

B.M.C. LEYLAND AUSTRALIA HERITAGE GROUP

A non-profit association of some hundreds of former employees and interested persons whose mission is to preserve the heritage of BMC-Leyland Australia and its associated companies as a significant part of Australia's automotive manufacturing history.

NEWSLETTER *JANUARY 2011*



Tony Cripps' Morris 850 - A Part of the Family

Letter and Pictures from Peter Stokes re 1800 etc.

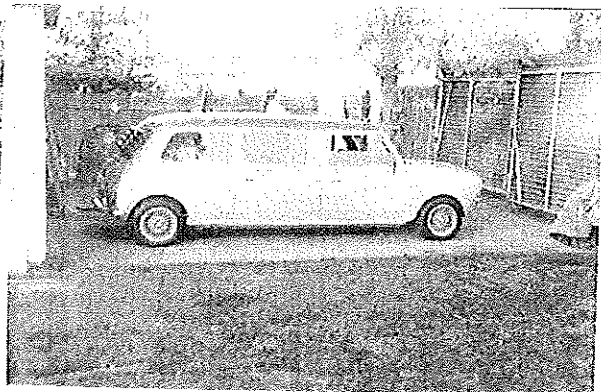
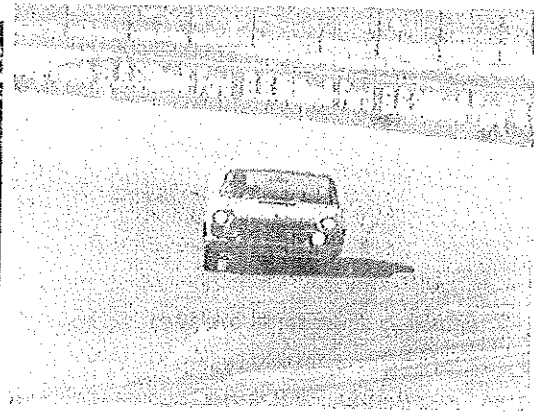
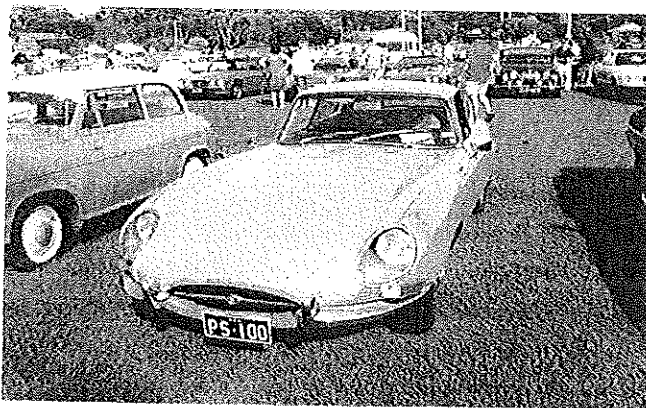
Part 2 of Herbert Simpfendorfer's Article on Austin 1800

Oz 50 Mini Festival, Details of Events

John Gawthorne's Family History with Morris Vehicles

Letter received from member, Peter Stokes, in June last year, referring to April/May 2010 Newsletter.

To add to the 1800 article in the last newsletter, this photo was taken at the MG Car Club National meeting in the mid seventies and is of myself competing in the lap dash at Adelaide International. Whilst I didn't win in the non marque class, the car and I were not disgraced. I had modified the car to 1800 'S' specification twin 1-3/4 SU's and free flow exhaust with a fast road camshaft. I drove back to Sydney overnight on my own in 16 hours stopping only for fuel and a flat tyre, with the generator giving up an unequal task at Crows Nest. About half way home I was seeing things like old ladies pushing shopping trolleys, but stop and rest, no chance!! It was the silliest thing I ever did. Anyway, at least the car proved itself to me and remains one of my favourite cars, alongside the T.C., the series one XJ6, and my current toy, a 1965 4.2 Litre E type Coupe LHD.



Also enclosed are photos of the recreation of one of the London-Sydney rally cars which competed in the Jaguar Drivers' Club Mountain Rally in the 80's or early 90's. This was driven by Stuart Ratcliff who is perhaps better known as MG Centre of Sydney, still looking after that marque. The Mini was owned by the late Brian Hollings, who was XJ Auto Spares. I have no idea who made this LWB conversion, but it sure looked impressive. Hooray for British Motor Corporation.

