Riley Motor Club of W. A.

NATIONAL RALLY MAGAZINE

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Editor: Ken Gasmier ☏ 08 9279 2982 E-mail: *kennethgasmier@bigpond.com*

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Club address: PO Box 328 Kalamunda WA 6926 ☏: 0448 568 395

Web page address: www.rileywa.org.au Email Secretary: secretary@rileywa.org.au
Webmaster: Brian Gannon ☏+ 60 186 625 258. Email: Webmaster@rileywa.org.au
Honorary Auditor: John Lightowlers ☏ 9271 4457

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INTRODUCTION by JIM RUNCIMAN

I am delighted to commend this magazine to you and believe we are indebted to our Editor Ken Gasmier & his contributors in producing another publication which will provide interesting Rally reading for all. There is insight into many aspects of the marque, the family behind it and transport & social history very relevant to the south west of this vast state of Western Australia.

RM Roadster enthusiasts will be intrigued in Hugh Oldham's article, demonstrating that this low volume car (about 500 examples) was virtually handmade or coachbuilt. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that Nufffield must have "lost their shirt" on this project –they were a volume producer & certainly not coach builders. These cars are however an important part of the fabric of the Riley Marque.

Early Australian history is very interesting because of the "can do" attitude of the early pioneers. Can you imagine building the original Busselton Jetty effectively without the use of cranes. It was a massive structure which would carry a steam locomotive and a loaded train. Looked at this project from the perspective of an individual at the time it was built –it's amazing.

Greg Morris refreshes memories from the era when what are now collectors' cars were used as everyday commuters. And stepping back a little further when petrol was in very short supply during and after WW2, a very poor quality fuel in gaseous form could be substituted by a crude gas producer. Can you imagine having to take a bag of charcoal with you as fuel for a trip ? Finally too, some biographical notes on one of the lesser known of the Riley Family which I'm sure you'll find absorbing. Thanks Ken & team for a rewarding read.

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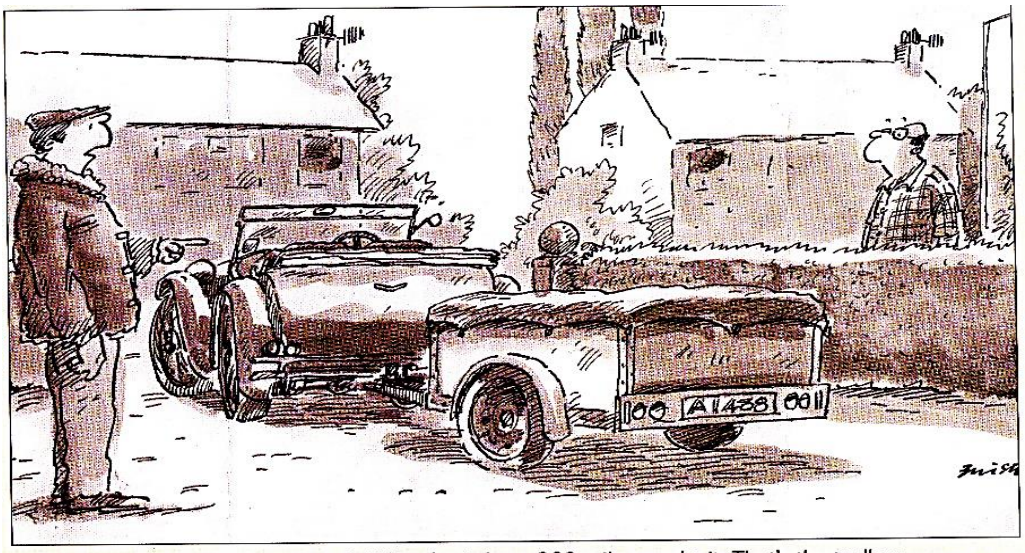
EDITOR'S NOTES: Thanks to Jacquie & Peter Hocking who provided the front cover photo of their Big 4 Kestrel at the Lily Dutch Windmill (Bordern). Alan & Susan Blackburn helped mightily with layouts & graphics solutions. Martin Egan provided photos & information on Peter Wells. Glenys Runciman proofread the magazine expertly. I thank all contributors as named in the contents and also original publishers where applicable. Members including Mike Wadsworth & Cliff Goodman spotted & provided leads on articles "out there".

ALL the NATIONAL RALLIES SO FAR by Greg Morris

2025 W.A. Busselton
2024 Queensland, Bundaberg
2023 Tasmania
2022 W.A. –cancelled- Covid
2021 NSW, Broken Hill
2020: NSW Broken Hill –cancelled- Covid
2019 SA Fleurieu Peninsula
2018 QLD Caloundra
2017 VIC Phillip Island
2016 ACT Merimbula
2015 WA Swan Valley
2014 NSW Mittagong
2013 SA Burra then Darwin
2012 QLD Toowoomba
2011 VIC Beechworth
2010 ACT, Queanbeyan
2009 WA, Porongurup
2008 NSW Tumut
2007 SA Narracoorte
2006 QLD Maryborough
2005 VIC Tasmania Tour
2004 ACT Canberra
2003 WA Collie
2002 NSW Cowra
2001 SA Hahndorf
2000 WA Alice Springs Tour
1999 QLD Brisbane
1998 VIC Ballarat
1997 ACT Cooma
1996 WA Guildford
1995 NSW Nowra
1994 SA Burra
1993 QLD Maroochydore
1992 VIC Rawson
1991 WA Pemberton
1990 NSW Muswellbrook
1989 SA Goolwa
1988 ACT Canberra
1987 QLD Ipswich
1986 VIC Echuca
1985 WA York
1984 NSW Mudgee
1983 SA McLaren Vale
1982 QLD Toowoomba
1981 VIC Mount Beauty
1980 NSW Port Macquarie
1979 ACT Canberra
1978 SA Barossa Valley
1977 QLD Gold Coast
1976 VIC Parkes
1975 NSW Parkes
1974 NSW Dubbo
1973 NSW Cowra
1972 NSW Merimbula
1971 NSW Griffith
1970 NSW Bega
1969 NSW Albury
1968 ACT Queanbeyan
1967 NSW Wagga
1966 NSW Wagga
1965 NSW Yass
1964 NSW Yass First National Rally !

Thanks to The Riley Club of Australia (NSW) online for the above data. Every Rally has a host of stories and this is mine:
1984 MUDGEE: The first one I went to. I went with Ron Pendergrast in his RMH (with overdrive) and Richard Creed in his Cooperised Elf Mk3 (after the 1st total rebuild). We rotated the driving and at a cruising 70mph the RMH was doing about 2000rpm and the Elf 5500rpm. But RC had brought earplugs for us all, so the buzz-box Elf was enjoyable too. The earplugs also dealt with RP's snoring at the motel stops. Us two had learnt that lesson when sharing a caravan in Harold Martin's back yard in Geraldton, a few years before, when we three were up there to see Harold's Nine.
In passing the RMH on the Eyre Peninsula the Elf had kicked up a stone that cracked the RMH's windscreen. We motored on in the dark, but soon had to push out the crazed screen. That was fine, but a bit windy and cold. Until moths started to whizz in in droves. We were also running over millions of splodges on the road. Eventually we remembered about the mice plague that had been. Then we saw a few scurry across in front of us. Ron went to a bathroom renovation shop in Port Augusta. Why? He'd remembered while building airstrips up north in WW2, that plane windscreens were repaired up there with perspex. That perspex windscreen lasted him about 5 years, before he got a new one from U.K.
Cliff and Beryl Goodman had bussed to Melbourne, bought an RMB and joined us in Mudgee. But they hadn't booked. We three lads had a big room with a double and two singles. So then we five fitted in, all on beds. Work it out! I nabbed the window bed, because there was a 12/4 Imp right outside. The first pre-war Riley sports I'd ever seen. On the way back RC and I set an Observation Run record from Port Augusta to York, where the next rally was to be. Must have been a World Record as the longest; but to get it in the Guiness book took too much red tape. There was no unconnected "Observer".



Camping? Heavens no! Off to the in-laws. 200 mile round trip. That's the toolbox

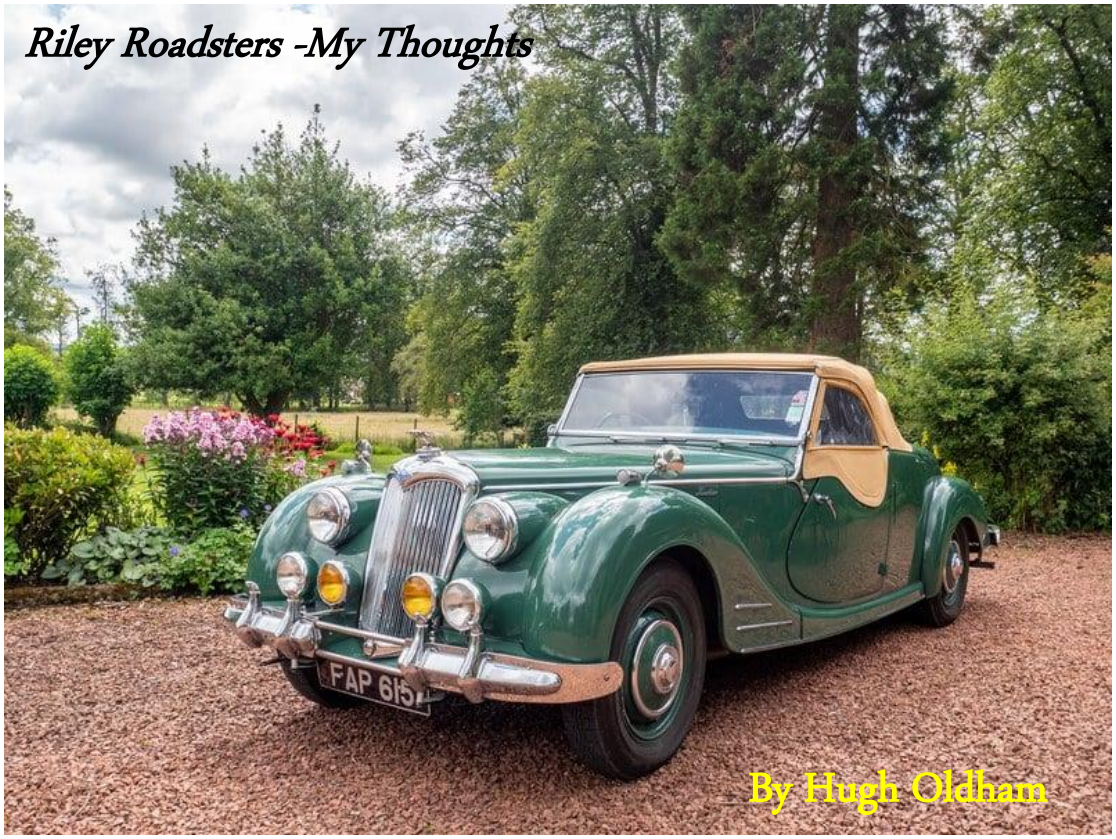
Early Coventry door. Laminated top rail. The bracing chain is not original -no strapping.

Photo by Gary Hollis.

Later solid timber in door complete with strapping.

Photo by Gary Hollis

-Showing varied door handle heights



Most records of roadsters concentrate only on chassis numbers sadly they tell us only the year of manufacture and 2 or 3 seater , ie 60S2 or 60SS (1950 2 seater or 1950 3 seater) the all important number has been forgotten or lost in rebuilds the body number is the only number that tells us were it sits in order of production.

I do hope more numbers can be added to the lists. What is so important about that engine number stamped on the timing chest what on earth does it tell us?
By my thinking the first production car 58SS2802 body number A34501 last car should be chassis number 61S2----body number A35008. That is if 507 cars were built and production stopped January 1951.

I now know that chassis 58SS2802 carries body number A34503 making it the third body made. This is were it gets a little tricky because that means there were two prototypes made before GVC705 which became the sales car. To make things more complicated chassis 58SS3351 body no. A34502 and chassis 58SS3376 body no. A34503 were both shipped to the U.S.A. there must be a mistake some were because this means there are two cars with the same body number A34503. (and possibly A34501 and A34502)

The best I can come up with is that 58SS2802 chassis is not the same as a production chassis it has slight variations as does the body so the numbers on this car are only for the third prototype not the first production car. They used its number 58SS2802 as a start point Now the first production car would have been body A34501 chassis number unknown, body number A34502 chassis number 58SS3351 and A34503 chassis number 58SS3376 is the third production car. -As for the missing body numbers could this have happened moving factories could 27 timber body kits been missed placed or lost. Having moved factories a few times I know things go missing. Riley's big move was until 1949, after producing evidently 121 cars.

Ring nut lower rear strut, note extra width.

We could add any in progress, if all cars started were completed. So, in theory the last Coventry car would be A34621 maybe minus three prototypes would make A345618 the last Re the 121 cars made I have my doubts that this figure is correct as only 92 seem to have been sold in that period, leaving 1/3 of production unsold and three prototypes with duplicate body numbers.

