

WESTWORDS

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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB
OF WA

Leyland P76

LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA (WA Division) Inc.

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General Meetings are held on the last Wednesday evening of every month at 7.30 PM (unless otherwise notified). The Meetings are held at Unit 4 - 9 Yampi Way, Willetton.

The AGM is held in July. For dates of club meetings and events, refer to the Coming Events section of this newsletter.

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Front Page Photo.*Photo: James*

Grill and P76 Logo from, Am I Blue, Leyland owned by James Mentiplay



Welcome to Big Al's Poker Run.

Saturday 14 February 2009

Charles Paterson Park
BURSWOOD

Show 'n' Shine 10:00am - 4:00pm

29th Poker Run 4:00pm - 6:00pm

BBQ & Dance at destination 6:00pm - midnight

First held in 1981, Big Al's Poker Run has become one of Perth's most well known hot rod events.

In the past 28 years, the Poker Run has grown from an initial entrant number of 52 in 1981 to a record 850 for its 21st celebration run in 2001. It now as an event that commands six months worth of organising, involves numerous government departments and attracts a growing list of sponsors.

Due to the steady growth of the event, the demand on resources and the restricted space available at venues, entry to the event is restricted to hot rods, custom classics and cars manufactured in Australia prior to January 1st, 1978. This cut-off date applies also to Japanese and European cars. Cars of US manufacture are not restricted.

Always intended as an event for hot rods and cars of American origin, the Pre-'78 cut-off recognises the classic Aussie muscle cars and cruisers that have always been part of the Poker Run.

Holdens up to WB, Toranas up to LX and Geminis up to TD will ensure that those of you that love your Monaros, SLR/5000s and hot four Holdens aren't disappointed.

For the Blue Oval fans, Falcons up to XC, Fairlanes and LTDs up to ZH and Cortinas up to TE will still be able to enjoy Perth's biggest cruise, while Mopar fans will be happy to know that the last of the Aussie-built Valiants — the CM — are also welcome.

Invitation Class 2009: Lowrida Mini Trucks

Celebration Class 2009: 75th Anniversary '34 Ford

11412

COMING EVENTS

Saturday February 14th 2009

Big Al's Poker Run

Please contact James Mentiplay on 9457 7077 during business hours for assembly point and time.

**General Meeting
Wednesday 25th February 2009
7.30 pm
At Writegear**

2009

Coming Events

Saturday 14th February- Big Al's Poker Run. Burswood Park, Show and Shine 10am to 4pm. Poker run 4pm to 6pm. BBQ and Band at the end of the run til late. Entry fee applies. Great fun day

Wednesday 25th February 2009— General Meeting at Writegear 7.30pm

Sunday 15th March 2009— Classic Car Show at Whiteman Park, (Interest only club not attending as a group)

Wednesday 25th March 2009— General Meeting at Writegear 7.30pm

Sunday 12th April 2009— All Aussie Day Waroona
As it stands at the moment All Aussie Day falls on the Easter long Weekend!

Wednesday 29th April 2009— General Meeting at Writegear 7.30pm

Snippets.

SNIPPETS

Brett recently sourced a variety of parts for the P76 from Clark rubber such as boot seals, bonnet bumper stops, door seals bailey channels, bushes, clips and fasteners etc. He has a complete list of parts and prices which I will run in a later edition but if anyone is interested please contact Brett on 0447788018 and he can give you the part numbers

P76 Books

The P76 book that I had been advertising in the magazine a few months back are now available.

If you would like to purchase one please contact James by phone or email

They are \$85.00 each.

TRAX Models

Trax has recently released the latest P76 model, it is a 1974 Leyland P76 Targa Florio in Aspen Green

The models are 1:43 scale and are \$39.95.

They only make a set amount so be quick before they are all snapped up.

They can be ordered Through the following website
www.topgear.com.au

P76



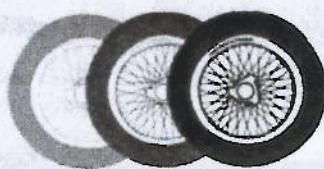
James has been in contact with EmbroidMe and we can now get our club logo put onto shirts, jackets and other clothing. The store has a range of clothing so you can pick something from their range or supply your own shirt and they will put the logo on it for you for \$7.00.

EmbroidMe
Unit 3, 71 Mc Coy Street
Myaree
Ph: 9317 1333



Club Plates

Phone James on 9457 7077
(work) or 9394 0152 (home)
for more details.