Peter Stokes.

Part 2 of Herbert Simpfendorfer's Article -

The Austin 1800 in 2010.

Keeping up with Repairs.

Some members of my LOCA club are innovative, and work out easy restoration techniques, and improvements to the basic 1800 design. This knowledge is then passed on to others in the club via the Landcrab magazine. In this way, I have fitted much cheaper oil filters, a relay for the high beam, reliable electronic ignition and Bosch alternators. We mix up our own brew of suspension fluid, and make our own evacuate and pump up machines for the suspension system for next to no cost. I add a fuel filter, and have a modified air cleaner setup. I have even rebuilt the vacuum advance mechanism. Some members fit up-market front seats, two speed wipers, better starter motors, electric fans on the cooling system and even air conditioners, but I have had no need to make any more changes than listed above. A little trick we have is to see if any Mark 2 vehicles or even Kimberley/Tasman vehicles have parts that are better than the Mark 1 parts. Not being a concourse person, I do not hesitate to use such parts. Sometimes it is easy to make up a part from scratch. In this category are metal brackets, as it is much easier to make a part that has broken than try to source it from somewhere. A good welder comes in handy often too.

Lots of Room

Because the 1800 has so much room inside, much extra gadgetry can be added. I have equipped one vehicle with every instrument known to the automobile industry, and there is still plenty of room for a GPS unit, a mobile phone, cuppa gear and personal effects. The door pockets are just so much better than the tiny pockets in modern vehicles. When I go for a drive around Australia, there is plenty of room for lots of spares, a full range of tools, camping gear, food and water for most of the trip, clothes, personal gear, and lots more. All this without using a roof rack or trailer. But I do fit the larger front suspension units (as fitted to the ute and Kimberley/Tasman vehicles) at the back to stop the tail going down.

Servicing

For servicing and troubleshooting, in my situation, I use many items, like Colortune, a compression tester, a timing light, feeler gauges, water pump leak test gear, gear cable leak test apparatus, test light, a multimeter, amongst other items less commonly used. Of course, a complete set of SAE tools, compressed air, painting gear, and other tools common to a good workshop are needed. To do a special task, I often make up a tool which is used only once per restoration. Gasket material of three types is also found on my shelves. And much more. In my 20 years of restoring activities, I have surely learned a lot, but still have the odd problem for which I come to a blank wall. That's when a lot of thinking has to be done, books are read, phone calls made to friends, and the problem is solved. But never yet have I had to have a mechanic do any work on any of my vehicles. To help others in the Landcrab club, I write many articles about these problems and their solution. Very important are workshop manuals and the Parts List book. At Swap Meets, these books come up for sale, and I think I now have at least one copy of every manual produced for the 1800. This includes three printed in England. All of these are used a lot.

My Vehicles

Two of my Mark 1 vehicles are original black, which is most unusual, according to Mark Hindhaugh. The only history I know of these is that they were abandoned. Mark told me that black 1800s were never on the colour chart. Some batches were made for special order, particularly for government use. I have used these two as wedding cars for family members. With plenty of chrome and sparkling red interior, they did the job nicely. Another of my vehicles is a utility, which was left abandoned in the river flats in S.A. I had

to do a lot of work on it, but since restoration I have driven it solo to Perth and back for last year's Austins Over Australia. There were a few problems, but quickly fixed in rest areas on the Nullarbor Plain.

Longevity

I hope I have shown the reader that my Austin 1800 vehicles will survive very nicely well into the present millennium. There is absolutely no reason known to me why they are cannot be considered to be at the prime of their lives. They could easily be daily drivers for another 40 years. The one big stumbling block would be government regulations which could take older vehicles off the road. In that case, the concessional registration vehicles could still be used. And if they are banned from the road, we can still have them in our sheds, to be driven on private land for our enjoyment. As is common with my fellow Austin 1800 restorer buffs, once vehicles are properly restored, like my black ones, they are rarely driven in the rain or on very hot days or in dusty conditions. They are always stored in a shed, and kept in immaculate condition. There is no reason why these vehicles cannot last a very long time. We can only do this because the 1800s had a very good start at the Zetland factory.