I don't have access to the historical files and this is only an observation by me but what was the anomaly that caused 27 cars to go missing when sales were only 45 cars for that year ? Did they go back and use up the missing numbers ?

No where can I find a 27 body number –a gap in the information that I have collected over the last 59 years. I have gaps of 12 to 18 in those first years those gaps are because my records are in complete.

It would appear that 45 cars were sold in 1948 all for export these are the finished cars but what of the work in progress -how many were carried over to 1949 production so is this were the 27 cars appear to be lost then how many carried over to 1949 then to the new factory at Abington.

I have seen reference to the first RHD car being delivered to a J.H. Keller on the 23rd July 1948 with an English rego. number JYP565. Was this car for export or home market as without any chassis or body number given the car is hard to identify. Also, we have been lead to believe no cars were offered for sale to the home market in 1948, so this car may well be the first RHD car to be finished and delivered but I do believe the first RHD car to be started was chassis no. 58SS3702 body no, A34509, as a special order to be sent to Australia. Built right next door to LHD chassis no. 58SS2946 body no.A34508.
Now the weird thing is we are told that 45 cars were sold in 1948 but body no.A34533 chassis no.49SS4152 RHD which should be car 33 was not made until 1949. Are you confused because I am. So which of the historical figures can we trust? Is this because of a shortage of parts for RHD cars as the market was to be LHD or is this catch up of the lost cars?

Now, car A34618 chassis number 59SS4399 was finished in 1949 so where are the lost cars? Also, the last chassis number for Coventry was approx. 59SS4299 -one hundred before this car (A34618 car no. 118) was made.

These cars were bespoke in that they all differ: Here are some of the differences I have found over the last 59 years. In all panels bar the centre panel between the bonnet tops, the drain hole is in wrong place. Some panels hand were hand rolled in steel, others in aluminum, and there are a couple of completely aluminum bodied cars. Obvious reasons for differences may be the changeover from Coventry to Abingdon (MG) production methods.

As you may know, the Roadster was designed for the USA market and was therefore Left hand drive (LHD).

Hitherto, Rileys were only made in right hand drive (RHD) but some time in 1946 an export RMA 1 ½ LHD. This meant the front suspension cradle needed to be modified punching a hole on the left for the steering rack. That type of cradle was then used for the LHD Roadster. There were two part numbers LHD P/N A4804R and RHD P/N A4803R. The cradle is universal to both RMA and RMB, LHD and RHD: P/N A2698R;

The parts book appears to have been written sometime after the cars were in full production as

-Boot lining in rolled aluminium

Factory adaptation of saloon grille - cut down etc.:

-Rear bumper part showing chassis number.

the start dates and chassis numbers changes don't seem to apply to roadsters, apart from the original 58SS2802. Chassis numbers were numbered in sequence with the 2 ½ saloons yet the roadsters were originally on the 90 hp chassis and engine.

The early cars still used the wider ring nut retaining the lower rear wishbone arm which was fitted to the 1 ½ and the 90hp cars part no. A2556/R.

The cylinder head was the 90 hp P/N 566 that was modified by the factory to the larger valves and these heads had steel welch plugs. The later cars had the 100HP heads P/N 699 with brass screw in plugs. This started at chassis no. 58S2959 but these start numbers do not appear to apply to Roadsters.

The very early cars front wheel hubs were the 90hp ones P/n A2601. These were without the large ring nut, The later cars part P/n A2684 started at chassis 58S2861 but as we can see this did not apply to the early Roadsters as their chassis were the old 90hp and not updated due to the long lead time in making them. Chassis number 58SS 3702 still had the early hubs.

The Coventry built cars had different timber work ie. Laminated over the rear arch and inside the doors.

Bonnet side panels for the early cars were being built at a time before removable side panels were introduced. The parts book states that removable panels start at chassis no. 4875 although all Roadsters had removable panels the early cars were factory converted by cutting off the top part of the fixed side panel about 1 1/4inches above the top of the guard and the top ¼ inch turned over. A new side panel was made with metal legs going down the inside of the guard to keep them in place, the parts book lists the change at chassis number from 4875 and saloons 4070 from being the start of the removable panels around 1949 at the factory change over, time but we know that car A34503 and A34509 both had removable panels (chassis numbers 2802 and 3702).

The early engines had different big end bearing caps in line with 90 hp engines- the change like many others appears to be a cost cutting exercise.

Lower door sill timber was screwed to main bearer but later cars had angle steel doing the same job.

There are three types of doors the early Coventry and the later Abington

1. early doors are flatter less curve have laminated timber frame door handles which line up with the wind screen posts
2. later doors solid timber more curve door handles same height as early doors
3. later doors solid timber and door handles set higher

The parts book only lists later two types of doors. I believe the changes came with the change to Abingdon.

The boot lid lining was 3 piece rolled aluminum panel and these panels were numbered for each car and covered in a black leatherette. Later cars one piece black coloured cardboard.

Roadster grille shells were cut down from the standard cut about 3inches from the bottom brazed, dressed off on the outside, then chromed.

-Bumperettes: standard RMB third early Coventry RMC welded brackets also note the difference in the brackets

Second later RMC version is as per parts book:

-Third type: early Coventry RMC. Welded brackets also note the difference in the brackets.

Bumper bars were made for each car carrying the last three numbers of the chassis as NS or OS The bumperettes made for each car are numbered as for the main bars (eg. NS 702) The bumperettes are similar to those for saloons but are not there is a third bolt bracket welded on the inside. The Abingdon cars have modified saloon type with two chrome bolts a chrome bifurcated rivet holding a bracket Pn.H7946 and H7945. These brackets are handed but look very make- shift.

Front gravel trays: early Coventry cars have a second skin which hides the mounting bolts. The rear gravel trays have different mounting holes. Again the parts book does not list the early ones.

Early Coventry cars had a panel between boot and cockpit timber for hood mounting. Water was able to leak under into cockpit as this panel was only 30 mm wide in the middle and was turned down into the cockpit. On later cars this panel was turned up, stopping this problem.

Another thing that was pointed out by Joss Martin was the swage line between the boot lid and the rear guard. He found three versions and I added a fourth there four photos to showing the differences -three were taken by Joss.

The first prototype roadster FVC386 had many differences to the production cars
The second prototype JYE555 was the sales demonstrator for the U.S.A. The third prototype GVC705 , chassis number 58SS2802 started out much the same as the first but was converted to the production specifications, bar a few things. This car 58SS2802 is not the first production car body number. It carries body no. A34503. The chassis number is only the starting point in the parts book not of the first production car.

The next 8 cars made were LHD and the last of these was chassis number 58SS2946 Body number A34508. The first RHD car chassis 58SS3702 is body number A34509. This is where chassis numbers don't work. Chassis no. 58SS3700 is body number A34526 and LHD (17 bodies after A34509 but 2 chassis nos. earlier).

This group of cars were built on the 90hp chassis. All had the 90hp heads but converted to the larger valves by the factory. So all production cars were 100hp engines but still retained some of the 90hp chassis parts. As you can see chassis numbers make things very confusing. The only thing that they tell us is the year of manufacture. It is the body number that tells us more like what order the body was started chassis number finished. Engine number tells us nothing. All thoughts, comments and information are welcome. Acknowledgements to Rod Forrest, W.J. Lewis, Gwyn Morris, David Pettican, and E. & O.E.

"Riley Roadsters" – Illustrations continue over page ....

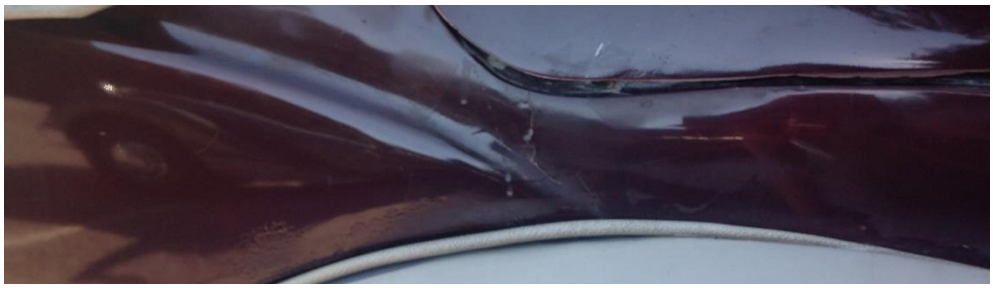
-Note numbers NSR 876.
Front cradle for right hand only part number A4803R.

Photo by Arthur Babbington

-Front gravel tray showing second skin which hid the mounting bolts (very rusty).

-Swage line No. 1 stops with boot lid.
Photo by Joss Martin.

-Swage line No.2 continues beyond boot to mud guard.
Photo by Joss Martin



-Swage line 3 never goes near the boot lid
Photo by Joss Martin.

-Swage line No.4 from boot lid stops short of mud guard 58ss3702 body 34509. Photo by Joss Martin.

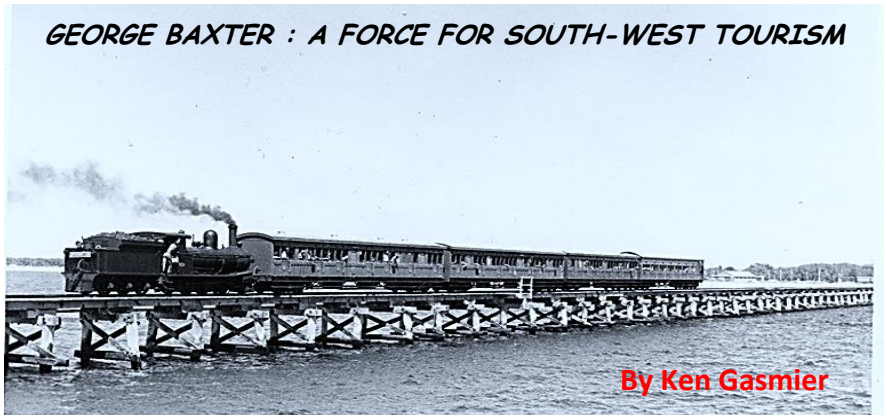
Door handle low 1948 to early 1949

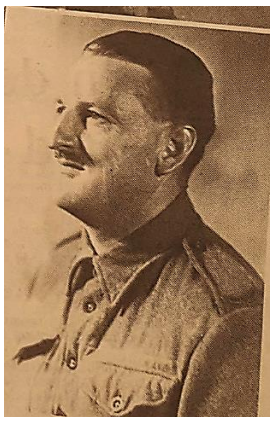
Door handle high, built mid 1949. Most possibly an Abingdon change.

Cylinder head showing welch plug in the converted 90HP : P/N 566 -small valves to 100HP large valves.

Big end caps early engine vs. later engines the early caps were the design of Frank Ashby weight saving same strength but more machining so dropped as a cost cutting move by Abington works as was the laminated timbers The diff housing was also changed some time 1949 around chassis no. 4118. #

South West of WA showing Roads & Railways, circa 50s & 60s.





There was an Anglican bunfight at Johnston's Dairy (now preserved as Leschenault Homestead) to raise money for the new Cathedral. The Bunbury City Band played *Muskrat Ramble,* and a clergyman motored in, dog collar and all, in green Bullnose Morris.

I turned to my Dad and said "I've never seen that one before. Is he from Harvey or what, why can't we have interesting ones like him at our church?"

"Don't be silly, that's George Baxter pretending to be a clergyman."

In the early 60s kids were only told stuff on a need-to-know basis. This was, in fact, was supposed to be a cavalcade of "Bunbury clergy down the ages" and two or three more arrived but they were real ones in their own modern cars. And there was I hoping for a scene out of Ealing comedy such as we often saw Saturday afternoons at Arthur Dunn's Forrest Theatre. Later on there were rides in a Land Rover, one of the few 4WDs around, and according to my father, the Bishop had amused them on the organising committee by referring to this as rides on a four wheeled vehicle. "Has the farmer providing the four wheel vehicle responded? " etc. They enjoyed it too much to correct him.

Allan George Baxter (1911-1999) came to Bunbury in 1936 with Winterbottoms and he at various times also worked for Wentworth Motors and Dunlop. He had trained as a Light Horseman in the CMF and joined the AIF in 1939, serving in WW2 in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Badly wounded in the chaotic Greek campaign, he received no immediate hospital attention, and was a POW in Germany for four years. After retirement from the motor industry he led the Bunbury Tourist Bureau (1966-1981). His knowledge of the SW from getting out there all over to sell and his affability got him that job. An owner of old British cars, such as an Austin 12 and a Bullnose Morris, and a Holden sulky, he was also prime mover in beginnings of veteran and vintage car clubs in the area.

As tourist manager George originated and came to focus on the *Leschenault Lady* and *Koombana Queen* tourist steam train excursions from Bunbury into the south-west. He was a Bunbury Councillor, enmeshed in and integral to many community groups, a life Member of the RSL, the Bunbury Historical Society, founder of the King Cottage Museum and a Bunbury Citizen of the Year. With his wife Edith he was a keen and

Leschenault Homestead –a National Trust property – formerly known as Johnston's Dairy.

