder liner during practice so that Brabham ran the race with McLaren's spare 2.5-litre engine.

Local starters, all slower than any of the visitors, were Syd Negus (Cooper Repco Holden), E Edwards (TS Special) and Jeff Dunkerton (Lotus Super Seven). This was the last AGP start for the Holden six, the Repco headed engine in Syd Negus's former Cooper Bristol, and the last AGP to be contested by a sports car, the Lotus Super Seven.

The track had been resurfaced for the event and it was hoped that many of the people in town for the 1962 Commonwealth Games would travel out to Caversham for the race. Unfortunately, Sunday provided ideal beach



Bruce McLaren with his trophy is congratulated by Syd Negus

weather and the expected crowds stayed away in their thousands. The event almost sent the WA Sporting Car Club bankrupt.

The main interest in the race was the duel between McLaren and Brabham. Methanol fuelled 2.7 versus avgas fuelled 2.5, the 2.5 revved harder but the 2.7 had more grunt. Smooth handling BT-4 versus twitchy Cooper on too-stiff springs. After leading for more than 50 of the 60 laps, McLaren made a mistake after lapping Glass and Brabham was only a few lengths behind. Trying to take advantage, Brabham dived inside Glass into KLG Corner at the top of the main straight. Glass didn't see him (photographs indicate that the widened bodywork to cover the crossover Weber carburettors on the V8 obscured Glass's view through his mirrors) and took his



Bruce McLaren in his Mini Cooper leads Lloyd Tresize's Ford V8

usual line through the corner, pushing Brabham over the tyre markers on the inside of the corner, tearing off part of the nose and damaging the radiator.

Brabham drove gently to the pits to retire and McLaren coasted to victory. John Youl and Bib Stillwell finished second and third after their own race-long battle. Laps behind, the locals fought their own battle with Syd Negus holding off E Edwards thirteen laps down on McLaren and Dunkerton a further lap down after a refuelling stop.

McLaren also drove in the sedan in his 997 cc Mini Cooper, surprising many, but not able to match Lex Davison's 7-litre Ford Galaxie. Was this the last time an AGP winner competed in a support race?

Three months later, Brabham had his revenge and won the 1963 AGP at Warwick Farm with McLaren in third behind second placed John Surtees' Lola.

THE JUBILEE GRAND PRIX – 1951

This story was written by me in 2001 as part of the preparation for the 2001 Narrogin Commemorative Australian Jubilee Grand Prix, held in Narrogin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Jubilee Grand Prix held in the streets of the town in 1951. The photographs are from the 2001 event, because I wasn't there in 1951, but most of the cars in the photographs were. The race was the last Australian Grand Prix to be won by an Australian-built racing special, the last AGP to be run as a handicap race and the first AGP to be run in Western Australia. BC

1951 was the year of the Festival of Britain and the Commonwealth Jubilee, celebrating fifty years of Australian federation. As a result, the Australian Grand Prix was saddled with the rather grand title of Jubilee Grand Prix.



George Reed (left), who built the 1951 winning car, and John Cummins, who drove a Ballot in the 1951 race, sit on the Skate replica at Narrogin in 2001 and reminisce.

favourable. The loudest voice of protest heard was from a native of the rival town of Katanning, demanding to know why his town council could not have won the Grand Prix.

Narrogin's usual racecourse was a 2.2-mile circuit around the centre of town, but for the Grand Prix the track was extended out of town to a total lap length of 4.4 miles. At the time most Australian Grands Prix were handicap events and Narrogin's was no exception, the cars being released by the starter according to their handicap. The driver credited with winning the race, Warwick Pratley, set fastest time but actually crossed the line third. First across the line was handicap winner Steve Tillett in his MG TC, which placed third on scratch times.

This was a transition period in Australian racing. Not too many years before, Western Australian Ossie Cranston in a self-built Ford V8 special had set fastest time in the 1937 Australian Grand Prix, but the winner was Les Murphy in an MG P-type, first on handicap and the first to win the AGP in an MG. Ossie is very much a footnote in the history books although his performance would have seen him hailed as Grand Prix winner a few years later.