**COUNCIL OF
MOTORING
CLUBS** OF W.A. (INC)

ABN 58352277045

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

As at October 21 2008

2008 2008 2008 2008

- November** 2 Fabcar 1-Day Touring Road Rally - AEM (www.classicrally.com.au)
9 Brockwell Memorial Run - to Whiteman Park
23 Fiat Lancia Car Day - GO Edwards Park, Burswood (www.fiatlancia.org.au)
23 GM Owners Day - Steel Blue Oval, Bassendean
30 Vintage Stampede - Barbagallo Raceway (VSCC - www.vscwa.com.au)
- December** 15 Council of Motoring Clubs General Meeting

2009

- February** 7 British Auto Classic & Gourmet Wine & Food Fest - Donnybrook Amphitheatre
15 All Italian Charity Superkhana (www.classicrally.com.au)
15 Northam Vintage Swap Meet - Northam showgrounds (AVVA)
16 Council of Motoring Clubs General Meeting
22 All Italian Car, Bike & Scooter Day - Technology Park, Bentley
- March** 15 Classic Car Show - Whiteman Park
- April** 9-13 Austins Over Australia national rally
20 Council of Motoring Clubs General Meeting
TBA Classic Challenge Touring Road Rally - AEM (www.classicrally.com.au)
TBA Northam Flying 50 round the hoses - Northam (VSCC - www.vscwa.com.au)
- May** 17 National Motoring Heritage Day
17 British Car Day - Gingin
31 Albany Classic round the houses event - Albany (VSCC - www.vscwa.com.au)
- June** 15 Council of Motoring Clubs General Meeting
- July** 3 CMC Quiz Night (Mercedes-Benz Car Club of WA)
26 German Car Day - Northam (Mercedes-Benz Car Club of WA)

General enquiries to Council of Motoring Clubs of W.A. (Inc) Secretary, Peter Taylor on 9343 4605 pcwh@bigpond.com
Visit the Council of Motoring Clubs website - www.councilofmotoringclubs.asn.au
A comprehensive calendar of motoring events can be found at website: www.classicrally.com.au

NOTES:

1. This page may be published in your club magazine.
2. Details are subject to change without notice and no responsibility is accepted by the Council of Motoring Clubs of WA (Inc), its member clubs or its servants for incorrect information.
3. Updates and additional information should be directed to Paul Blank on 9271 0101 or paulb@classicrally.com.au
4. CMC Website enquiries to the Webmaster via www.councilofmotoringclubs.asn.au

Council of Motoring Clubs of W.A. (Inc) PO Box 742, Subiaco, Western Australia, 6904

**LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA (WA Division Inc.)
MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 2008**

OPENED: 7:40pm.

Apologies: Bill Brain, John Metcalf, Mick Le Cocq, Matt Renn

Minutes for November: Moved as being correct by James Mentiplay, seconded by Dennis Woodward.

Correspondence In: P76 clubs of SA, NSW, NZ, Classic P76 Club, Lumley Special Vehicles Insurance, Mini Owners' Club, Membership renewal.

Correspondence out: Nil..

Treasurer's Report: announced at general meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Committee Meeting will be set for either 13th or 20th January.

New P76 Book is now available to the club. Thanks James :D

A brief discussion on water pumps as well as front and rear lights was raised.

Gary and James briefly discussed some of the topics raised at the CCC meeting held in Monday.

CLOSED: 20:10

FROM THE EDITOR

Hi everyone. I thought it was about time I put pen to paper to thank those members who have provided me with material for the magazine. As most of you will know I am not really a car buff and when I took on the role I was a bit worried that I wouldn't be able to write a decent magazine, if I was left to my own devices. But each month I receive good articles, photos and trip reports from you guys and it has made my job a lot easier! So to all of those who have contributed, THANK YOU.

I would like to say that I have a file of articles that I haven't put to print yet and to those people who's stuff I haven't printed yet I do apologise, I will endeavour to put some in when I can.

To those of you who would like to put something into the magazine please do. It is after all the club magazine. For those of you who live out of the metro area I would love to put some member profiles into the magazine with some photos of your country cars and a little bit about them, where you bought them, how long you have had them and any interesting stories about what you may have done to them. I am sure the metro members would love to read about it, and some photos would be great! I need some different little articles for snippets too.

Hopefully the magazine will be as well supported this year as last year and I look forward to hearing from you. Also if any of you have suggestions for anything you would like to see in the magazine let me know too. I am quite open to suggestions on how to make the magazine better in any way. And to all the other ladies out there, don't be shy, if you would like something printed let me know. I am sure you ladies have a few stories to tell about your experiences with the P76.(I know I do but I won't go there right now!!!!) I can't be the only one who has a husband who disappears for hours on end into the shed to "work" on his Leyland. I look forward to hearing from you.

