



10-2-1945 to 7-3-2019

Christopher Gilbert was born on February 1945 in Hanwell UK and one of six siblings, times were hard and they lived with their grandmother, at the age of eight Chris and his two brothers were placed in children's home. Chris was kept there until he turned fifteen before he was allowed home to his dads who died three years later.

By then all the sibling had gone their own way and Chris worked in a wreckers yard where he began his love of cars. He had his first Riley by age seventeen but he had to sell it later on. He took on a job learning to weld copper and he was very good at.

His second love was rock and roll music which he collected over the years, then he met Wendy when he turned twenty seven while playing with her brother-in-law's train set and from then on they were inseparable.

Chris loved going to the motor racing as well as riding his BSA motor bike. He bought a Ford Zephyr which he did up putting a Jack Brabham engine in it and you could hear them coming down the road way before they got there. By 1972 they decided to go to Australia the hard way, Chris bought a wooden framed caravan and on the 30th of June 1973 they packed it up then hitched it to the car and with Chris's mate Terry of they set.

Arriving in France at midnight they found that seatbelts we're enforced but having never left UK before it was a great experience. The van started falling to bits on Turkey's roads but managed to get through to Mashhad in Iran near Pakistan border where we left the empty van so Chris's brother would pick it up and Terry decided he would return back home.

We emptied the van putting what we could in the Zephyr and giving bedding etc to an Australian family who had lost stuff in the monsoons. We entered Pakistan without permits so along with another couple we had a guard to India and got as far as Agra in India before where the car was impounded for having no permits, as far as we know it's still there today.

We managed to get a lift with the other couple in their combi van with a bag of Chris's tools and a bag of clothing each and Chris had a air pistol and a double barrel shot gun which we had to declare at every boarder. When we got to India and Chris showed them the guns we were sent to do the paperwork and while doing this Chris heard his gun going off. He quickly flew out and gave the soldier a good telling off for firing it in public area.

Then we drove through India to Madras where we were to get a ship to Penang.

We were short of money so tried to sell the gun and got a good price but we had to go to the police commissioner to get permission to sell it, only to find out that there was a 111% import tax. So we had to buy it back, unfortunately the gunsmith had re-blued the barrel it look

lovely so Chris gave him his bullet belt as compensation. When we loaded the guns into the car to go on board the ship it was signed off and the car went in the hold of the ship with a cargo of onions. The police commissioner turned on sailing day didn't believe Chris, luckily they found the chap who had signed the papers.

We arrived in Penang where we had a month to wait before we could drive to Singapore for a ship to Australia. We got a taxi with four other passengers but the taxi hit a goat so we spent hours in KL getting the radiator fixed and when we got to the boarder the driver wanted to bribe the boarder guard, Chris said no!

They didn't know how to do the paperwork and Chris was telling he wanted it done properly so they ended up getting chief of police out of bed at 3am who took the guns and we would see him in the station later that day. When we went next day he blew shit out of Chris but he didn't know him, Chris just waved his passport in front of him saying that it states here that British subject will be shown curtesy and adding that he would go to the British console! The next day we were given tea and biscuits by a completely different man and finally got on the ship with the guns being taken on board by said policeman.

By then we were so broke only managing to get money from Chris's sister for the ship fare and a bit to spare. Like the other broke back packers we played monopoly for the whole week. We arrived on the Queen's birthday the 6th of October 1973 and then Chris's back had got bad and he ended up having a back operation by Christmas.

Wendy managed to get a job to keep them afloat so they stayed in a boarding house in Subiaco and their first meal in Australia was Pork Stew with a fried egg on top, the cook thought all poms had a fried egg with every meal. Chris finally got better by March and was working at a sheet metal works where he demanded a proper wage as he knew he was good.

Within a year we were travelling up to Darwin where we experienced cyclone Tracy and because Chris could copper weld the army grabbed him to weld up a big vat of beer as Darwin run on the stuff. Then he was up on roof of the tallest building in Darwin fixing gutters and not letting Wendy know as she hates heights. She never learnt of that until 1996 when Chris's mate in UK told him that they had seen him on the news.