The Mark 1 Austin 1800 was advertised as the Car of the Century.

Which century?

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Footnotes 1. It is interesting that some items are sent from Australia to England. It is common knowledge that the 1800 ute was designed and built only in Australia. So, if an Austin 1800 fancier in England wants a head turner, he can import one of the 1934 utes built at Zetland. This has been done many times. I have also supplied a part from an early Mark 1 to a person building a rally 1800. He needed a rear torsion bar, and I had one, as fitted to early Mark 1s in Australia. In England, all vehicles with this feature are being used, or gone to the breaker, which is the word they use for a crusher.

2. The many articles I write for other magazines would be of little interest to my present readers, as they deal with three main topics. The most important are restoration techniques for the Austin 1800, which are not found in any extant literature. These articles are of importance only to the few who are restoration buffs. The second group of articles are reports of rallies that I go to, like the Austins Over Australia reunions held every second year. The third group of articles are about my solo long distance travels in my 1800s, where I describe what can be seen and done while travelling, and the breakdowns and my repair techniques in desolate areas.

BMC-LEYLAND AUSTRALIA ANNUAL REUNION AT

THE DONCASTER HOTEL

The attendance at this event held last December 3rd. was higher than it has been for some years with a larger number of people staying on for a meal in the Bistro. Awareness of the event was again enhanced by being able to get suitable notices in both the Sydney Morning Herald, and the Daily Telegraph. Again there were a number of people attending for the first time, being unaware that this event has been happening for the past 34 years! If you know of any ex-employees, could you please tell them about it? Apologies were received this year from Peter North, Keith Graham, Owen McDonald, Reg Fulford, and Graeme Laurie. This year's event will be on Friday night, 2nd. December, at the Doncaster Hotel, cnr. Anzac Parade and Doncaster Av. Kensington from 4.45 PM. Put it in your diary or mark it on your calendar NOW!

Roger Foy.

HERITAGE GROUP DVDs

Members will be pleased to know that the Heritage Group DVDs incorporating three of the Company's promotional films, "The Carmakers", "Horses to Horsepower", and "Austin Freeway Around Australia in 9½ Days" are still selling steadily. The latter two films are incorporated in the one DVD. Price is \$20 each plus postage \$3, from Roger Foy (02) 9449 1524.

Roger Foy.

AUSTINS OVER AUSTRALIA

CLASSIC CAR RALLY

This year's Austins Over Australia Car Rally will be held in the historic NSW town of Forbes in the Central West, over the Easter week end. Some 200 Austin Cars of all ages and from all over Australia are expected to attend. If you are in the area over the Easter weekend drop in for some nostalgic sights and sounds. A number of Heritage Group members participate in this Rally, and would be pleased to see you.

Roger Foy.

OZ50 MINI FESTIVAL

Elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter are the details of the various events which go to mark this historic occasion, the 50 Anniversary of the introduction to the Australian Market of the Morris 850, otherwise known as the Mini. The specific event most likely to interest Heritage Group Members will be the first event of the series, the Mini's Homecoming to Zetland at the old BMC Factory Site on Sunday 27 February 2011.

Starting at 10 am and finishing at 3 pm, there will be a static display of Minis, Mokes, and all possible variants. There will be:

- Walking Tours of the old Factory Site
- Food and Drinks available
- Picnic and toilet facilities nearby
- Trade Stands and Club Displays
- Special interest Minis on Display

The location is Gadigal Avenue, Zetland, and roughly the site is the western end of where the Press Shop was located. Pedestrian entry will be by Gold Coin Donation, with proceeds to the Foundation for Aged Care. Visitors should be aware that parking facilities in the area are limited.

The event is being organised jointly by the Mini Experience Magazine and the Mini Car Club of NSW.

Roger Foy.

2011 ANNUAL REUNION

Members are reminded that the 2011 Heritage Group Reunion will be held on the 25th. September 2011, once again at the Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club. Further details in later Newsletters. If you haven't marked your diary or calendar, do so NOW!

Roger Foy.