Lianne Shea
sheabl@optusnet.com.au

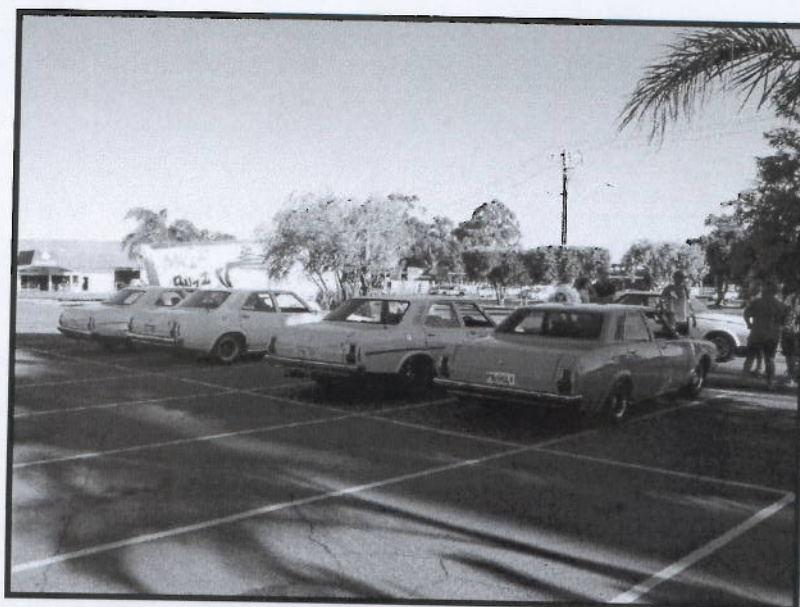
BURGER RUN

Well we all met up at Hamburger Hill at 6pm Jan the 10th to find the place full of Triumphs! Turned out they were meeting there for an event too. James, George and Gary were already there in their P76's, and John in Mavis' car when I turned up, with Andy not far behind. We left Hamburger Hill at about 6:30 and headed to Muzz Buzz in the Centre Point Midland car park but they were closed. From there we did a few lefts and rights, onto great northern highway, another left onto west swan road and some more lefts and rights and we were at Alfred's Kitchen in Guildford. The car park was tight and busy, so I opted for the sand as I wouldn't have got into the tight bays with a locked diff, while others chose to park on the foot path.

There were plenty of people already there, but it didn't take too long to get the orders through. I managed to jump the queue, as I ordered last and got my steak burger first, which made me very popular! There were many praises about the food, and once everyone had finished we went our separate ways, with some going over to the pub across the street.

We all enjoyed ourselves and the food was excellent, as always. We raised a few comments and onlookers on the road, with all positive comments. Definitely looking forward to next years run,

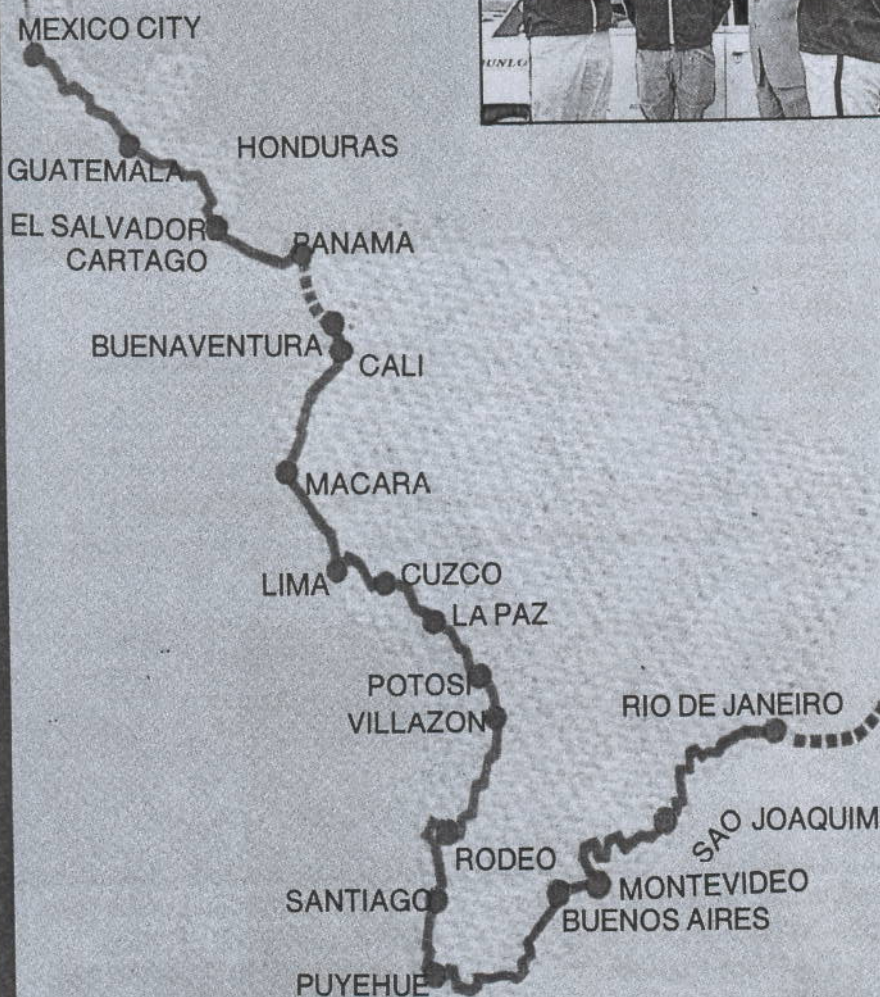
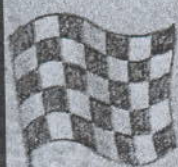
Adam