Another footnote in history is that the 1937 AGP was held on Boxing Day 1936. It was titled the South Australian Centenary Grand Prix, as 1936 was South Australia's centenary year. However, it has passed into history as the 1937 AGP. It was the first AGP held outside the state of Victoria and the first road race held in South Australia. By the 1950s some of the hierarchy were a little embarrassed by the handicap status of the national race and the rules were set up so that Warwick Pratley was the winner although his and Steve Tillett's prize money and status on race day were equal. Place money was awarded down to eighth place, but only on handicap. The powers that be might have decreed that the Grand Prix had to be won from scratch, but it was still a handicap race.

Of course, the only reason a handicap race could be considered was that overtaking was considered part of the sport in 1951. You could actually pass cars out on the track and not during pit stops.

The remote location of the race meant that getting there was a greater challenge than the race itself. Eastern states

It had been decided some time before that the Australian Grand Prix would move from state to state, so that it would be a truly national event. It was to be held in Western Australia in 1951, but there was no permanent racing circuit available for the race. Several options were considered before Narrogin was chosen as the venue for the first AGP to be held in WA

Narrogin was a wise choice, in spite of being 190 kilometres from Perth. The town held an annual motor race meeting, the feature race being the Great Southern Flying Fifty, giving the locals more experience of race organisation than other towns. However, those meetings were not on the scale of the AGP. The Western Australian Sporting Car Club was called upon to assist with the organisation.

The Town Council spent quite a sum of money getting ready for the Grand Prix, most of it on sealing the roads to be used. In 1951, most roads outside Perth and the port of Fremantle were unsealed. Such expenditure on a motor race might arouse opposition today, but the general mood was



The handicap winning MG from 1951, which was driven by Steve Tillett. 2001 owner John Ellis, driving here, drove the MG regularly in historic racing.



The TS Special, here driven by owner Charlie Mitchell, competed in three Australian Grands Prix, Narrogin in 1951 and Caversham in 1957 and 1962, finishing sixth (first local driver, Syd Taylor) and seventh (2nd local, E.D. Edwards) in the Caversham races.

into a small, 10-foot frontage shop in Ceduna. Behind the counter were a brand new, genuine Ford Blitz radiator and two new tyres of the correct size. Picking his jaw up off the floor, George paid the man £79 and accepted ownership. I almost said he walked out with the radiator and tyres, but he would have needed help to carry them. Problems solved, the Reed-Pratley entourage continued to Perth without further troubles.

Some drove their racing cars across the desert, whether because they didn't have trucks or trailers or because the trailer or tow car gave up part way. Andy Brown drove his supercharged MG across (no trailer) while Eldred Norman bought a Bedford truck and built a special 24-wheeled trailer for the Double-V8 special. According to contemporary reports, the trailer burst nearly four dozen tyres during the trip.

The Double-V8 was an interesting car. Norman began building the car in New Guinea just after the end of the war. The chassis, axles and wheels from a Dodge Weapon Carrier were the basis of the car. Into this unlikely frame were inserted two Mercury V8 engines in tandem, the front one extending over the front axle. Work was interrupted by Norman's return to Adelaide, South Australia, but the car followed him home and first ran at the Glen Ewin hill climb on August 28, 1948. Continuing development saw three different bodies on the car and the addition of water-cooled brakes. Twin SU fuel pumps were used to spray water on the front brakes, which tended to overheat. Imagine the effect on another competitor when clouds of steam poured out of the big car. Most were convinced that it had blown up in a big way – at least the first time they saw it – and would back off, only to see the Double-V8 disappear up the road in perfect health.

Dick Bland had dramas on the way from Sydney to the race when the Mercury engine in the Ford truck that was towing his Delahaye required a roadside engine rebuild just west of Ceduna. But worse was to come. On the way back the

Delahaye seemed to stay cleaner without its tarpaulin cover, which was folded down at the front of the trailer. Fourteen miles from Echuca on the Murray River an ejected cigarette lodged in the tarp and started a fire, which was noticed too late. The crew could only stand and watch as the Delahaye, truck and trailer went up in flames.