WAGR G Class locomotive later to become Koombana Queen sits by the turntable at Bunbury Roundhouse. The turntable was so well balanced that two kids could push it.

experienced horse rider and mounted on horseback he traditionally led Bunbury's Anzac parades. His contributions were many and various, some, such as his work with horse riding for the disabled, being relatively unknown.

It is his major achievement with the steam tourist trains and the present day fate of this enterprise in a privatised rail system which this article will focus on. Even before wrangling the tourist trains into existence, George had considerable railway background and in WW2 a train had more or less saved his life. Luckily we have a 1996 interview with him, which we can freely quote from:

Key railway incidents? Well, when he [George's father] *came to Western Australia he had been working in the railways in New Zealand and he brought my mother out and N.Z. was where I was born. He got a job with the interlocking section -with what was then the West Australian Government Railways ... what they called the safe working section.*
There was very little electrical, [just] *the bell system where they just had the codes for ringing bells by telegraph... actual movement of the signals and the points was done manually and I can remember as a little boy, he'd take me round the countryside with him and while Dad was working on the under frames of the signal boxes I'd sit there and look out. I think that it had something to do with my great interest in railways when later.*

Rightly or wrongly, Charles Court is sometimes seen as one who in government ran down the railways and ironically enough, George had childhood contact with him:

I went to school first at Subiaco State School in Onslow Road for a year ...then I went to Rosalie School [and] finished in the same class with Charlie Court.

Fast forwarding to May 1941 in Greece:

we looked out across an airfield ... right alongside the railway and there were three Spitfires ...all facing ready to take off ... three German planes come down with their tracers going, and each one picked out a British plane. As they came down they picked one each. Fired their bullets and their tracer and the next thing those three planes were all ablaze. I turned to my mates in the railway truck and said "Well that was neat wasn't it!" I'd no sooner got the words out of my mouth, and back they were machine gunning our train. You didn't have time to get out of the truck or anything - just went straight on the floor of the truck. They were made of wood and had angle brackets on each corner. The angle brackets would have been roughly eight by eight inches and I was laying there with my tin hat with all my body trying to get under that one tin hat, and next thing, right in front of my face appears this pip in the iron. If there hadn't been that re-inforcement there in that railway truck, I'd have got it right in the face.

Well ...we got up to Lamia and we were camped in an olive grove ...and we were told to move down to the railway station. We'd no sooner got to the station, then there's this terrific bombing on the olive grove. ...next thing there's more German planes over and they landed their bombs right on us. That's where I got the wound in my leg. Corporal Ford - Basher we used to call him- Basher Ford - he was killed right alongside me, almost as close as you are now. He was standing up on the platform and I just had time - I could hear the bomb coming down and I just had time to sort of dive between the tender of the

locomotive. I think they were going for the engine, because we were right up near the front of the train. Well the engine was there but no driver. The driver had buzzed off. I was standing just near the tender. I dived between the wheels of the tender and the little low platform. When the bomb fell, it killed Corporal Ford and one of the splinters came up from behind and it entered my leg there and went right up to about there.

I have a scar still to this day. Above the knee fortunately. And it evidently travelled along through the muscle. It didn't get to the bone. It travelled along through the muscle but it broke all the muscle away.

I'm not sure of little details because I was a bit dopey with the blast of the bomb and that - but they got us onto a train anyway. They couldn't get the original Greek driver and fireman, but they got hold of another Greek driver from somewhere, at rifle point. Lofty Schroeder (he now lives in Augusta and is very sick) he fired the engine, and they got us back. We were an unscheduled train - there was a train coming towards and we were going back, and they side tracked it off. ...by this time gangrene had set in, the poison had started to go through my body, and I don't remember much about it, but I can still just faintly remember that other train up on this siding. It was very hilly country. We were being bombed on several occasions on the way back, and I remember once we got down off the track and got in under a bridge for protection because they were evidently trying to bomb the railway to stop traffic going back you see. .. By this time I was pretty groggy. I was taken on - then an air force tender turned up with some other wounded on it - but no aeroplane on it or anything - just a tender that had carried the planes up I suppose. They put us on that and took us to Glafada where the British hospital was. And at Glafada they operated on the leg ...we were in tents round the hospital because it was already full. And I'll always, as long as I remember those nurses, how wonderful they were. This was after I'd been operated on, laying in the bed, or it might have even been while I was waiting for the operation. But I remember the wonderful way the British nurses were during the bombing. They'd put on their steel helmets but were still in hospital uniforms - just carefully going round those who were a bit shell-shocked, pacifying them, keeping them quiet. Bombs falling all round.

George was eventually to be evacuated with other wounded from Greece by ship but the vessel was bombed before it could leave: there were "clouds" of Stukas:

They really started to bomb, one after the other ... not only does the bomb make a screaming sound, but the Stuka itself has screamers on it. The noise is tremendous. It's demoralising ... ship started to get on fire with the bombing - one bomb right down the funnel - other bombs into the holds where all these wounded were. I called to the Sergeant - because my leg was paralysed... I got to the side of the ship .. heaved myself into the water ... a fair drop, twenty feet or more, I swam along, trailing my bad leg.

A British officer and two Tommies threw a rope to this fellow ahead of me. I called out, WAIT FOR ME ! I wrapped my hands round the rope, because I couldn't possibly climb up the rope with this bad leg. All my bandages and everything, had washed off by this time. Because my trousers had been cut off previously - I only had pyjama trousers on, and it all got washed away. They hoisted me up and then they loaded me onto a fire tender.

It was while George was next in a Greek hospital that he woke one day to find that it had been taken over by German forces. So began his POW life. Because this is a long and detailed story from real life with many roads and turnings we have to leave much of great interest out, and we fast forward again, this time to Bunbury about the time of the Johnston's Dairy Anglican bunfight.

There was something in the air then with an awakening to veteran and vintage cars in farm sheds and old ladies' backyards along with other early transport around Bunbury. Not the post-war Holdens and Fords called vintage now. They were everyday cars. Thus I remember going with my father in our FJ to a property in Dardanup where a big green early 1920s Delage appeared running but unrestored – some of its dashboard featured tractor gauges which I very wisely pointed out to the grown-ups. The property had an unusual high water tower made of brick –something to do with hops or winemaking or distilling– memory fails me – but it seemed to belong to a very old man called Tubal Clarke. That is definite in my memory as my father treasured and recycled unusual names, words and events. He also liked to tell of how he here or somewhere else in Dardanup in those days and was offered home- made muscat wine in a Vegemite jar – this in the height of summer.

Scoring a bullseye in the field of early transport, my brother longed for a horse and the first marvel was he convinced my parents it would be OK. We all went to a shambolic black sand place outside Collie run by a Mr S., where teenaged boys and girls seemed to live willy-nilly in stables made of old railway sleepers and corrugated iron. I could see that my father strongly disapproved.

The next marvel is that my brother rode that horse -a calm Waler breed- from Collie to Bunbury and I still ask how. Apparently there were one or two other Bunbury lads bought a horse then and they rode back together, sleeping overnight under trees by the side of the road.

I sought greater horsepower: a Silver Anniversary Buick, several years sheltered by a drooping peppermint tree outside the local butcher Mr Morrisey's house in Picton (just before the Preston River Bridge where my mother used to lead expeditions to pick the wild blackberries prolific there.) I didn't care that the Buick was "uted". I looked for silver in its radiator, headlights and dashboard etc. as I didn't understand what the model name really meant. My father was sympathetic but that's as far as it went.
George had a lot to do with the sprouting old car movement. He recalls that the Bunbury Tourist Bureau then had very little money, so he looked around for low-cost community things he could help initiate:

That was how I came to start the Veteran Car Club off first, and then, I thought, well I knew these old steam engines were going to be scrapped so I hopped in, and spent a lot of

Excursions were sometimes made directly onto the old Busselton & Bunbury jetties. Some were trips arranged for ships and their crew would return end of day by train to ship.

time with the government people, convincing them that it would be a good thing, to save something of those early days of transport. Leschenault Lady -of course was a name gained from a competition. A young fellow out at Burekup won it ...someone came up with the Lady Leschenault, but Leschenault Lady rolled off the tongue better.

I saw the coaches first of all, in 1967, the year after I joined the Tourist Bureau, I'm pretty sure it was '67. I saw them lined up out at Brunswick Junction to go back to Midland to be scrapped. And knowing the age of them, from 1897 to 1916 at that stage, I thought, well what a shame. We've got the old locomotives, built in 1897 by Dubbs in Scotland before the turn of the century in Queen Victoria's times. And Leschenault Lady [G223] *was built in Gawler, South Australia in 1898. I wrote dozens of letters to the government, to everyone I could think of. I could see the only way we were going to get assistance at all, was to raise money ourselves. So with volunteers we worked out schemes... A big raffle where we sold tickets and we raised quite a lot ...well on the way towards the cost of the first overhaul $15,000. Later, $17,000 for the second locomotive* [Koombana Queen G123]. *John Sibson was then M.P. here, and he helped a great deal on it. John could see the merit And of course everybody was all very keen on it, because it was unusual.*

You'd put in an application to the Railways and then they - I used to have all the manuals that I'd collected from railwaymen that were pleased enough to give them to me, and I had the Manuals and I would work out the loadings and everything else, because it's quite a complicated business. You can't take a - with a small engine - you couldn't take the same number of coaches say to Collie that you could take to Busselton, because of the different terrain you see. That's all worked out and put down in tables: "Load Tables for the West Australian Government Railways."

The locomotives ran through the 60s, 970s and 80s on many a South West trip, including to Collie, Yarloop, Donnybrook, Busselton. After all, the South West in those days still had a valuable rail system reaching down as far as Northcliffe and out to Boyup Brook. The two engines took part also in many commemorative events including the welcome of the first Indian Pacific train in 1979 and Centenary of the WAGR in Geraldton in 1981, also 1981 Fremantle to Guildford line centenary. The locos often were used for films and were lent to other rail groups. George continues the story-

The locomotives were then stored in what they used to call the morgue, where the locomotives in the steam days were sent for overhaul. That same building was also used for maintenance on the diesels. Change of the marshalling [and goods] *yard and everything else of course, came after my retirement, when they all moved out to Picton. I wanted to see the marshalling yards moved, for the benefit of the town, it was a good move. But I visualised all that area as parks and gardens, you see, so that the* [passenger] *trains could come in, even the Australind, to the* [existing] *railway station, the passengers would be able to get off, and be able to go right down to the estuary foreshore, and into nice trees and lawns and all that kind of thing. And also it would bring the visitors as well as the local people into the centre of the town. I was very disappointed when they moved it out.*

-L to R: Unknown gent, John Sibson Local Member for Bunbury, George Baxter.

Possibly on the inaugural Koombana Queen run.

Below: S sister G Class loco overshoots the Coal Stage (at Merredin?):

As the locomotives were squeezed out of Bunbury Station, with the demolition/dismantlement of the roundhouse, etc., they were housed in the goods sheds down towards the old harbour. I remember seeing George there polishing the brass dome of one of the engines and generally sprucing it up. A padded canvas cover for the dome, like a tea cosy, had been made by the volunteer force, to preserve the mirror finish.

By 1985 closure of the Bunbury rail yards and station as part of a redevelopment of the city centre was the first nail in the coffin of the enterprise George and his volunteers had begun. Insurance and regulatory complexities of running a steam train on main lines were also making operations of vintage trains increasingly difficult and expensive. By 1992, things came to a full stop. 2000 saw the WAGR/WestRail network handed to private interests.

Let's now fast forward to South West Rail & Heritage Centre, Boyanup, Saturday 28th August 2021. ABC news:

Leschenault Lady, a century-old steam engine, returned to the tracks in front of a huge crowd. She is one of only three operational steam locomotives left in WA. Her return is part of the celebrations marking 150 years of WA railways. A dedicated group of young and old volunteers have spent seven years painstakingly restoring the 123-year-old steam locomotive in WA's south-west. Their hard work paid off last weekend when the Leschenault Lady returned to steam in front of a crowd of about 1,700 spectators.

Special guests and rightly so were George and Edith's son(s) and grandchildren.

But the line out from Boyanup to Donnybrook, Greenbushes and beyond is closed, rusting and overgrown, due to its lease to private companies. The Lady is all dressed up with nowhere to go and all she can do then and since is shunt up and down in the old station precinct like a caged animal.

One hope is that in light of lithium mining at Greenbushes the W.A. Government announced funding for Greenbushes to Bunbury Railway Feasibility Study in July 2023 in partnership with Talison Lithium. The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup is also involved. The study includes the feasibility of re-opening the railway on the basis of

- eight train trips a day to replace hundreds of truck movements
- proposal was motivated by safety concerns
- proposal would include safety measures around pedestrian crossings and level crossings
- outcome of the study not a foregone conclusion

But it has never been made clear who or what has lease of this section of rail – is it Talison or Arc Infrastructure who seem to lease all of W.A. rail ? Yet another private group Aurizon may also have a stake. And is it true that Queensland Rail "owns" WA's permanent way?