1970 World Cup Rally TRIUMPH OR DISASTER?

It was the longest motoring event in history and probably the toughest. It almost cost author Evan Green and Gelignite Jack Murray their lives and yet they still loved the jinxed Triumph 2.5 PI which took them over two cliffs, lost a wheel, hit trees and poisoned them, before finally blowing its engine on a lonely plain in South America.

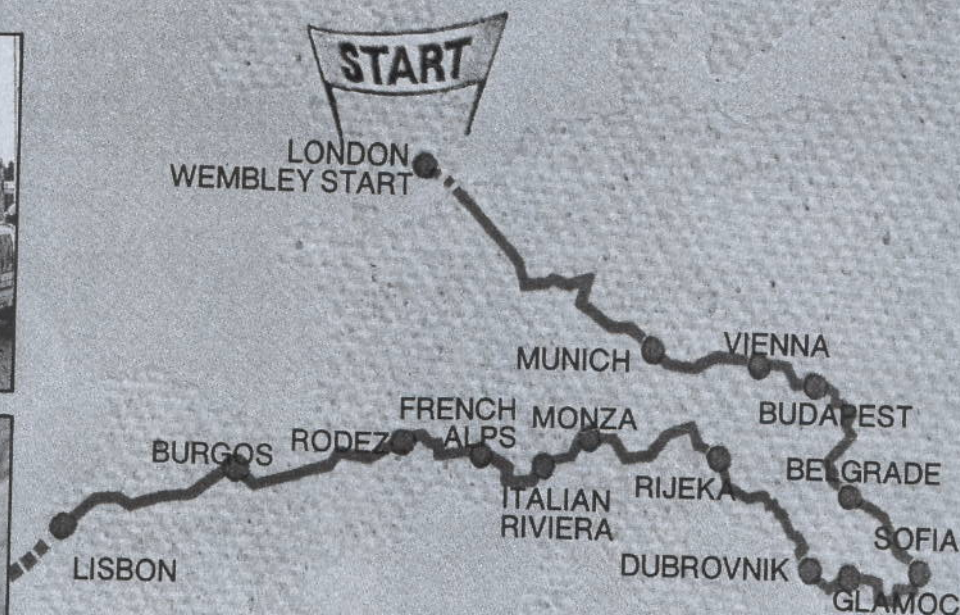
Part One: London to Bulgaria.



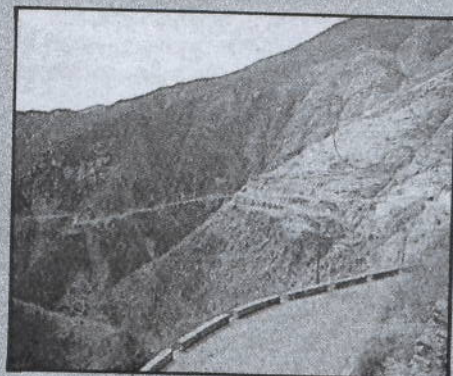
SOMETIMES, A car seems cursed from the moment the last bolt in its body is tightened. No matter what you do, it never seems to run properly. The engine misfires, bits fall off, things don't work as they should, and you have accidents.

And yet, very rarely, such a car can have a heart of gold — something you can sense, beating deep within all those accursed pieces of metal — and you grow to love it. Such a car was the Triumph 2.5 PI I drove in the World Cup Rally of 1970.

In many ways it was an awful car. The engine had a chronic stutter from the start. The brakes failed, struts blew their seals, the back end developed an arthritic stoop, a wheel fell off and the motor consumed a piston. It drank oil and sprayed petrol down its flanks. It took its crew over two cliffs and tried to poison us



Our team before the start (far left) from left, Evan Green, Hamish Cardno, Leyland boss Lord Stokes and Jack Murray. Refuelling the Triumph on the Austrian border (above left). European conditions varied from Autobahns to twisty mountain passes.



with its exhaust gases. It hit a pair of trees and was rammed smack in the side.