Handicap winner Steve Tillett shipped the MG home and flew back to Adelaide. He found himself sitting next to Doc Beach of KLG on the plane and recalls never again having to buy spark plugs.

Don Reimann was acting as mechanic to one of the South Australian entries. He loaded his gear and his wife into his supercharged side-valve Morris Minor and drove from Adelaide to Narrogin, raced in a supporting race (after unpacking his wife and gear) then packed the whole lot up and drove back to Adelaide. Talking about it more than 35 years later, he grinned delightedly and told me: 'I beat some of the MGs.' Don later moved to Perth and set up a garage where many of WA's leading racing cars were maintained, including the ex-Ascari Ferrari.

competitors travelled overland via the Eyre 'Highway', an unsealed track renowned for its bulldust, a fine dust that penetrated everything.

Potholes concealed in the dust could smash a wheel or crack a chassis if entered to quickly. Seasoned travellers uprooted roadside bushes and stuck them in the deeper holes to warn following vehicles.

The trip is generally referred to as 'crossing the Nullarbor Plain', but the road actually cuts across only a small corner of the treeless plain. However, the journey was no less difficult for that.

Warwick Pratley left Canberra with his car towed behind a 3-ton Ford Blitz truck on a specially built trailer. The car's builder, George Reed, had his own single-seater model on the back of the truck and the whole crew treated the trip as a holiday. Things started to go wrong as they approached Ceduna, a small fishing town at the South Australian end of the Eyre Highway. Not only was the engine overheating, but the truck was running out of tyres.

George is still astonished at what happened next. He walked



The winningest Australian built special is the Plymouth Special, built by Clem Dwyer and raced by Syd Negus at Narrogin in 1951, where it finished tenth. 2001 owner Graham Reed, shown here, raced the Plymouth successfully in historic events in the eastern states.



This single-seater MG is typical of the specials that were the backbone of Australian road racing in the immediate pre- and post-war years. This is one of three similar MG TA specials built together in 1939. Alan Tomlinson took his to victory in the 1939 AGP at Lobethal, South Australia. This car was built for Norm Kestell and was not at the Jubilee GP, but then owner Keith Choyce drove it in the 2001 event.

of 173.4 mph. It's a good story, but I can find no record of his presence in Australia in 1950 nor that of the Bimotore in any year. Any record of a race called the Commonwealth Grand Prix is equally elusive.

In 1951, however, the records show that he brought an ex-Cortese 6CM to Western Australia, to run it in three events including the Grand Prix. In fact, he didn't run in either of the first two events he contracted to enter, and his appearance at the Grand Prix was short-lived.

Accommodation was arranged for Mr Murray at the home of Neil Baird, whose family owned the biggest department store in Western Australia, but Baird soon tired of the Englishman and threw him out. 'Gentleman' Jim Harwood, in later years to become widely known as the curator of the York Motor Museum, put up (with?) Murray for the remainder of his time in Perth.

It transpired that Murray's main reason for wangling the trip to Australia was to acquire at least one Jaguar for sale in car starved Britain. Jaguars were for export only in 1951 and money was to be made by re-importing them. There was also a rumour that a patch in the Maserati's fuel tank had something to do with a consignment of contraband watches.

The Grand Prix was the climax of a carnival of motor sport in Western Australia, starting with the WA hill climb championship at Mundaring Weir in the hills inland from Perth on Saturday of the weekend before the AGP. Then there was the WA Road Racing Championship, held at the airfield circuit of Mooliabeenee, 50 miles north of Perth, on the Sunday.

There were casualties at those events. Keith Martin, 1950 Australian Hill Climb Champion, crashed his Cooper at Mundaring and there was talk of flying a replacement Cooper from Melbourne. Heady stuff in 1951.

South Australian Andy Brown, having finally cured a fuel starvation problem, arrived too fast at a bend he hadn't previously been able to reach and rearranged the front end of his blown TC. A loan of a complete TC front end from local TC driver Noel Aldous got Brown back on the road.