A retired very senior officer in local government of the area, who will be nameless, has told me that when an incident such as a fire occurs on the railway reserve, so many different entities have to be contacted and sifted for responsibility that by the time any official action is agreed a farmer or orchardist has put out the fire. Whereas in the days of the WAGR, it took responsibility and acted. Donnybrook lies also in a years' long time warp as to its town planning: Should it allow for the railway or give up and streamline its road network, eliminating level crossings etc ?

Some community groups there are advocating for tourist rail opportunities on the line, and believe there would also be a lot of opportunities for product transport, which could encourage agri-tourism focused economic development throughout the district.

Should the line be re-habilitated and re-opened purely to run steam tourist trains? Of course not. But such enterprises, including using the ex-Australind railcars, could be the icing on the cake of a healthy rail system in the South West and WA generally.

To date no report seems to have eventuated from the July 2023 study and in fact in 2019 a similar study led by Talison Lithium and the South West Development Commission was undertaken. In 2020, that study was put on hold due to a number of external factors including a decline in the lithium market, partly as a result of international disruptions caused by COVID-19. Will a study soon be commissioned into what happened to the studies? Yes, Minister.

A recent article by John Hassell in *The West Australian* offers some hope. It pulls no punches in a grim but lucid account of the current physical state of WA's country railways and their management maze. Hassell's highlights:

What was supposed to be more efficient and competititve system ...became anything but. A disaster for grain growers who have seen an ever-growing share of grain shift from rail to road. It's a quarter century of missed opportunities.
Now the current operators are demanding Government funding for upgrades , taxpayers are being asked to pick up the bill for infrastructure the private sector was supposed to maintain.

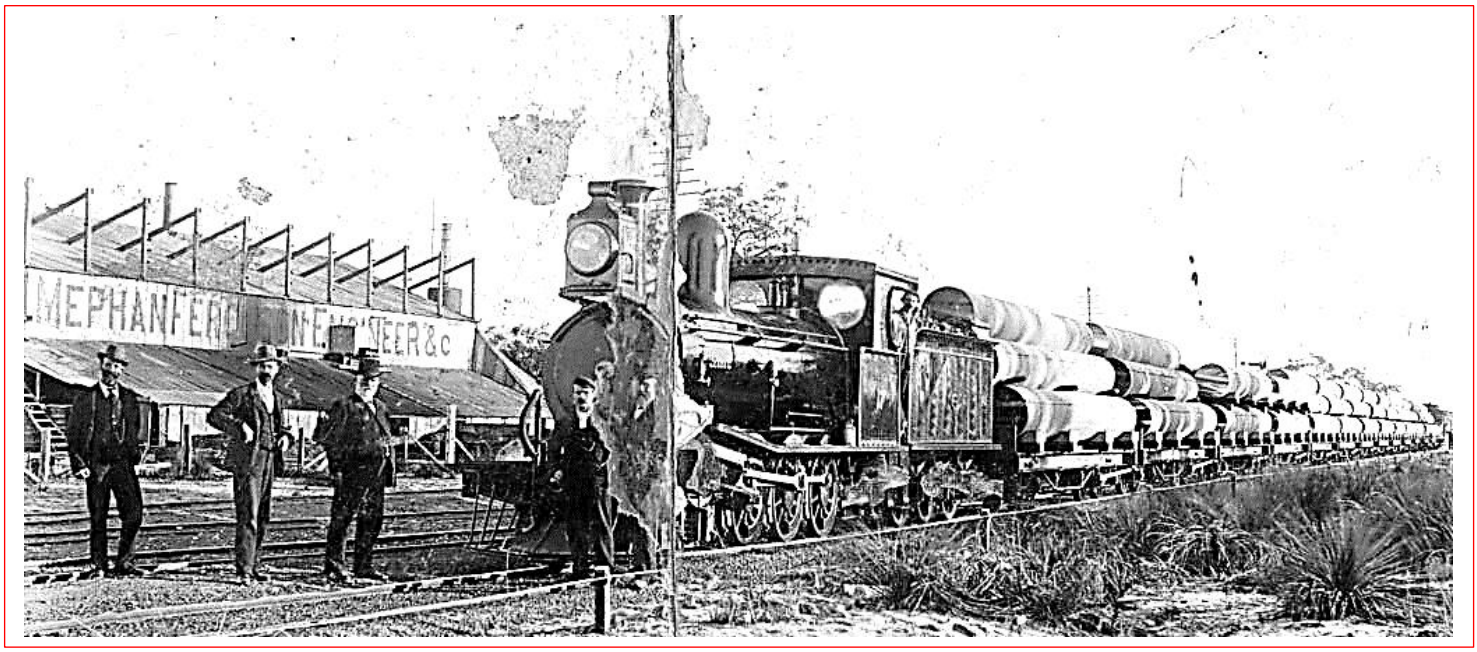
Technically, the network must be returned to the government in 2047 in the same condition it was when leased. But anyone who has seen trees growing between the tracks on Tier 3 lines would rightly question whether this obligation is being met.
Now Transport Minister Rita Saffioti says the government is prepared to buy out the network lease, citing the impact on the State's mining industry and the political headaches.

And on this upbeat note, let's end with George's school friend Sir Charles Court. Was he really the arch opponent of our railways ? His biographer Rhonda Jamieson gives him pretty fair defence including that his "networks established through music proved useful". Court told her of a fraternity of fellow brass bandsmen he knew at the Midland Workshops:

He would be phoned at night by one of them to warn him of trouble brewing to which he personally responded along with [Commisioner] *Wayne. They would arrive early and fix the problem before the workers started to arrive …one of the purchasing officers saved money by buying cheap coarse toilet paper. Shop stewards blamed Court and his cost cutting measures and gave a grim picture of what would happen if the paper was used. After [the] tip off he made sure all rolls were replaced before the first shift …#*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Bunbury Oral History Group; Battye Library: *An interview with George Baxter.* 1988; **Weston Langford Railway Photography** (photos on p. 22) at https://www.westonlangford.com/search/?q=busselton
Graham Emerson for Memories of Bunbury. Australian Railway Historical Society photo archives. **John Hassell**: "Opportunity in Rail Buyback" in *The West Australian*, Feb. 3, 2025. p.30; **Ronda Jamieson:** *Charles Court: I Love this Place.* Perth: St George's Books, 2010. p.137-8. **Wikipedia:** Has excellent and up to date articles on the Leschenault Lady, Koombana Queen & the G class locos generally. For **Leschenault Homestead** see https://inherit.dplh.wa.gov.au/public/inventory/printsinglerecord/8bb17410-6e85-45fe-94fa-f57e68375ef6
For **South West Rail & Heritage Centre,** Boyanup, see http://swrhc.org.au/



A G Class locomotive hauls pipes from Mephan Ferguson in the old Maylands industrial area, for construction of the Goldfields pipeline. A steam locomotive made in Queen Victoria's times can obviously haul the weight of several road trains & more efficiently and safely. So imagine what a modern day diesel or electric loco can do nowadays on a well-regulated railway infrastructure.

MEMORIES OF 38-AX-1099 *by* GREG MORRIS

Above is my 1937 Riley Blue Streak Adelphi in York at the first National Riley Rally held in W.A. Then owned by Peter Hocking who had purchased it while living in U.K and looking for a RMB. I bought it later in 1985. "Adelphi" relates to the body style.

What a great car it was; looked great but it was falling apart, however still went like a rocket! I would drive from West Perth north up the Freeway, away from the city, to work in Balcatta doing the allowed 100kph (maybe a bit more?) in overdrive top with the engine ticking over lazily, and next to no traffic. Top speed was about 90mph (145kph) or more. Meanwhile on the other side of the Freeway heading to the city, it was chock a block and 40kph if they were lucky. It was the same on the way home. Wonderful.

Stephen Sneesby is now in Mudgee, N.S.W., but he was at the York Rally and later moved to Perth with his lovely RME. He now says: ”I used to follow this car picking up all the bits that fell off it. All of course, made with the best of British engineering.”. My reply would be: “Where were you then when the left rear wheel fell off, rolled across the road in Subiaco, narrowly missing a pregnant nun pushing twins, and ending up in a hedge? Nowhere in sight! But it was a back street so I hoped no one would know. But I was walking back with the wheel when a Riley 2½ Litre Roadster came round the bend with a laughing Phil Soden. What's the chance? So the whole Club soon found out.”

I also recall on the way back from the 1991 National Riley Rally in Pemberton, I let my lady Ingrid Peeters drive for a while. On an empty road we saw an old Limo up ahead just as a passing lane started. She passed that c1960 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud doing the full 90mph. UPHILL!! I well remember the look of astonishment on the faces of the passengers in the back of the RR.

The needed rebuild was beyond my expertise, but I sold it to a very capable friend, Club Registrar Cliff Goodman, who has got stuck into it since his recent retirement. So it will be good to see it on the road again. See photo 2.
Riley first advertised the new model in 1937 calling it the Blue Streak, and it would use four of the existing body styles. But the first sales brochure referred to it as the 16hp and the engine as The Big Four. With almost 2.5 Litres it was the biggest twin-cam Riley.

That engine followed existing Riley designs of twin high cams (in the block), crossflow with hemispherical combustion chambers and was a long stroke of 2443cc putting out 85bhp and lots of torque. But it could be referred to as a Double Cross Flow as the Zenith carby is on the exhaust side, with inlet tubes going thru' the head to the "inlet" side. I guess to pre-heat the mixture (just what we need in Oz?) and give a ram effect. Mr. W. Morris' accountants soon put an end to that! The Dual Overdrive g'box gave 5 forward ratios. The factory took one with a Kestrel body (fastback 4 door saloon) and hotted up engine with twin SUs to the Continent and recorded over 100mph (161kph). Very few Saloons of any size could do that in 1937. But that was never marketed as the company went into receivership as we know, and was bought by a Mr. W. Morris (personally); he also had a company making cars under his own name. But no relation to me!

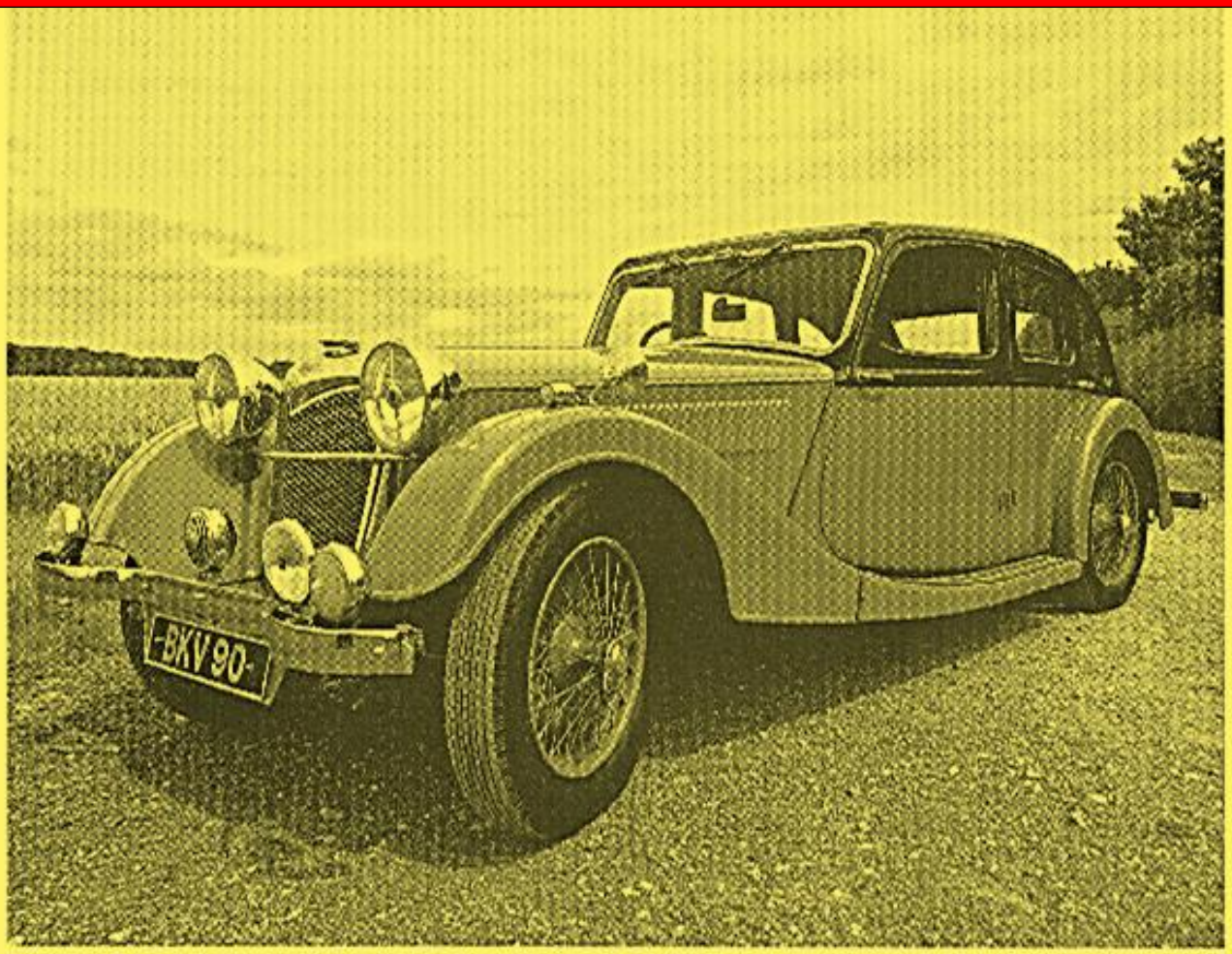
So the 16hp was only made for c6 months for a total of c300 with 4 body styles. Thanks to Cliff for the 1985 photo.