It did dreadful things, and endured calamitous happenings, but it kept going. Like a boxer who has taken a fearful hammering and hasn't got the sense to stay on the canvas, it would absorb each fresh disaster, shake its scarred panels, and keep on running.

Eventually, inevitably, it fell apart. It blew its engine and, literally, died on the arid plains of Patagonia, near the southern tip of South America. That was not a convenient place for the two Australians and one Scot on board, but the miracle was that the Triumph had travelled so far.

It should have been a perfect car, for it was hand-built by master craftsmen. XJB 303H was a 'works' rally car. It began life as a bare body shell on the floor of British Leyland's competitions department in the MG plant at Abingdon-on-Thames,

Berkshire, and over a period of three months was assembled, piece by piece, into a machine designed to win the longest rally the world had seen.

The World Cup Rally of 1970 ran from London to Mexico City. The course covered nearly 26,000 km. Of that distance, 7300 km was in Europe and more than 18,600 km in South and Central America. The event started in April, finished in May, involved competitors in three sea crossings and took them over possibly the roughest and certainly the highest roads in the world. It was rapid, exhausting and dangerous — much more so than the London-Sydney Marathon of 1968, which was its inspiration. And it became a battle between three factories: Citroen, Ford and British Leyland.

Citroen built DS21 rally models for such drivers as Rene Trautmann, Robert

Neyret and Guy Verrier.

Ford developed a special version of the Escort for a group of drivers, including the Finns Rauno Aaltonen, Timo Makinen and Hannu Mikkola and British stars Roger Clark and Tony Fall.

Leyland entered four Triumph 2.5 PIs — plus a single Mini Cooper. The little car was a hare — a car to set a merry pace that might tempt the Fords into reckless pursuit on the early European stages. It was not intended to survive those fast and early kilometres.

The Triumphs were built to reach Mexico City. Three of them were driven by a trio of Britain's top rally drivers.

The first was Paddy Hopkirk. Winner of the Monte Carlo Rally in 1964 (and therefore the man who gave the Mini its first great international victory) and second in the London-Sydney Marathon, he was at that time Britain's best known



Leyland played the same game: it offered the spare seat in our car to Steve McQueen



rally personality.

The second was Andrew Cowan, the Scottish farmer who had won the Marathon for Chrysler in a Hillman Hunter but was now driving for Leyland.

The third was Brian Culcheth. A dedicated Leyland man, Culcheth had spent several years with the team as a second-string driver. He was a co-driver on the Marathon, but the defection of former Leyland stars Aaltonen, Makinen and Fall to Ford had given him the opportunity to become a recognised number one driver.

Seizing his chance, Culcheth had volunteered to do most of the hard work in developing cars and tactics for the long event. Hopkirk and Cowan had practised over part of the course in the months before the event, but Culcheth had driven the 26,000 km from London to Mexico twice before the rally started. The first time was to examine road conditions, analyse hazards, find out where fuel and service were available and help determine what chance a Triumph would have of winning. The second journey was to practise the course, marking the most difficult sections and making notes for the rest of the team.

Hopkirk the Irishman was the most famous team member, Cowan the Scot the one with Marathon winning form, and Culcheth the amiable Briton the most confident — for only he truly understood what was in store.

Alone among the British drivers in our team, Brian Culcheth elected to travel with a two-man crew. The others took three. Culcheth felt he knew the way sufficiently well to dispense with the need for a separate navigator. Besides, he wanted to travel as lightly as possible.

I shared his feelings about weight. In rallying, light is beautiful. If you can save weight, you enhance acceleration, improve braking and preserve the suspension. You've also got more room. Three in a rally car is a crowd. With two in a cabin, you lay back one seat and still have room for spare wheels, tools, food and water — heavy items that can unbalance a car if crammed in the boot.

With three, you are bumping heads, or sleeping sprawled across the tools and food and clothing. And yet, if the going is long and tough, three is better insurance. Two tired men are more likely to collapse from exhaustion than three who have been sharing the work and getting more rest. Leyland's competitions manager Peter Browning decreed that the rest of us would travel three-up.

Gelignite Jack Murray and I had been together in the London-Sydney Marathon. We had driven one of the factory's Austin 1800s and might have won the event but for losing a wheel in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia. On the strength of that run, we were invited to join the works team again for the World Cup Rally. As third man, I would have liked to have had George Shephard, our navigator in the Marathon, but Browning ruled that two Australians were enough.