Morris 850 - A part of the family (See Picture Front Page)

In 1960, my father was walking on a pedestrian crossing in Victoria Rd, Drummoyne when he was knocked over by a car driven by a Mrs. Smith, resident of Victoria. The subsequent injuries were not serious, but resulted in an insurance payout of 336 pounds, 16 shillings and sixpence. Mrs. Smith probably did not realise that her indiscretion resulted in my father making the extremely wise decision to use the money towards the purchase of a brand new Morris 850.

CST353 began life assembled at Zetland from parts shipped from the UK and subsequently sold at Maurie Gilman's dealership in Pittwater Rd. Narrabeen. The original art-deco dealership building still stands and is now a furniture shop. In 1962, Maurie Gilman was a brave man to sell a new-fangled front wheel drive small car when most people were looking at EK Holdens, Ford Anglias or VW beetles. At the new dealership, a young mechanic named George Steele was the back room boy who had the unenviable job of keeping the new CST353 on the road and free from teething troubles. I have the feeling George became very familiar with all Maurie's customers because when I spoke to him on the phone in 1992 he instantly knew who I was even though he hadn't seen car or customer for over 20 years.

When CST353 was first driven, registration (including third party) was the princely sum of 20 pounds, 5 shillings and sixpence. Full comprehensive insurance totalled 21 pounds 4 and 3. My mother was the eventual daily driver of the car and by 1968, the insurance premium had risen to \$27.55. Registration totalled \$53.75. My mother had the curious habit of never filling the petrol tank up to full but would only go as far as half. Our petrol receipts show weekly visits to the local Ampol for \$1 worth of petrol.

Being a typical British car, CST353 required regular maintenance. My father kept to the factory schedule for 2 years before giving up on the inconvenience. Over the years, the car seemed to have an extraordinary number of brake re-lines, wheel cylinder and master cylinder replacements. Mother drove the car mercilessly until 1973 when came the day that CST353 would not start and the NRMA was duly called. Now, when one drives a car every day, things that require attention generally happen one at a time and one tends not to notice any deterioration. Alas, the kindly NRMA road service mechanic was viewing CST353 in its entirety for the first time. After much fiddling about, the trusty engine burst into life only to look and sound quite normal to those familiar with the car, but was cause for considerable alarm for Mr NRMA when he noticed that both oil and generator lights glowed brightly and continuously (the family had become quite accustomed to the display). A few weeks later we drove it down to George (now operating at North Manly) who, shaking his head, took the keys off us and phoned up later with a "quote" for \$799 (about double the value of the car at that stage) to put things right. Of course we couldn't let an old friend just expire without some effort, so as a result, CST353 was good for another couple of years before it was obvious that even George would balk at taking the engine out again.

At about this time, I was old enough to be ready to inflict myself upon the general populace by obtaining an official "L" learner's permit. When the day came to satisfy the relevant authorities that I was a fit and proper person to be granted a drivers licence, I fronted up to the RTA (or the DMT as it was then) in CST353. Even though this was some 35 years ago, I still remember the look on the examiner's face when we walked out of the registry office and I waved towards the Mini as the car we would be taking our road test in. The rather burly examiner tried in vain to maintain his personal space in the confines of the front seat, much like when people in a crowded lift tend to find something distant to look at. The cosy and intimate feeling was further enhanced by the heavy rain which resulted in misted up windows in the first few feet of travel along our designated route. Now, CST353, being a standard model, was not well equipped with the latest in demister systems. In fact, the system consisted of dummy demister openings along the top of the front parcel shelf in combination with sliding windows which could be adjusted so as to admit the desired quantity of moist air on to the windscreen. This system, together with the exhalations of the equally nervous driver and passenger, served to have no effect on the visibility offered out to the front of the vehicle. However, being experienced in these matters, I had equipped the parcel shelf with an assortment of high quality rags in easy reach and it was a simple matter to snatch one up and wipe both passenger and driver's sides of the windscreen in one swoop. Alas, upon returning to the registry, I was

told that I had failed the test in the first 30 seconds by not pulling over to the side and stopping before wiping the window. Indeed, for one reason or another, usually connected with some feature of the Mini, it took four attempts to convince the DMT that this particular driver and car combination was road-going concern.