After spending four months helping to rebuild we left in the Land Rover we had just bought and got fuel for free whenever we stopped in Darwin. We then visited SA but decided to head back to Perth where we had our son Michael then Paula. Chris had got his old job back for a while so we built a house in Kelmscott.

Then we got itchy feet again so Chris build a camper van on the back of the land rover just like a modern day Winnebago? We travelled through the central highway to Alice Spring the outback resort then to Queensland. We visited Wendy's uncle in Rockhampton, drove up to Cairns then down to Sydney and back to Perth.

Then we moved into Bassendean, Chris started making ultralights and Wendy used to pop rivet the wings. We then moved to Beverley with a few vintage cars and Ultralights in bits. Chris started working for himself building glider hangers and construction work for the town but his greatest love was restoring cars he said he had the perfect job. With many a Riley back in the road as he had three of his own and Wendy got many a car that someone exchanged for a bit of their payments.

The kids grew up and moved back to Perth producing three beautiful grandkids so in 1996 we decided to do the reverse trip back to UK to celebrate 100 years of Riley. The pathfinder was restored, adding air conditioning and after the Riley Rally in Perth we set off.

Not a very good start, the car was shipped to Madras and we flew there to meet it not knowing it was a long weekend so nothing for four days. After lots of bribing we set off, the first day was a eye opener we countered eighty car or truck accident down the hill sides. Luckily the lights on our pathfinder were large the trucks pulled over and after driving around the roundabout in Deli all day we managed to find the road to Pakistan.

When we got to Iran Wendy had to cover up from head to toe in black garb (like a Burka) but she made it herself so it was lighter than regulation and she got dragged out of the car at gun point at the boarder when trying to move the car so trucks heading back to UK could get past. We then drove through the desert getting petrol at eight cents a litre, it was smuggled over the border from Pakistan. Wendy sat in the car with a camera going for safety sake but we got through quite cheaply, getting to Turkey to get spoilt at garages washing our car and Wendy getting chocolate and perfume sprayed on her, Chris also wanted some but they laughed. At the hotel no one spoke English so Wendy was taken in the kitchen to see what there was to eat.

Asking for boiled egg and toast for breakfast they turned out green well and truly boiled. We got through turkey worrying about the protest at the American banks, luckily for us we were on the main highway. We got done for speeding, we had stopped for a picnic so when we finally got pulled up they wondered what had took us so long, \$150 fine. It was nice to get into Europe, a bit of maintenance and the car was good and in Italy Wendy got spoilt again for Mother's Day which is a month long there.

We finally got the ferry in France to Dover and in England we stayed at our friends where we learnt we couldn't get insurance for the car as it was over 25 years old and Australia registered. Luckily the Noel Wyatt from Melbourne got us in touch with the African Rally and got us covered. Off we went visiting rallies and getting to Coventry where we had pride of place, Victor was very impressed. One couple said they had travelled a 150 miles with their Riley on a trailer when they asked Chris how far he'd come and he said 10,000 miles, they were gob smacked.



Well after the rally and catching up with friends and family it was back to Perth

Chris was going on a camel trek with Bill Peasley (WA Riley club member) for another 100 year re-enactment up the canning stock route for another ten weeks gone, meanwhile Wendy ws back in Beverly.

Back to restoring Rileys by 2013 we decided to retire to Tasmania but the day we signed the papers Chris was diagnosed with cancer. Luckily it was slow growing and he was told to go and enjoy his life which is exactly what he did.

Still restoring cars but at a slower rate than normal, we explored Tassie every chance we got. He bought a beautiful juke box and we'd listen to music.

Then Chris started getting chest pain so he had a couple of stents put in but then sadly he had a massive heart attack one day while washing his Riley, he was rushed to hospital but sadly didn't survive.