Above: Cecil Riley's Flying Licence. In those days all certification including military was conducted by the Royal Aero Club.

With acknowledgement & thanks to the Riley Register Bulletin, the following article by Bob Rowland (UK) consolidates information on the life of the fifth and youngest of the Riley brothers. Bob as well as being a Riley person is a TR4 owner and as a volunteer at the RAF Hendon museum had the means and inspiration to follow up leads on the life of former owner of his Kestrel, Cecil. Bob's article presents new information and a Miscellany of further aspects from Bob's researches and my own adds to the picture.

-Ken Gasmier, Editor

William Thomas Cecil Riley RFC by R.J.G. Rowland



Captain Cecil Riley's Kestrel Sprite in 2016: Reg BKV 90. Chassis: SS27K5404.

As a recent Riley owner, I found amongst the paperwork I received with the car a letter written in 1979 by Arnold Farrar to a previous owner mentioning that the car had been factory registered and allocated to Capt. Cecil Riley.

There is little mention of Cecil in Riley books but an interesting article by Kenneth Gasmier in a Riley Register Bulletin set me wondering what he did throughout WWI as he served from the start to the finish. The following article is the result of 18 months research starting briefly from his birth until the start of WWI and his activities in the RFC from 1915 until the end of the war and his return to civilian life in 1919.

WTC Riley was born in Keresley, Warwickshire of William and Emma Riley on 7th November 1894, baptised on the 17th September 1895 and lived in the family house, Holly Bank, Barrs Hill, Radford Road, Coventry. After the death of his mother in 1909 he was sent to Oundle School in September 1910 and placed in Laxton House until he left in 1912.

Laxton House, Oundle School: Which one is Cecil Riley?

He joined the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway in 1913 based in Horwich, Lancashire, but, unfortunately, when the L&Y was absorbed into the LMS during the grouping of 1922/3, many of the records were destroyed. Cecil then joined the Rilcy company later the same year.

At the outbreak of WW1 Cecil volunteered for military service at Avonmouth on 11th August 1914 as Pte Cecil William Thomas Riley aged 19, enlisting for 1 year's' Army-service or duration of the war.

He was sent to France with the BEF on 14th August 1914, Army Service Corps, (MT), 4th Division based around Ypres. There is very little official information on army service available owing to WWII bombing destroying many records, but it is recorded that he was awarded the 1914 Star (Mons Star).

Cecil was commissioned in Routine Orders to Temporary 2nd Lieutenant 21st November 1915 when still a member of the Army Service Corps (Mechanical Transport) for duty with the Royal Flying Corps and allocated an outfit allowance of £50 at Cox & Co, Charing Cross and pay of that rank.

A posting followed to the Royal Flying Corps No. 6 Squadron on 12th December 1915 as an observer on probation for reconnaissance and artillery spotting based at Abeele in the Ypres salient. The squadron supported 4th Corps during the 1st battle of Ypres and on 29th Dec sent 3 BE2Cs to join another 4 and 7 from No. 5 and No. 7 Squadrons respectively on the first concentrated bombing raid to Comines station with BE2C aircraft

equipped with two 112lb bombs. However, in February there was a switch to 'general artillery action' to break up German attacks and in one busy day 51 hostile batteries were engaged. General Douglas Haig mentioned No. 6 Squadron in his first dispatch from France along with No. 2 Squadron, the only case of flying Squadrons being mentioned for their role in the fighting.

Cecil qualified as an Observer for BEF reconnaissance still flying in BE2Cs on 21st March 1916.

On 16th April 1916 Cecil and his pilot Capt. McCall took off at 5pm on reconnaissance for the Canadian Corps in BE2C 2602 equipped with a wireless set and two machine guns. Unfortunately, they crashed 1mile SE of the aerodrome, landing in a ditch owing to engine failure at 200ft. Both pilot and observer were uninjured and sent on leave from 20th April until 29th before returning to the squadron. The aircraft undercarriage was buckled, and one wheel forced through the wing, the propeller was broken and the camshaft probably bent. The fuselage also appeared slightly out of true, nevertheless, it was recommended to transfer it for rebuilding.

Cecil was then posted to No. 15 Squadron (Bombing) on 5th July 1916 at Marieux, about 18 miles SW of Arras just after the first Battle of the Somme had started on the 1st July. The squadron was equipped with 14 BE2C aircraft, soon rising to its establishment level of 18 aircraft and the squadron's operational objectives were now Artillery Battery Liaison, 8 aircraft, contact patrols, bombing and reconnaissance patrols in support of VIII Corps 3 aircraft each. A further aircraft was armoured, BE2C 4205 and used for photography, kite balloon destruction and special missions but the extra weight made the aircraft very unwieldy to fly; there was also an armoured spare held in reserve.

In the diaries of Capt. Paul Maltby of No. 15 Squadron, he reported that during July cloud and continual rain restricted the amount of flying that could be undertaken in support of the ground troops but whenever the weather cleared the Squadron would send up patrols from early morning to late in the evening flying between 500 and 1000ft in support of the infantry in the trenches noting enemy troop movements and calling down artillery fire to disrupt any enemy advance. During this period the Squadron suffered many casualties killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Despite this toll Capt. Maltby would regularly meet with others to play Bridge most evenings, a little peace after the daily battles.

In spite of the obsolescence of the BE2cs the aircrews pushed home their attacks. On 1st August one aircraft strafed German columns on the Beaumont - Hamel road and anything else that moved. Occasionally the pilots with their observers would drop down to 50ft or even landing close to advance formations to discuss the situation with ground commanders. On 15th August the Squadron was re-assigned to support V Corps, promptly bombed Grevillers station and soon after a detachment from the Squadron was inspected by King George V along with No. 4 Squadron. During August and September, the Prince of Wales was a frequent visitor to Marieux. On 2nd October the Squadron moved 4 miles SE to a new aerodrome on Clairfaye Farm at Lealvillers where the facilities were very primitive, no buildings and living in tents for some months whilst Marieux was taken over by No. 5 Squadron. During this time No. 15 Squadron

continued to suffer many casualties, however, on the 21st October 1916 Cecil was very fortunate when he was withdrawn from the front line and posted to Home Establishment. Cecil was among the many courageous RFC men in the front line of a violent environment and after over two years at the front returned to relative peace in England and pilot training.

He moved to Oxford on the 6th November 1916 before joining No. 5 Training Squadron on 24th January 1917 at Castle Bromwich. He then transferred to No. 34 Training Squadron at Ternhill, Shropshire on 20th March 1917 for higher instruction and qualified as a pilot on 23rd March 1917 at Military School, Birmingham flying a Maurice Farman Biplane. During his training Cecil's flying consisted of 6hrs dual in a Maurice Farman Shorthorn and 6hrs dual in an Avro 504A followed by a further 6hrs solo in a Maurice Farman Shorthorn and 23hrs solo in an Avro 504A.

Unfortunately, on 1st May 1917 Cecil during a flight in Avro 504A A1989 (possibly built by Bleriot & Spad) fainted, stalled and crashed near Ternhill; he was severely injured and unconscious for 3 days in Prees Heath Military Hospital, Shropshire. He was found to be suffering diplopia (double vision), insomnia, hypertension and little mental concentration. Cecil was not released from hospital for convalescence until 12th June 1917 when he was transferred to Mrs Mulliners Convalescent Home, Clifton Court, Rugby. During his time there he was summoned to a Medical Board at the 1st Southern General Hospital, Birmingham on 29th September 1917 and was declared unfit for service for 3 months and requiring further convalescence.

Following the Medical Board assessment, he was entitled to 6 months back flying pay of 4 shillings (20p) a day from 3rd May 1917. During his convalescence Cecil wrote to the Secretary of the War Office in Whitehall on the 10th November 1917 requesting promotion to full Lieutenant to which he thought he was entitled. He received confirmation of his promotion to Temporary Lieutenant on 26th November back dated to 1st July 1917. Some confusion had occurred because he had signed the letter WTC Riley whereas he was CWT Riley on his military record.

After his convalescence Cecil transferred to HQ 37th Wing, No. 4 TDS (Training Depot Station) Hooton Park, Chester on temporary duty and being classed as fit only for home service after Medical Boards on the 29th December 1917 and 24th January 1918. During the next few months Cecil moved between various training units starting with No. 90 Squadron which was equipped with various aircraft including FE2b, Avro 504K and Dolphin based at Shotwick but on 2nd February Cecil was declared permanently unfit for service as a pilot or observer. However, on the 21st February he was appointed Acting Adjutant (Supernumerary) and on 24th February Cecil again wrote to the Secretary at the War Office, this time applying for a wound gratuity as he had consulted Sir Anthony Crickett of Harley Street and been told there was little hope of a full recovery from the Diplopia. This was granted and, on the 19th March 1917, he was awarded a gratuity of £229-3-4d (£229.17) to cover the period 1st May 1917 to 24th March 1918.

After the formation of the Royal Air Force on the 1st April 1918 Cecil was re-graded a Flying Officer (Observer) still at No. 90 Squadron but restricted to General Service

ground duties only and continuing as Acting Adjutant although his flying pay ceased on that date.

In view of his experience of active service and RFC procedures on 20th May 1918 he was promoted to Temporary Captain without pay of that rank and joined No. 96 Squadron based at Shotwick equipped with BE2C aircraft as Station Adjutant. He left on 11th July 1918 when the Squadron was disbanded, also relinquishing the rank of Temporary Captain and returned to HQ 37th Wing joining No. 51 TDS being formed at North Shotwick.

He transferred to 29th Wing, No. 13 TDS on 12th September 1918 at Ternhill finally moving to Chiselden dispersal unit on 8th February 1919, transferred to the unemployed list on 19th February and was awarded in addition to the Mons Star the Victory and British Medals – war over!

In later life Cecil lived at 42 Binswood Avenue, Leamington Spa and he died on 24th April 1961 in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham leaving an estate worth £47089-6s.

Acknowledgements to Oundle School, L&Y Archive, RAF Museum Hendon, GRO and National Archives Kew.

Miscellany of Further Information on Major Cecil Riley

William Thomas Cecil Riley (1895-1961) born in Keresley near Coventry was the fifth son of William & Emma (nee Lister) Riley. His nickname within the family was Tet. At that time Keresley was a village outlying Coventry. At that time William Riley owned Hollybank, the family house in Coventry. The Keresley house was leased. Family sources suggest it may have been a holiday property or a home whilst extensions were done to Hollybank. At that time also residents around Hollybank complained of noise from the new Electric Light Station affecting their sleep and well being.

Given that his elder brothers Allan, Victor, Percy & Stanley earlier took up roles available in the family bicycle and later motor business, Cecil while undertaking significant work there from time to time, had no full time or continuing employment in Coventry as did the others. Cecil therefore looked further afield.

He attended King Henry School in Coventry and then had 2-3 years at Oundle school. In his WW1 service records there is a note of employment at a railway workshops although family sources have no knowledge of this. It could be said that Cecil had more of formal engineering training than his brothers.