For this rally, both Ford and Leyland had one eye cocked towards victory and the other towards gaining maximum publicity. After all, with the right characters on board, you can still get a lot of column inches in the papers even if you don't get the chequered flag...

Ford entered its Escorts in the names of various newspapers and magazines. It scored a coup, in soccer-mad Britain, by putting a top footballer, Jimmy Greaves, in with Tony Fall. That shows you the weird thinking that some factories engage in... and how little they understand of the rigours of rallying. After all, no football team would have considered playing Tony Fall for a vital game, but Tony was given a footballer — for an event that was known to be fast and hazardous. Leyland played the same game, and tried to outgun Ford by snaring an even bigger celebrity. It offered the spare seat in our car to Steve McQueen. He was keen to go. As the films *On Any Sunday* and *Le Mans* demonstrated, the American actor was enthusiastic about motor sport, and knew a thing or two about high speed driving and travelling on rough roads.

But McQueen had signed to make another film and while he wanted to compete in the rally, the studio heads said "No". The risks he took in making *Le Mans* terrified them. The thought of letting one of Hollywood's hottest properties go haring around the world with two Australians (one of whom had earned the nickname Gelignite Jack) was too much for them. So I never drove with Steve McQueen. And he had to make do with the chase sequence in *Bullitt*.

Instead of an American actor, we got a Scottish journalist. Hamish Cardno was a slimly built young man with long, fair hair. He wrote for *Motor* magazine.

We first met him at Abingdon, where the car was being built. The men there must have been feeding him strange tales about Jack and myself because, as he walked towards us for our first meeting, his face had the wretched look of a man

being led to the gallows. Jack didn't help. As Hamish offered his hand in greeting, Jack wrapped him in a bear hug, and lifted him bodily from the floor.

"Well," said Jack, as Hamish bobbed in his arms high above the concrete, "Thank Christ you're light."

THE MAN who thought of conducting a car rally from England to Mexico was Wylton Dickson. His job at that time was to handle the PR for the English Football Association's defence of the World Cup — soccer's most important competition. The World Cup finals are held every four years, and attract interest on a scale that is rivalled only by the Olympic Games. England had won the cup at Wembley Stadium in 1966. The 1970 finals were to be held in Mexico City.

Dickson's job was to devise ways to focus world attention on England's defence of its title as top footballing nation. One of his ideas was to run a rally from London's Wembley Stadium to Mexico City's Aztec Stadium, where 15 of the world's best soccer-playing countries would by trying to wrench the cup from the Poms.

The rally, he reasoned, should travel through as many of the countries playing in Mexico as possible. That meant a route that wound through Europe and South America, the two continents dominating the finals. Cars should reach the Aztec Stadium less than a week before the first matches kicked off, so that one contest would blend with the next.

Above all else, the rally had to be a major event in itself; the most spectacular, most challenging rally ever held. People liked the idea.

And so, knowing nothing about motor sport, Wylton Dickson found a sponsor and gathered a team to organise the world's longest car rally. The route was staggering. From England, cars would cross the channel to travel through France, West Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, was to be the turning point, where the route curled westwards, out of Bulgaria and through Yugoslavia to Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.

At Lisbon, cars would be shipped to Rio de Janeiro. Then the route wound south through Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina; west across the pampas and over the Andes to Chile; then north, along the spine of the mountain range and into the north-western tip of Argentina, before rising to the great plateau of Bolivia and

“Average speeds on the difficult stages were so high that any mishap promised to be memorable”

surmounting lofty passes as the route traversed Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Another ship would take the surviving cars to the Panama Canal, before the rally resumed for its final spurt through Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.

The event was to last five weeks and cover nearly 26,000 km. The schedule called for 19 days of driving, which meant an average of 1368 km had to be covered on each of those days, over roads which ran around sea shores or soared over the world's highest mountain passes.

Surfaces would vary from rough cobblestone to swampy tracks. Stages would be so long that crews would be ground into exhaustion. Average speeds were so high — as much as 156 km/h for one of the South American “primes”, as the most difficult stages were called — that any mishap promised to be memorable. In motor sport, it seems that the greater the challenge, the weirder the mix of people who want to take part. So it was with this event.

There were 106 entries. Drivers ranged from professionals who would drive over a cliff if the instructions called for it (and who would try to get to the bottom faster than anyone else) to new chums whose naivete bordered on the bizarre.

Almost a third of the entry fell into the latter category, and their choice of vehicles spanned the spectrum of motoring sophistication. At one end was a beach buggy, whose crew must have had a strange idea of motoring conditions in South America. At the other end was a pair of Rolls-Royces whose owners evidently believed all the myths and legends about The Best Car In The World and assumed there could be no finer, more comfortable, nor more certain way of travelling to Mexico.