At Mooliabeenee Warwick Pratley broke a piston in the Skate, but the well-organised George Reed team repaired the damage and the car was driven to Narrogin on the road to run it in. The Skate was a two-seater and licensed for the road. Although the mudguards were removed for the Grand Prix, it raced with its licence plates in place. Speeds were high at Mooliabeenee, with Dick Bland's Delahaye reaching 131 mph on the airstrip straight, about 35 mph more than the fastest cars could manage on Narrogin's 1.1-mile straight.

Race day was on Monday March 5, a public holiday in Western Australia, so first practice was on Sunday morning between 6am and 7.30am. Unfortunately, it turned out misty, which reduced visibility across the flat

After all the adventures on the Eyre Highway, the race might have been an anticlimax, but it exceeded expectations with the only disappointment being the wrong Murray. The organisers had attempted to get some internationally known drivers to their big event. Approaches were made to Prince Bira and Baron de Graffenreid, but they were too expensive. However, they did get a response from a British driver named Murray, who carefully omitted his Christian name from all correspondence.

The way the correspondence was worded led to the mistaken belief that they were getting David Murray of Ecurie Ecosse fame. When the ship arrived at Fremantle, the organisers expected to meet David Murray with his Maserati 4CL. Instead they found Lancashire driver, Colin Murray, and his 1936 Maserati 6CM, an unknown driver with an older and slower car.

The Lancashire and Cheshire Motorist's Monthly magazine credits Colin with ownership of a 1948 Maserati 4CLT that he spun innumerable times including a spin on every lap he completed at his debut meeting at a wet Goodwood. In 1950, according to the magazine, he took the 4CLT to Australia, won the 'Commonwealth Grand Prix', sold the car then drove the Alfa Romeo Bimotore to an Australian land speed record



There were several MGs entered for the Jubilee Grand Prix. -Some were racing specials, but most were road-going cars like this beautiful MG K3 driven by Peter Briggs.



Jack Nelson entered his White Mouse in the Jubilee Grand Prix, but retired after 23 of the 24 laps. Jack Nelson passed away in 2001, before the commemorative event, and didn't see present owner Jack Del Borello return the little Ford special to the streets of Narrogin.

Salmson engine replaced by a Vanguard unit, were also non-starters, while Arthur Collett had the head gasket blow on his immaculate MG in the preliminary race for under 1500cc cars.

Keith Martin's Cooper, however, was back in running order.

Two preliminary races over six laps were won by Cooper importer John Crouch in his V-twin Cooper-JAP, from the Murray Maserati and Tillett's quick MG (the under 1500cc race) and by Eldred Norman's mighty Double-V8 from Warwick Pratley and the Bland Delahaye (over 1500cc).

The Grand Prix, over 24 laps, started with Colin Uphill's stripped Morgan 4/4 leaving 30 seconds ahead of Ron Kennedy's MG TC and Claude La Motte's pretty little special, the Fidget, based on a Ford 10 engine in a Fiat Topolino chassis.

After five laps, Uphill still led and Murray, on scratch, had still to start, giving away five minutes to the next fastest car, the Crouch Cooper, and a massive 25 minutes and 30 seconds to Uphill. When the times came through for the first lap completed, Crouch was actually the fastest car on the track, although he only lasted three laps. Martin in the other Cooper lasted two more.

Reed was second fastest in the Monoskate, his monoposto Ford V8 special, followed by Norman in the Double-V8, then Pratley's Skate and Bland's Delahaye with identical times. Martin was next, then local driver Barry Ranford in his newly completed Chrysler special. Only 24 seconds separated the top seven drivers on scratch time.

After three laps Bland rolled into the pits with a mysterious loss of power in the 1949 AGP winning car. Quick work by the pit crew revealed that the cable controlling the advance and retard of the magneto had broken. The engine was retimed by ear, the magneto wired in place and the Delahaye sent on its way. Apart from another quick pits visit to report problems with the clutch, the Delahaye ran steadily and quickly to the finish. Without the pit stops Bland could well have won the car's second AGP. Incidentally, the driver who won in 1949 with the Delahaye was John Crouch.