With so many memories, it was an easy decision to save and restore the car after its retirement from active service and so starting in about 1984, work began. Many parts were restored/replaced and re-plated - the crowning achievement being the acquisition of a brand new "crocodile skin" front floor mat which finished off the pepper and salt interior. It is of interest to note that at this time, I was working at the Zetland plant in the ex-Leyland vehicle emissions laboratory and many of the restoration jobs were done using machinery and facilities ex-BMC and now operated by the Navy. While all this was going on, I was continually berated by friends who couldn't understand why I would take such an effort over an 850 when everyone knew that a Cooper S was the car to have. After a couple of years of toil, CST353 was reborn with a new coat of paint, reconditioned mechanicals, and everything just spick and span, just waiting for the number plates to be officially affixed and then driven.

A tense moment arose at the motor registry when time came to reunite CST353 plates with the vehicle. The RTA officer found the plates in their hold store, brought them to the counter and laid them down on her side of the partition. "I'm sorry", she said, "these plates cannot be released, they will have to be re-made." There they were - within an arm's reach - the original plates now some 30 years old, about to be taken away forever. "Hold on a minute" I said, "what's wrong with them". Of course I had become accustomed to the creases, dents, stone chips and peeled off portions and didn't think anything was amiss - but Ms RTA had other ideas. We discussed the matter "amicably" for some time where in the end we agreed that as a customer service officer, she was not technically qualified to assess the roadworthiness of the said number plates and the decision on that count would have to be made by an engineering inspector. Since there were no technically qualified persons at this particular branch, then the plates, if issued, would almost certainly fail a pink slip inspection at the next registration renewal. I promptly accepted the risk and grabbed them before she could change her mind. I can report that the plates to this day still rate acceptable.

The car, now 48 years old and regularly driven, was displayed at the 2010 BMC-L Heritage Group reunion function. This was my first attendance at such an event and from a customer's perspective, it was a great pleasure and privilege to talk to you, those who built the car. Even though I spent some time at the plant after everyone had left (as described in another article), the Zetland plant to me, from 1980 to 1985) was mostly an empty shell with a small group of us in the middle working in the emissions lab. Now, having read your newsletters and met some of you in person, I am able to fill out the empty shell with the personalities and culture that adds immensely to the significance of CST353 in our family.

Tony Cripps

BOOK UPDATE

Barry Anderson reports that our long awaited Book:

- is nearing completion -only two chapters and an overall review are needed to finish it; and
- We have a strong indication that the financial support we have applied for from the City of Sydney is likely to be successful. Their feedback is that it meets all the requirements for such support.

Our Book group, consisting of Ron Moss, Reg Fulford, Peter Davis, Chris Rogers, Greg Kean, Ross Bell, Roger Foy, and myself, has been working tirelessly for the last two years, and at last we can see light at the end of the tunnel.

A FAMILY OF MORRIS CAR DEVOTEES

This is the story of three generations of the Gawthorne family's enthusiasm for cars bearing the Morris marque. John is a long-time member of the Heritage Group, and has attended most of our Reunion Lunches. John takes up the story...

"Briefly, our "MORRIS car" family history began in 1951 when I was 6 years old and was given and still possess my first toy cars, being a key-operated MORRIS OXFORD by TRIANG MINIC and a very rare battery operated medium scale model of a 1951 MORRIS MINOR by VICTORY INDUSTRIES (SURRY) LTD of Guildford, England.

My late dad's first car (purchased in 1956) was a 1935 MORRIS OXFORD TWENTY sedan. The replacement car was a new 1961 MORRIS OXFORD V turquoise/white sedan which had been on BMC's display stand at Sydney's motor show. Confirmation was then provided by my cousin John Evans, a former BMC employee.

My first car was a new 1963 MORRIS MAJOR ELITE which I still drive and treasure. My elder son Robert's first car is also 1963 ELITE and he has since purchased two Farina MORRIS OXFORDS, one being a TRAVELLER wagon. He has also purchased several ELITE scale models in their various duotone colour schemes. My youngest son Colin, now has two 1961 duotone MORRIS MAJOR SERIES II sedans.

Many thanks to the Heritage Group for organising the social functions and the collation of the BMC-LEYLAND AUSTRALIA'S Automotive Manufacturing History."

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