Happily for the crew of the beach buggy, that overloaded and over-ventilated vehicle expired in Europe, which saved the occupants from being deep-frozen among the lofty peaks of the Andes. The two Rolls lasted longer, but only just. They retired in Brazil, after being plagued by troubles in Europe. The other Rolls, being driven by a more experienced crew, was pushed harder to keep up with the common cars and developed a vulgar appetite for wheel hubs and rear sub-frames.

British drivers dominated the entry list, which was to be expected. So was the fact that there were many entries from Europe, with the French being

particularly numerous. But, in addition to the traditional rallying nations, there were Russians, Poles, Yugoslavs, Americans, Australians, Argentinians, Bolivians, Peruvians, Mexicans, and even drivers from Thailand, Antigua and Kuwait.

Five Australians entered. The other three were Ken Tubman, Andre Welinski and Rob McAuley, who were in an Austin 1800 which had been shipped from Sydney. Theirs was a private entry, although they had backing from the Sydney *Sun*, and the 1800 was an ex-Marathon works car, which Leyland in Australia had loaned Tubman. The car was one of three left in Sydney after the Marathon, and had been refettled at the company's Victoria Park plant for its second long journey.

Leyland Australia, in fact, lent Tubman two ex-Marathon 1800s. The second car had been used to survey the course through South America and had been left in Lima, Peru, awaiting shipment.

There was no wiser or more experienced rally man in the field than Ken Tubman. A Maitland (NSW) chemist, Tubman had won the first around Australia rally in 1953 and was one of the gentlemen of the sport. He was also rare in that he rallied purely for the love of it. Prizemoney, or even sponsorship, meant little to him. He rallied because that's what he liked doing, and the longer and tougher the event, the more he enjoyed it.

Tubman, Welinski, and McAuley were not the only private entrants to practise in South America. The French Citroen drivers did so, too...

In all these big rallies, the two nationalities which seem to have the gift to grate are the French and the Russians. The Russians tend to keep to themselves. They seem surly. Only when the rally passes into Communist countries do they change. Then some of them become pompous and aggressive and do trivial but annoying things like not bothering to stop for the long border checks which slow all the other contestants.

The French also keep to themselves. Why, I don't know, because they are charming people when you can persuade them to talk. Less pleasant is the habit some of them practise of trying to bend the rules. The Citroen team did it for this rally. The DS21s were full works cars. They were built in the Citroen competitions department and the factory, backed up by its distributors, provided a wide service coverage.

But the cars were “sold” to the drivers and the drivers entered them privately. It

was an old ploy. The factory denies any involvement. If the cars fail, don't blame us. Just cars entered by private owners, in it for the adventure. Mind you, mon ami, if they win...

This sleight of hand with the entry forms meant the French professionals, who were quite capable of winning outright, qualified for extra prizemoney intended to encourage the novices and battlers in the rally. The move brought growls of protest from genuine private entrants and from the organisers. The fact that one crew would be temporarily leaving the rally at Lisbon (during the lull while cars were shipped across the Atlantic) to compete in a full factory Citroen attack on the Moroccan Rally only added starch to the raised eyebrows. There was nothing that could be done. The drivers produced receipts, showing they had bought the cars...

WE DREW No 92, only 14 cars from the tail of the field. That could be a disadvantage because of the unusual rule covering the late time limit at controls. In most rallies, all cars have the same allowance for lateness. But in this event, controls were to stay open for a set time and that time was determined from the moment the first car arrived.

As an example, a control might stay open for three hours. The first car could be two hours, 59 minutes late and still stay in the event. But if you were travelling at the back of the field and, say, two hours behind the leader, you had only one hour of allowable time. When a control closed, that was it: you were out of the rally.

We looked at the long stages, the super-fast schedules and the variable but uneven late time limit and knew No 92 was in for a hard time. We prayed it would be a good car, but must have got the words wrong.

Our Triumph was one of the new Michelotti Mark II versions, with a longer and more elegant nose. The car was white, with the nose panel painted matt black to reduce glare. It had eight forward facing lights, including two mounted low on either side of the windscreen. There was no bumper bar; you were not supposed to hit anything.

Above the windscreen was a scoop to channel fresh, dust-free air into the cabin. A spare wheel was mounted on the roof. Another spare was in the boot, under a bulge in the aluminium lid. The bulge was necessary for the wheel to share cramped quarters with long-range fuel tanks, boxes of spare parts, an axe, shovel and the other knick-knacks of marathon rallying.



Our car, destined to run to the New World, was dragged around on the end of a tow rope



The cabin had accommodation for three. The driver and navigator sat in conventional reclining seats. They weren't the tight-at-the-hips fibreglass buckets that normally go into rally cars because such things would have been chafing, numbing instruments of torture after a couple of days of non-stop motoring. These were ordinary seats, that let you wriggle your backside and pull a handkerchief out of your pocket. For similar reasons of comfort, three-point seat belts were used, rather than four- or six-point devices.