On the road, Bill Hayes MG took the lead after Uphill struck trouble and lost five minutes. After 10 laps Hayes led by 40 seconds from Kennedy with Tillett only 20 seconds further back. Pratley was fourth and first of the heavy brigade, having recovered half of the six minutes handicap advantage Tillett had at the start.

At fifteen laps, Hayes still led by 35 seconds from Tillett. Kennedy clung on in third with Pratley still fourth, but only half a minute in front of Reed in the Monoskate after losing half a minute in one lap. Murray had only four more laps to go in a disappointing run that never saw him among the leaders on scratch or handicap. Tillett was having a dream run, except on lap nine when he was crowded against a kerb. He stopped to check the damage — a few broken spokes — and decided to keep going. His decision proved to be the right one as he charged past the chequered flag to win the race — but not the AGP — followed home by Hayes, Pratley and Kennedy. Local newspaper, the Narrogin Observer, remarked that the morning's (scratch) races were more exciting than the Grand Prix. With a stopwatch and a lap chart, an enthusiastic spectator would have found the scratch category, the actual AGP, to be very exciting. A massed start might well have resulted in a real nail-biter of a race. After three laps, Crouch led by 32 seconds but retired with a sunken carburettor float. That put Norman into the lead with the thundering Double-V8. Reed was second just five seconds behind with Pratley only one second further back. Four Ford V8s held the first three places.

Four seconds covered the three leaders after six laps, but a broken link in the Double-V8's front suspension put

countryside and reduced speeds somewhat. Monday morning's practice, at the same unconscionable hour, was faster. Casualties in practice included Alan Watson's HRG special, driven by Harry Hyde, who fetched up in someone's backyard with an extremely bent car. The sympathetic householder offered the shaken Hyde a cup of tea. The Watson equipe had its troubles on the trip over with a two-car team of the HRG and a Ballot-Oldsmobile. One tow-car gave up the ghost, so the HRG completed the trip on the Ballot's trailer while the Ballot was driven. The Ballot's gearbox had to be rebuilt after the trip (in the Perth Yellow Cabs garage) because it had to be driven so slowly to stay in the Chevrolet tow-car's headlights. Unfortunately, the radiator also suffered stone damage and the Ballot had to retire from the Grand Prix after only two laps with a blown head gasket. One DNS and one DNF after travelling across the continent to compete was not the result the enthusiastic team had hoped for.

Locals Aub Melrose, whose MG swallowed stones, and Alan Macintosh's Bartlett Special, an ex-Brooklands car with its



Entered for the 1951 AGP at Narrogin by Cooper importer John Crouch, this car is a Mark IV with a 1000 cc V-twin JAP engine. Crouch won the Mundaring Hill Climb held the week before the Grand Prix and followed up with a win in the under 1500 cc preliminary race at Narrogin. Crouch only lasted two laps into the Grand Prix before retiring with a sunken carburettor float.

Crouch sold the Cooper to WA motorcyclist George Best who used it briefly until it was reported that the engine blew up in 1952, after which it was stored until the 1980s. Ian Boughton finally persuaded Best to sell the little car and it appeared in a number of WA historic events before being sold to Dick Willis in Coffs Harbour. As of 2004 it was owned by John Gale of Mosman NSW. It is considered to be the most original Mark IV in the world.

The only replacement needed was the high tension leads, which had deteriorated with age. Storage in a dry shearing shed had done remarkably little harm — even the tyres still held air.

Norman out on the seventh lap. Pratley and Reed continued to duel for the scratch lead until Reed's V8 stopped with no sparks, leaving Pratley to win the AGP with Bland second and Tillett a worthy third.

It was the last AGP win for a traditional Australian special. The next two Grands Prix were won by Doug Whiteford in a Talbot Lago (known at the time as the Lago Talbot or Large Tablet), the 1954 race by Lex Davison in his HWM-Jaguar and the 1955 race by Jack Brabham in his bobtail Cooper Bristol. Mind you, both the HWM and the Cooper were in the tradition of the Great Australian Special, each fitted with a bigger and more powerful engine than it had been designed for.