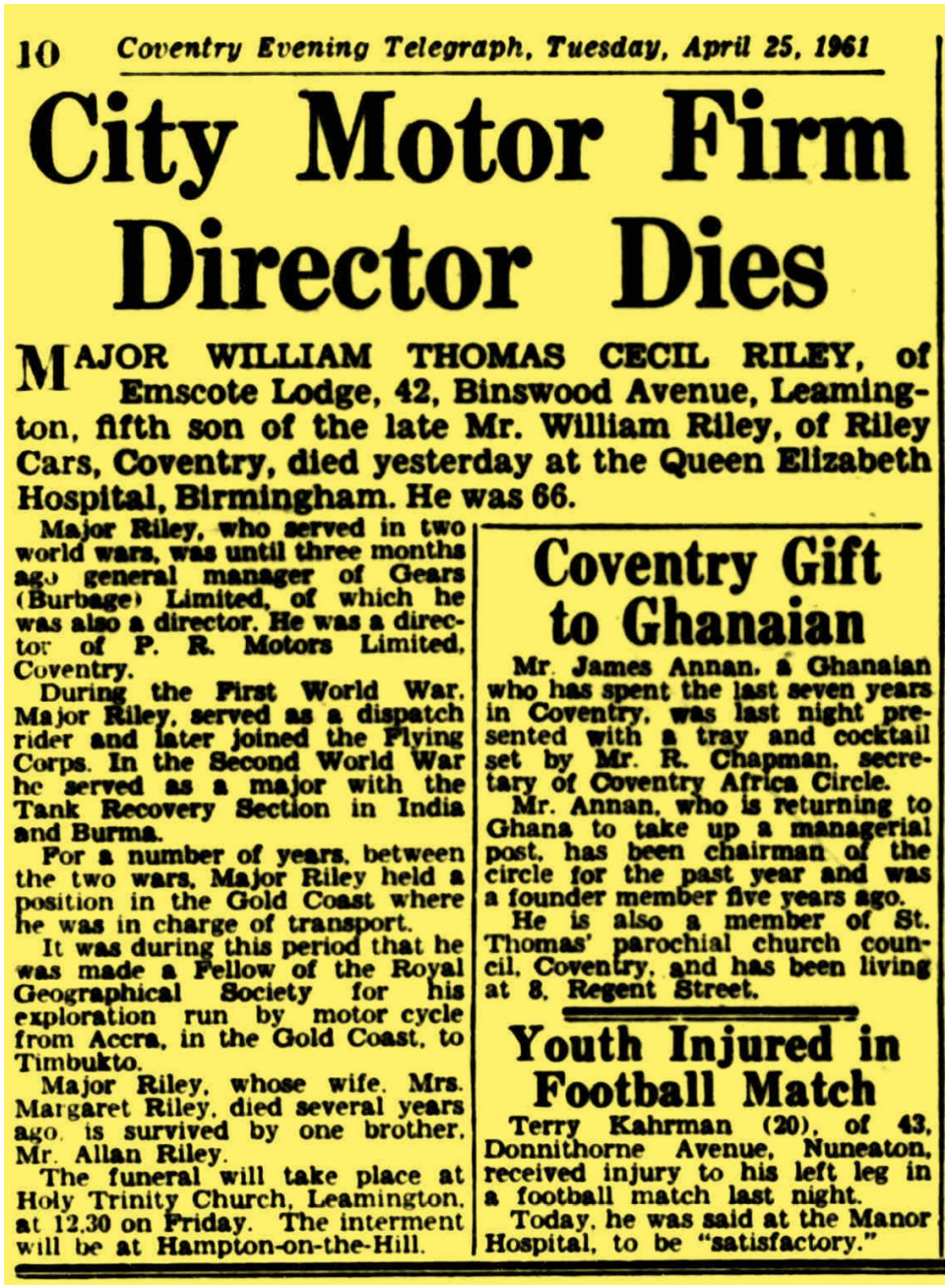
I have studied and copied his WW1 service records at the NA Kew. The main WW1 puzzle there is that he seems to have been drafted in GB and then into the theatre of war in France in very short time –less than a fortnight. -Which may indicate he had prior military training in the Oundle OTC.

He served first as a motor cycle despatch rider. These men were apparently recruited from volunteers who could bring their own machine and already knew how to ride and fix them. He became known as an expert artificer and was promoted to keep lorries etc in running order. During this time he served at Mons and was awarded the service medal of the Mons Star.

It was previously thought his service as a fixer was with the Royal Engineers but the records show that it was with Transport & Supply units.

A desire to fly saw him accepted into the RFC in the later stages of the war where he rose to rank of temp. Captain. Unfortunately he suffered injuries in a flying accident in the latter stages of his training at Tern in Shropshire which seem not to have allowed him to resume flying and he took on administrative duties. Family sources however believe he resumed service flying but there is no record of this in the file at Kew.
Information on his WW2 service is sketchy coming solely from family information (his nephew Victor Riley jnr) and the newspaper cutting overleaf.

There was an effort amongst his brothers to counsel Cecil from volunteering in WW2 as he was by then approaching middle age, had yearly bouts of malaria from his sojourn(s) in Africa and was told he'd already "done his bit".



10 Coventry Evening Telegraph, Tuesday, April 25, 1961

City Motor Firm Director Dies

MAJOR WILLIAM THOMAS CECIL RILEY, of Emscote Lodge, 42, Binswood Avenue, Leamington, fifth son of the late Mr. William Riley, of Riley Cars, Coventry, died yesterday at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham. He was 66.

Major Riley, who served in two world wars, was until three months ago general manager of Gears (Burbage) Limited, of which he was also a director. He was a director of P. R. Motors Limited, Coventry.

During the First World War, Major Riley, served as a dispatch rider and later joined the Flying Corps. In the Second World War he served as a major with the Tank Recovery Section in India and Burma.

For a number of years, between the two wars, Major Riley held a position in the Gold Coast where he was in charge of transport.

It was during this period that he was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society for his exploration run by motor cycle from Accra, in the Gold Coast, to Timbukto.

Major Riley, whose wife, Mrs. Margaret Riley, died several years ago, is survived by one brother, Mr. Allan Riley.

The funeral will take place at Holy Trinity Church, Leamington, at 12.30 on Friday. The interment will be at Hampton-on-the-Hill.

Coventry Gift to Ghanaian

Mr. James Annan, a Ghanaian who has spent the last seven years in Coventry, was last night presented with a tray and cocktail set by Mr. R. Chapman, secretary of Coventry Africa Circle.

Mr. Annan, who is returning to Ghana to take up a managerial post, has been chairman of the circle for the past year and was a founder member five years ago.

He is also a member of St. Thomas' parochial church council, Coventry, and has been living at 8, Regent Street.

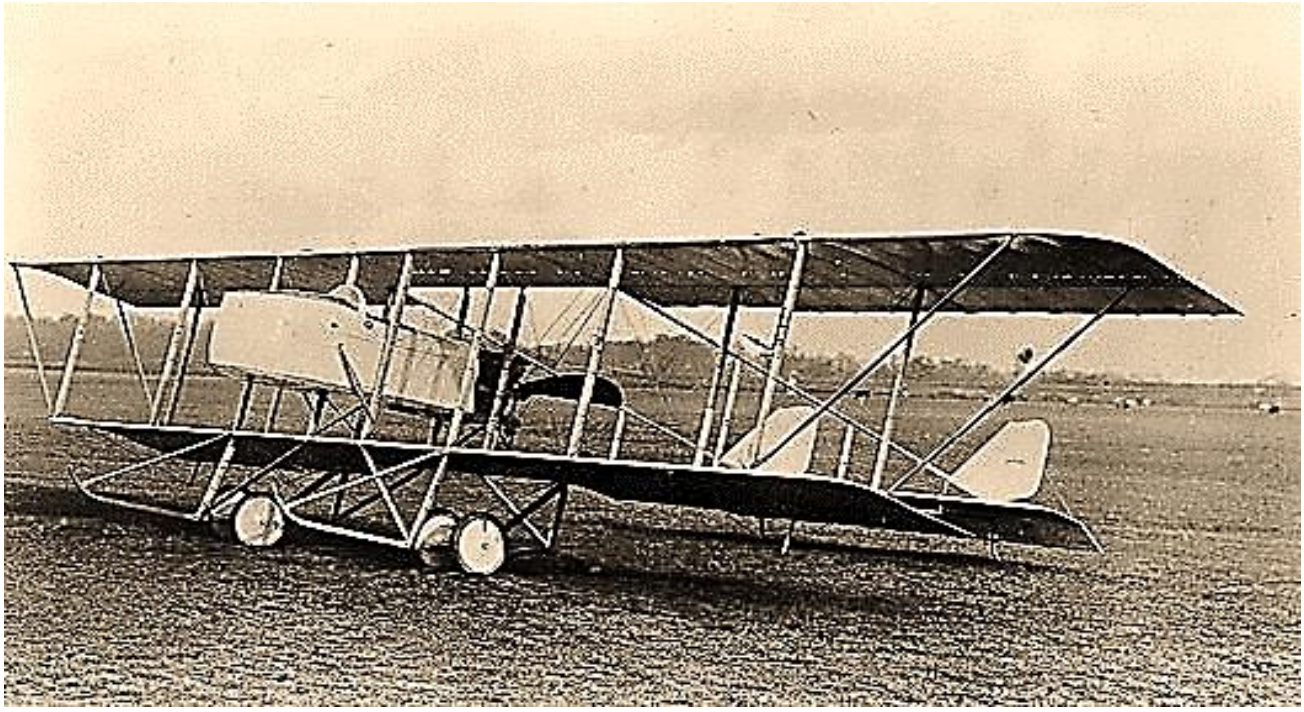
Youth Injured in Football Match

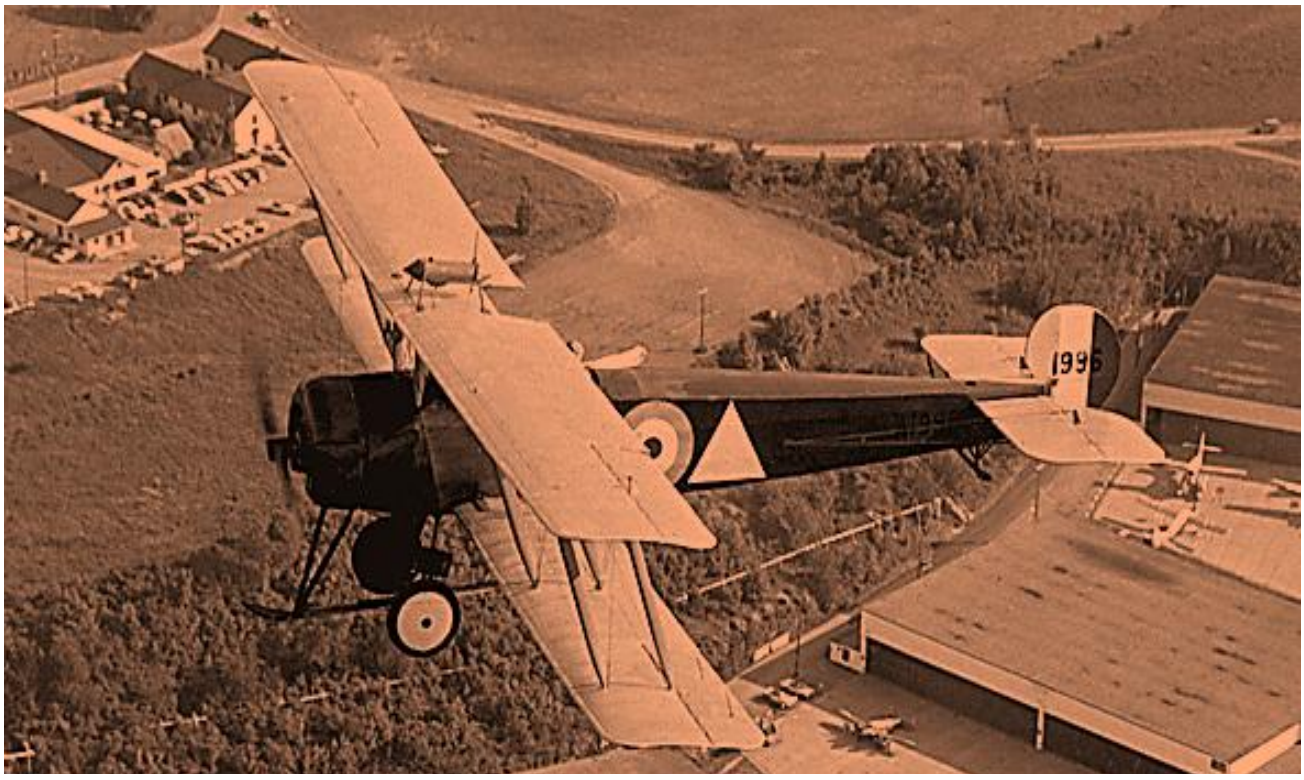
Terry Kahrman (20), of 43, Donnithorne Avenue, Nuneaton, received injury to his left leg in a football match last night.

Today, he was said at the Manor Hospital, to be "satisfactory."

WW2 Army records are not as accessible as those from the Great War, except to family members. As a Major in Burma Cecil was in charge of a Tank Recovery Unit. This may mean recovery and repair of British tanks or possibly salvage of the small Japanese types which apparently used the plantation roads of S E Asia ? The TRUs generally used six wheeled Scammel vehicles equipped with winches etc. and often worked under very difficult conditions, sometimes under enemy fire.

The main family story re Cecil concerns ravine territory in Burma. Cecil is said to have devised a method either thwart the Japanese there by bulldozing obstacles into their path or making a British advance possible for their tanks by filling in the floor of ravines. Real information on this is sketchy. He said to have written a special plea to the Caterpillar company to supply the British Army with bulldozers or at least one with which he could experiment. US forces were likely aware of the value of bulldozers.





Cecil's initial training was on a Maurice Farman "Shorthorn" type (above) but he was flying an Avro 504K (below) at the time of his accident at Tern.

The road to Timbuktu

In 1926, CAPTAIN DUDLEY GOWING rode a Triumph outfit from Africa's Gold Coast to Timbuktu. Read on...