Local drivers bought the Double-V8 and Crouch's Cooper and Eldred Norman bought the Murray Maserati. In 1952 Norman had to rebuild the engine of the tired old voiturette from scratch, fabricating a new block from steel and casting new detachable bronze cylinder heads. Maserati parts being unprocurable, Fiat connecting rods were modified to suit and BSA motorcycle pistons were fitted.

Murray also cadged a lift to Adelaide with Norman. At an overnight camp a few days from Perth, Murray must have upset Norman, who is said to have felled the Englishman with one blow. The Blackpool garagiste seems not to have done much good for Anglo-Australian relations.

The Double-V8 raced on in Western Australia through the 1950s, until it was acquired by Jim Harwood in 1958, without its twin engines, which had been installed in speedboats. Reconstruction proved impracticable and Harwood sold the body and chassis separately in the late 1960s, since when nothing more has been heard of it. The Crouch Cooper was sold to one George Best, who hung on to it in spite of receiving many offers until the early 1980s, when it was acquired by Ian Boughton, complete with a spare engine. Ian cleaned out the redback spiders and got the little car going.

BUILDING A MCLAREN REPLICA



When Roger Donaldson was making his movie McLaren, he needed an Austin Seven just like the one in which Bruce McLaren began his motor racing career.

Now you might think that would be easy. Just get a sporting Austin Seven and paint it the right colour, but that didn't work. At first they thought it was an Austin Seven Ulster, but it wasn't. The real car was sitting in a museum in the UK and the movie was being made in New Zealand, so something had to be done.

Art Director Roger Guise rang his friend Richard McWhannell to talk to him urgently about cars for the film. His first question was whether Richard's Seven was the same as McLaren's. Apart from the wheelbase, it wasn't.

To cut a long story short, Vintage Austin Register (VAR) members Richard, Joss Campbell and Ian Williams agreed to build a race ready replica of the McLaren car in 10 days!

Left: Bruce and 'Pop' McLaren with the original car and lots of trophies won by Bruce in the Austin.



Bruce fettling the Austin by the roadside

Fortunately, there were some delays in filming and they were allowed a few more days in the end, but it was still an amazing effort, to build up a replica of one of New Zealand's most iconic historic racing cars in little more than two weeks.

Joss said, 'but they said the only option was to dress up Richard's car in string and cardboard.' But such a thought was anathema to the three, all of them special builders, and anyway they knew that the replica would be minutely examined by every McLaren and Austin anorak watching the film.

They got the go ahead on the evening of Good Friday with ten days to go and the complication of trying to find parts and materials over the Easter weekend. They hit three Mitre 10 hardware shops on Saturday to get enough tube for the body frame. Sheet aluminium was sourced and by the end of Sunday they had the elements of the tube frame bent to shape.

The aim was to complete the car by April 7 and on March 31 the chassis was taken to Joss's garage for the body. Richard was organising the engine,



The engine installed with the unique exhaust manifold

which was put together in record time.

Joss bent the panels to shape over old pipes and his knee and while Richard worked on the engine Ian recreated the unique exhaust manifold, which had to look right on film.



Richard, Joss and Ian with the partly completed special

Most of the car, apart from those parts unique to the McLaren car, were 'donated' by various cars and projects belonging to the three or to other VAR members. Even the wheels and tyres belonged to other cars within the VAR. The front tyres were a match for those shown in photographs of the original McLaren car.

Fortunately, there were delays in film production, giving the team an extra four days to finish the job. The car was delivered to Muriwai for filming of 'Bruce' driving it down the beach on April 11, but the stunt driver, Gareth, was very tentative and Richard had to give him a quick lesson in how to drive the car. That the lessons were a success can be gauged by the fact that when Gareth came to drive in the hillclimb scenes, he was opposite-locking the thing through corners.



Richard giving Gareth a driving lesson

Filming completed, all the borrowed bits were returned to their correct cars and the film car was a bare shell, but the trio could be proud of a job well done.

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decided to use its own engines for 1970 and the March F1 cars proved to be inadequate, Ken Tyrrell was forced to build his own cars. This SCX model depicts Tyrrell-Ford 001 as it appeared at the Race of Champions at Brands Hatch in March 1971 when Stewart finished second to Clay Regazzoni's Ferrari. Yours for

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