"When I was serving as a young officer with the police in the Gold Coast I bought a Triumph combination to get around the villages in the area. I had two like-minded friends also in government service.

"One was Cecil Riley, brother of the designer of the Riley car, who was Government Transport Officer, and the other Kenneth Vaughan, a surveyor. They too were keen on motorcycles and as there were few opportunties to hold rallies we looked around for some other challenge.

"At Riley's suggestion we decided to make a trip to what was then considered to be the remotest place on earth – Timbuktu, which was a thousand miles to the north in French territory. As it was the rainy season we had to wait at least three months before we could set out but in view of the many preparations which had to be made this was certainly not too long.

"Our target date was January 1926, but first of all we had to get leave from the Gold Coast Government and then ask them to write to the French authorities for permission for us to enter their territory. No one had ever made the journey, except many years before on horseback, so there was a lot to find out about roads, if any.

"There was 300 miles of our own country to cross, about which we had good information, but over 600 miles through the Haute Volta and Touareg provinces on the French side about which we knew nothing. There were also rivers to cross, including the Niger, just across which Timbuktu is situated. Stores had to be obtained from England, especially spare parts for the machines and first aid kits. Arrangements had to be made for dumping sufficient petrol on both sides of the border. We also had to carry with us a certain amount of petrol, oil, stores and a cook.

"This meant that the sidecar of each machine had to be rebuilt for the purpose. Platforms had to be constructed to carry the tins of petrol and boxes of stores and this work was undertaken by Riley who had the resource of his workshops. The platforms were hinged so that if we broke down anywhere or had to sleep out in the open we could let the sides down to form a flat surface for our camp beds.

"Riley had a Zenith Super 8 H; Vaugh a P model Triumph and I a 4hp Triumph SH. Each machine had to be overhauled and the chassis reinforced to withstand the hard going. This we did by binding bamboo rods on to the metal tubes of the frames with bind-cord! Then, when everything had arrived from England, we loaded up and carried out road tests to ensure all was ready and nothing forgotten."

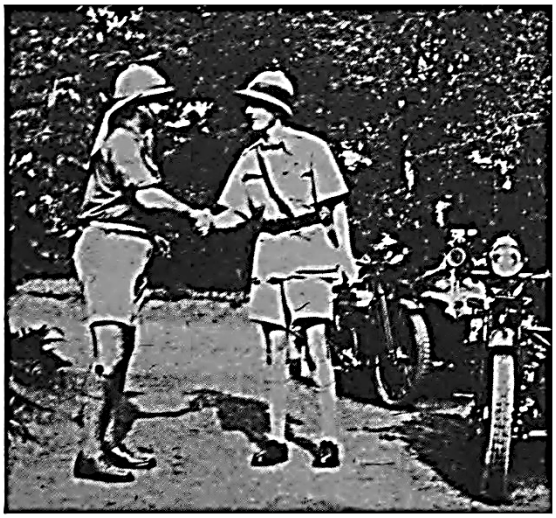
Into the bush

"Riley and I each carried four cases, each containing eight gallons of petrol. Vaughn could only take two cases as his sidecar had been specially designed to carry the cook and his utensils as well. We also took seven gallons of water, our iron rations consisting of coffee, sugar and biscuits and 24lb of meat, a flask of brandy, first aid kits, spare parts, sleeping equipment and clothes. All these preparations ocupied us fully during the three-month wait for dry weather and on January 5th 1926 we set out from Kumasi towards the north.

"After we had travelled some 50 miles over some very poor roads we found our way completely blocked by a fallen tree. It was a huge piece of timber and there was no possiblity of lifting the machines over as it would have meant completely unloading all the gear. Fortunately, there were some helpful Africans not far off and they hacked a path through the bush around the base of the tree and we were able to get by.

"We rode 140 miles that day to a village called Yeji where we stayed the night in a rest house and between us dumped ten gallons of petrol for the return journey. We had now left Ashanti province and entered the Northern Territories where the roads were much better. There were few trees and the terrain could be described as bush and desert.

"The next day we drove another 96 miles to a place called Tamale which was rather bigger than the average village, being the headquarters of the West African Frontier force and containing certain government offices. Our stay at the rest house nearly ended in disaster. We were enjoying an after dinner smoke when one of us must have thrown a cigarette end out of the window. This unfortunately landed in one of the sidecars parked outside, and to our alarm we suddenly saw flames coming up by the window.



Left to right: Messrs Vaughan, Riley and Gowing. Above: Clean shirts, pith helmets and a hearty handshake before setting off

"The straw in which the tins of petrol had been placed was well alight! We grabbed the rugs and blankets from our camp beds, rushed over and managed to smother the fire, but the thought of what would have happened if the fuel had ignited gave us a restless night.

"Next morning, after dumping another ten gallons of petrol for use on the way back we travelled to Navrongo, some 106 miles further north. We were near the frontier so decided to have a day's rest to check over our machines although so far we had no mechanical trouble. Navrongo was the provincial capital of the Northern Territories, containing the local HQ of the Transport Dept. Riley, as Transport Officer, had arranged a petrol dump there so we were able to replace the cases we offloaded at villages along the way.

"We made an early start next day and crossing into the French province of Haute Volta where the road were good we drove 110 miles to Ouagadougou. There we were offered accommodation in a house belonging to a government official who was on leave and all seemed well until we noticed a guard from the Foreign Legion posted outside.

Rivers to cross

"Next morning when we tried to resume our journey we were prevented by an official who said that nothing was known about our presence. We had already told him that our government had cleared our journey to Timbuktu with theirs, but although the town was the capital of the province, no confirmation had apparently been passed to them.

"We were obviously viewed with suspicion and kept under house arrest while a cable was sent to Accra seeking confirmation of our story. It was two days later when a reply arrived from the Governor of the Gold Coast explaining who we were, and we were allowed to proceed.

"During the next four days we covered roughly 100 miles a day. The roads were fair but we had the difficulty of crossing two tributaries of the River Volta. There were no suitable boats available to take our motorcycles and sidecars so a ferry had to be improvised by lashing together three canoes and putting a platform on top. We then managed to manoeuvre our machines onto the platform, get into the canoes and paddle them across the wide stretch of water which confronted us.

"After the crossing the roads became a bit difficult but again we had no trouble with our machines. At the small villages we stopped at for the night we left tins of petrol for the return journey. Eventually we arrived at Mopti in the Touareg province of the Upper Volta, which lies on the south bank of the River Niger. We had planned to cross the Niger there and complete the remaining 120 miles to Timbuktu the following day. But we were stopped dead in our tracks. There was no road the other side.

"The fact that there was no way of getting from Mopti to Timbuktu by road came as a shock. The only possible way would have entailed making a detour to the northeast of 500 miles and this was out of the question for reasons of time and supplies.

"However, we found there was a steam launch running a daily service to Kabara, about 120 miles up the river and within a couple of miles of Timbuktu. We therefore decided to leave our machines in the care of the district officer at Mopti and travel up by boat, taking just a few things with us.

(*The three made it to Timbuktu by boat and horseback, arriving back in Mopti a few days later*).

After throughly checking over our machines we went back the way we had come, but this time our reception at Ouagadougou was friendly, even cordial. We recrossed the Volta Rouge and White Volta rivers by canoe rafts as before and found our cases of petrol intact where we had left them.

Soon after entering the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast we ran into the first bit of trouble with our machines. Between the frontier and Navrongo we were riding along at dusk without any lights as we wanted to conserve the carbide in our acetylene lamps. Unfortunately, in the dim light I did not notice a piece of rock in the road and as I ran over it, it shot up and punched a large

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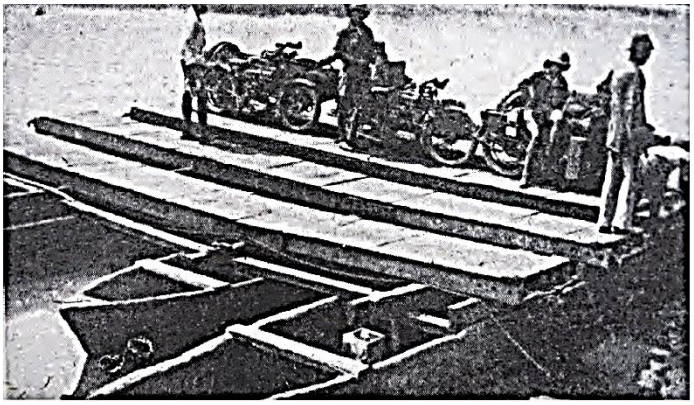


Above: Three canoes lashed together improvised a ferry. Left: Refilling with fuel – all carried in tins; Below: 41 years ago, Motorcycle Weekly carried Cpt Gowing's story


Into the unknown

from previous page

hole in the sump of my Triumph. This, of course, not only lost all the oil but exposed the flywheel."

Extraordinary roadside repair

"We now had a real problem, with another 50 miles to travel to our overnight stop at Navrongo and the light fading fast. The fact that the flywheel was protruding through the bottom of the sump casing didn't help as we set about repairing the damage. However by moulding a section of outer tyre to the shape of the sump we made a cover that would allow the flywheel to rotate freely. Over this we applied an inner tube patch and bound the lot together with strips of bamboo. Finally, we packed the joints with cotton waste to keep them from leaking. After an hour we were able to refill the sump and with bated breath I kicked the machine into life again.

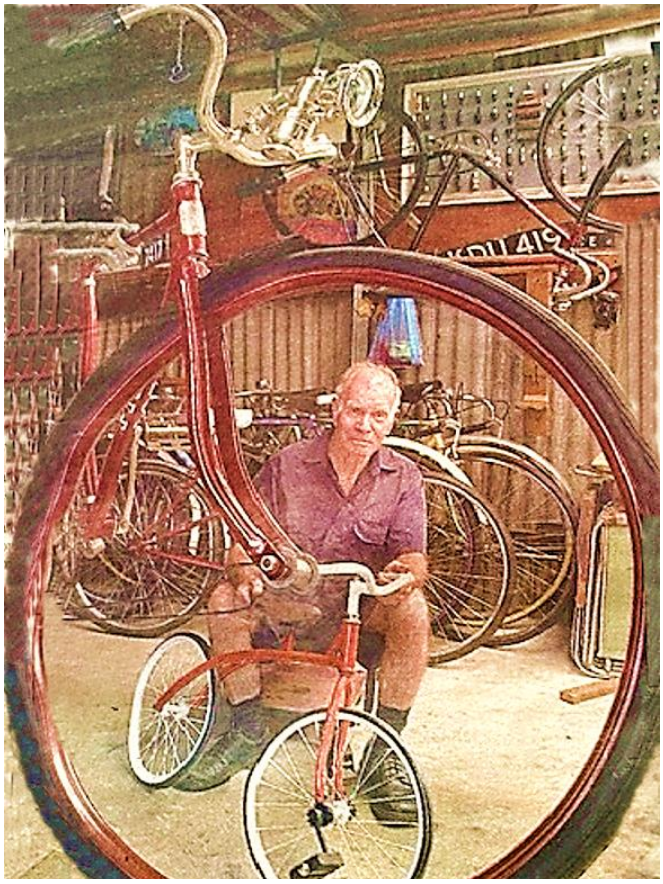
"To our immense relief the oil stayed inside the casing and we were able to continue on our way. It even enabled us to get back to Kumasi which we reached on January 28th, 23 days after we started the adventure. Although on the round trip to Timbuktu we had covered about 2,000 miles, the fact that we had to leave our machines at Mopti meant we had used them for about 1,700 miles. In calculating our petrol requirements we had worked on the basis of getting 15mpg from each machine. This was certainly conservative but we had to bear in mind the weight we were carrying and the heat. Both Riley's machine and my own carried 32 gallons of petrol, which weighed 320lb. Vaughan, in addition to his 16 gallons of petrol, had as passenger the cook. On top of this was all our kit, spares and supplies.

"In the event, our consumption worked out at 25mpg, so we had plenty of petrol to spare. As for the weather, it was the Harmatan or dry season and we were riding through temperatures of up to 120 degrees. To combat the heat we rode in pith helmets and bush shirts with spine pads. The latter were necessary as so much of the time we were leaning forward on our bikes with the sun beating down on our backs.

"The country we passed through both in the British and French territory was sparsely populated and very primitive – the natives just over the French border literally wore only leaves, both men and women. They were naturally friendly and curious, never having seen any form of motor transport before. Whenever we stopped at a village we were soon surrounded by a crowd of interested spectators. The roads were very rough in places, making the carrying of spare tyres essential. All our tyres were supplied free by Avon, but this was the only material help we got from any source. We had to pay for everything else ourselves including the Sphynx petrol, which by today's standards was very cheap. We had a few punctures and changed the tyres after about 600 miles. Mechanically, the machines performed perfectly. The trouble with the sump was my fault because I didn't spot the rock in the road.

"The motorcycles stood up to the gruelling conditions marvellously well and were a tribute to British engineering. Both the Zenith and the Triumph lived up to their names at a time when British companies such as themselves, Douglas, AJS, Norton, Matchless and BSA certainly knew how to turn out good and reliable machines and back them with first class service. It is tragic that this field of technology has been surrendered to foreign competition and that it is now the exception rather than the rule to see a British bike on the road."

● *Thanks to Tim Gowing – Cpt Gowing's son – for sending this in. It originally appeared in Motorcycle Weekly (6th and 13th January 1979).*



A SIMPLE HOOD SYSTEM for PRE-WAR RILEYS by PETER WELLS

-Bicycles were another passion of Riley man Peter Wells (1928-2016) & here he is framed by a 1906 Pilot bike with carbide gas lamp made in Perth by W. Jackson, along with a 1947 Perth manufactured Flying Arrow prototype.

From long experience Peter was aware that a pre-war Riley convertible project is often missing hood frame, or parts thereof or has a remnant hood frame "plonked on" from a bigger American car which doesn't fit or fold properly.
The simplest and most efficient system he knew of was that used in the just pre-war and post war Vauxhall Caleches bodied by Holden.

This system avoids the complex transverse bow systems and struts used many on British makes. The front mechanism is hinged flat bars either side which jack-knife inwards when folded.

These link at the front to the top rail secured at the rear to only two simple bows:

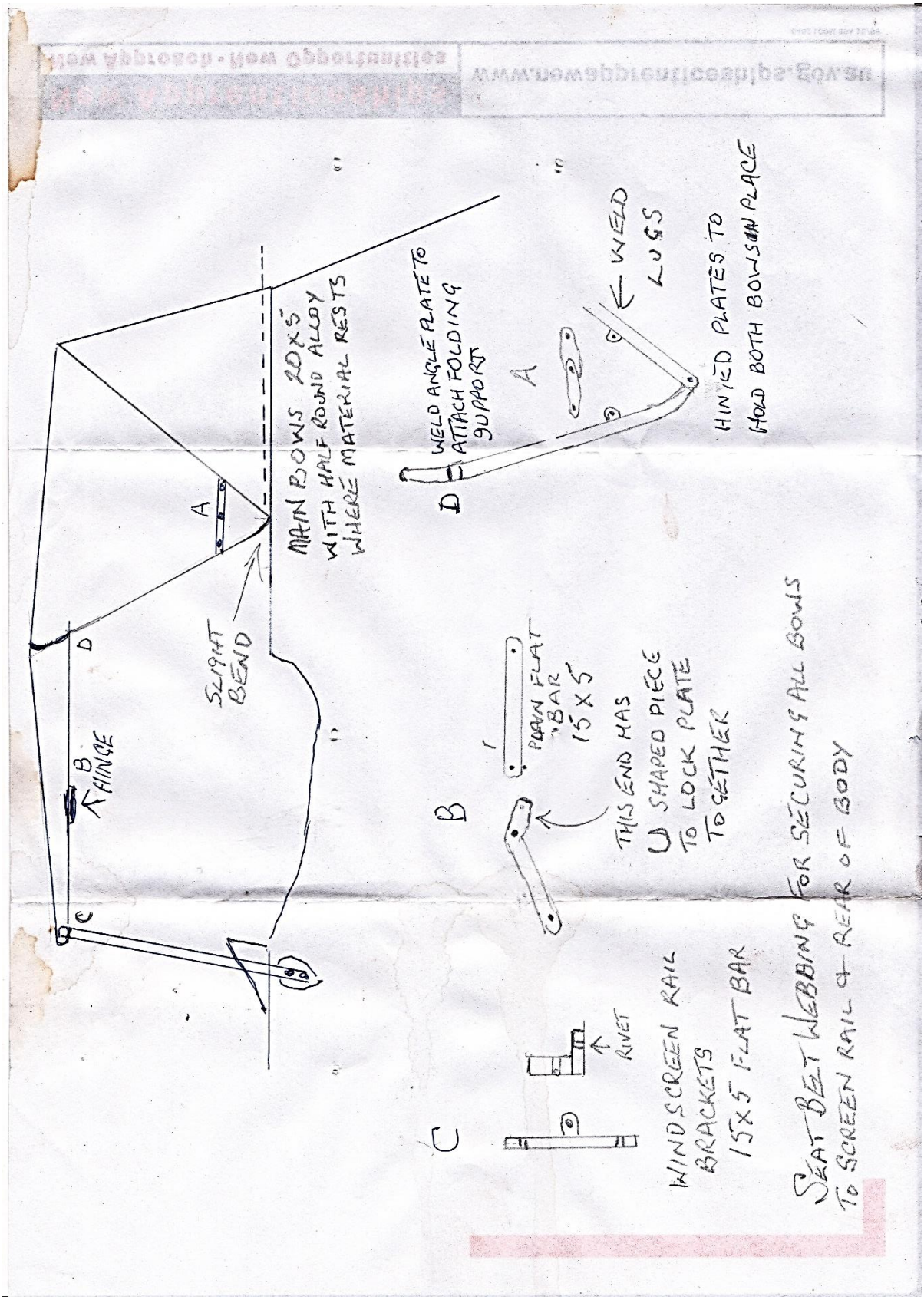
Hi Ken,

This is a rough sketch of the most simple and effective hood frame, and gives plenty of strength. Both main bows are about the same length from the hinge on the body, to the top of the hood. If you put a slight bend in the front bow (the one in the middle) they will lay flat when folded. If in doubt come and see my hood, the front half is the same as the Vauxhall design.

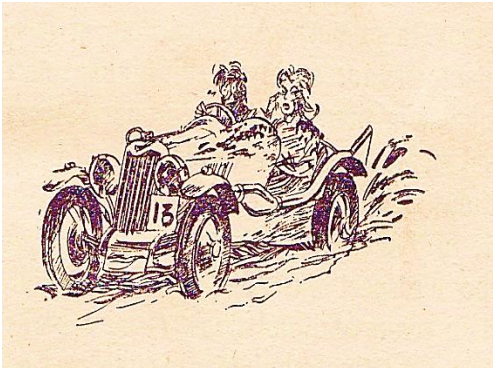
I presume that you have a welder, if not bring the bits to me.

Regards,

Peter Wales



Acknowledgements: Our member Martin Egan sourced a choice photos of Peter. Andrew Mills, President of the Vauxhall Owners' Club kindly took photos of his 1937 Vauxhall Caleche. Compiled by Ken Gasmier.



The Long Wait: A Little Bit About Myself

By Bob Finney

My first modes of transport back in the mid 1950s were British Motorcycles but due to only being able to take 1 passenger ,being newly married and having a young family I decided to move to 4 wheels . My first car was a 1955 Austin A30. After 2 years I sold that and bought an Austin 7 mini .In 1964 I purchased a brand new Riley Elf for the sum of 550.00 GBP approximately $1000.00 AUD.

In the 1970s I started restoring motorcycles , I refurbished quite a few British bikes mainly Velocettes. I also had a keen interest in MG Cars. In 1978 I bought a 1964 MG Midget to restore. It turned out this was in very poor condition and required major restoration from the ground up taking 2 years to complete. Then bought an original 1955 MGA. The restoration took approximately one year. I stripped and rebuilt the engine, replaced wings sills and repaired various other panels ,resprayed ,had seats reupholstered and carpets replaced.

The second and last MGA I purchased in 1999 had previously had a full restoration prior to me becoming the owner. This was one of the last MGAs to come off the production line in 1962. I bought this car in Yorkshire UK and shipped it out over to Western Australia when I moved over to Oz in the year 2000.

We purchased a beautiful home in Mindarie but this wasn't an ideal location for taking on any restoration projects due to being in a residential location so I bought a 5 acre block in Gabbadah near Moore River. I became a member of Whiteman Park Tractor Museum, my first restoration project there being a Fowler Steam Engine. I didn't have a great deal of knowledge around Steam powered vehicles. Another member Bill Hall was a retired ships' engineer and we worked as a team to carry out the restoration: A great learning experience for both of us. Following on from this I went on to restore Vintage tractors.

In my early teens around 1950 there was a local haulage boss that purchased a new Riley RMB. I fell in love with that car . I went down to the showroom and got all the glossy sales literature. I kept that for many years but unfortunately with house moves etc. they have now gone missing but memories last forever. 71 years later now living in Halls Head W.A. ,with the help of the Riley Club Western Australia I came across an immaculate 1949 Riley RMB which I have now recently purchased . The Riley bug started in my early Teens when my Father taught me to drive in a Riley 9 and I still double de-clutch to this day. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of the Riley Club W.A for their assistance in making my dream come true. I look forward to meeting you all at some of the planned social events.

CHARCOAL GAS

MAKING THE CHARCOAL

A large pit was dug in the ground, about 20 feet x 8 feet x 5 feet deep. This would have about 6 or 8 pieces of green whitegum wood placed across the bottom and about the same number down the sides. This was to allow air to circulate whilst a fire was starting to burn. The pit was then filled with dry and green wood to about 4 feet above ground.

The wood was then fired, which made a very large and hot fire. This was allowed to burn for about 4 hours. After this it was usually level with the ground and was a very red and seething bed of coals. Sheets of heavy gauge iron were then placed on top of the coals, and about one foot of soil quickly shovelled on top of the sheets of iron.

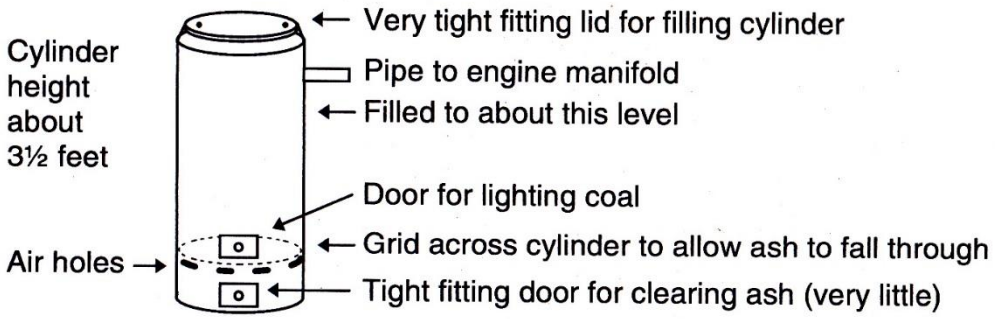
This was allowed to stand for about two weeks till it had cooled. The coal was then shovelled out of the pit, bagged and carted to Yornaning, where it was loaded onto rail wagons and forwarded to Perth (Attwood Motors). Apparently it was retailed to various clients.

This was a very cheap, but dirty-to-handle fuel, and a vehicle could travel from Narrogin to Perth (150 miles) on about one bag of coal, which was sold at 2 shillings and 6 pence per bag.

This became a very lucrative business for many people who had been struggling financially during the depression. It gave them a chance to obtain dreamed about luxuries like wirelesses and talcum powder.

VEHICULAR USAGE

The vehicle would be started using petrol, after a small fire had been lit in the bottom of the charcoal cylinder. The sucking action of the manifold on this vehicle would then cause gas from the charcoal fire (which was very combustible) to be drawn down the connecting pipe into the manifold of the vehicle. This took the place of petrol, which was turned off by means of small tap on the petrol fuel line. I am not sure what this gas was called, but it was a very deadly and dangerous gas and was also used for fumigating rabbits.



On a utility, these cylinders were usually mounted on the side of the vehicle on a running board. On sedans, a bracket was usually constructed on the rear of the vehicle. On larger vehicles, such as trucks and tractors, two cylinders were placed in tandem to give a larger range.

When fumigating the rabbits, a hand operated blower was placed on the gas line at the top of the cylinder and a flexible hose placed on the outlet side of the blower. This was then put into the rabbit burrow and covered with soil. It proved to be a very cheap and effective means of combating this pest which was then in plague proportions.

This short history on charcoal production and its uses, is written and illustrated to the best of my memory from about fifty odd years ago, so please forgive any errors in the story and illustration.

Martin Christensen

GAS PRODUCERS

As is well known, during World War 2 (WW2) all commodities were rationed. It became necessary to be issued with a Ration Book. By 1940 most farmers had acquired tractors, trucks or cars, replacing the faithful old horse. Petrol rationing dealt the farmers a severe blow. Some people recalled Dobbin & Co. back into action and used their fuel rations for travelling to get supplies. Because of this, a new invention was put to use - a Gas Producer. Many farmers procured one of several models. The one I can tell you about is a Lewis System. Most Systems combined steam with the gas. Steam, of course, is a source of power itself. A small water tank is fitted to the roof of a vehicle. From this, a water feed is regulated to drip onto the charcoal burning in the producer, causing spontaneous

combustion. One had to be very careful to regulate this drip properly. If there was not enough water, the coals would become too hot and not give off any gas; too much water and the whole thing would go out.

Ernie Henderson and Don Metzke proved that such a producer could be built non-commercially, and it could work very well. However, after the experiment was proven they, together with old Mr Metzke, opened up this contraption too soon to check on the internal results, and it blew up in their faces. Sceptical Mr Metzke had to admit that it DID work. Fortunately, they were only badly singed. They couldn't build it to a high enough manufacturing standard, so they didn't go into business.