The third person sat in the back in a non-reclining seat. He was supposed to rest by lying sideways across layers of sponge rubber that had been shaped to cover a series of floor mounted boxes. These boxes, made from aluminium and beautifully fashioned to fit into the folds of the floor, filled the lower left of the rear compartment. They contained such things as food, water, eating utensils, cameras, sleeping bags and documents. The inner panel of the left-hand rear door was converted into a tool rack. The window winder and door handle were removed.

Jack and I spent two weeks helping to finish the car. The men at Abingdon were magnificent; not only skilled and vastly experienced but dedicated to their work and prepared to do whatever you asked. They seemed surprised and pleased that a couple of drivers were taking such a practical interest in the preparation.

To our dismay, we learned that our Triumph was behind schedule in its preparation. The system at Abingdon was that one man was in charge of one car and the poor fellow responsible for No 92 had been in hospital. Other men had helped when they had time. Most things seemed to have been done — except the engine. It was supposed to be balanced, checked for cracks or flaws in the metal, and then assembled with meticulous care. But because our car was lagging in so many jobs the engine, a 2.5 litre fuel injected six, had come straight out of the crate.

"I wouldn't worry," said one of the mechanics, looking worried. "They tell us these Triumph engines give no trouble. Anyhow, a standard engine should be able to run for five weeks, surely."

And he, who had seen hand-built engines blow up in less than a day under rally conditions, went away looking miserable and muttering about fuel injection and why couldn't they just fit a couple of Webers or SUs, which they understood and trusted.

There was much unhappiness about

using Triumphs, for these were BMC men who had built the Austin-Healeys and Minis that had made BMC the world's most successful rally team in the 1960s. The whole of the Abingdon plant remained in a state of shock from the recent Leyland take-over and the men in the competitions department still regarded the Leyland cars — Triumph and Rover — as rival models. The atmosphere at the plant was dreadful, being laden with uncertainty and spite.

The uncertainty hovered around the BMC men, who were feeling the lash of a new master. The experience was all the more uncomfortable because they had regarded Leyland with a sort of benign contempt, as befitting a smaller and almost inconsequential manufacturer. They were like the supporters of Goliath, stunned by David's victory.

Certain of the victors, however, lacked David's greatness. The new managers at Abingdon were Triumph men, who had spent years regarding MG as a deadly rival. The take-over demanded diplomacy and foresight, for here was an opportunity to build a new and flourishing enterprise. Instead, the newcomers acted like vandals, out to wreak vengeance. They mightn't have won in the market, but they had these MG bastards now...

All MG development work was stopped in favour of Triumph projects, despite the fact that MG at the time was the world's best selling sports car. Thus, by crippling themselves, did they sow the seeds for the success of the Japanese in this market.

It was made known that the future of the competitions department — the best in the world — was uncertain. The word was out that the only cars to be rallied or raced were Leyland models and, if they weren't suitable, then competitions would cease. The conglomeration of traditions which had gone into BMC were ignored, or sneered at. Even the cars in the MG museum — the first MG, and historic vehicles like Colonel Goldie Gardener's world record breakers — were pushed out and left to rot on the grass.

WHEN THE time came to start our car, it disgraced itself by refusing to fire. XJB 303H, destined to run from London to the New World, was dragged around the plant on the end of a tow rope, jerking at the rear wheels and emitting an occasional cough but resolutely refusing to run under its own power. Fuel injection, they said.

The man from Lucas came and worked for half a day on the car. It still wouldn't fire on the starter but at least — and, at

last — the engine burst into life when it was towed once more around the plant. The Lucas man showed us how to diagnose a blocked injector and said he was surprised because the engines rarely gave trouble. What it needed was a good hard run.

That night, we took the car out on to public roads for the first time. Snow was spiralling into the windscreen when we came back to the plant around three in the morning... and the engine had developed a misfire. We reported it, but didn't drive the car again until the rally.

PETER BROWNING had made special arrangements to cover team needs for such things as clothing and cash. Each man had been given one hundred pounds, plus a list of clothes, and sent to Marks and Spencer's to buy cheap slacks, shirts, socks and underwear. We were to bundle the clothing into packs, which would be sent by air to various cities along the route. When we reached, say, Sofia or Buenos Aires we would put on the fresh outfit and throw the dirty clothes away.

It was a good plan, but it didn't take account of human nature. Many Brits wouldn't be seen dead in M&S clothes, so they wore other gear, and we couldn't bear to throw all that good stuff away, so we kept it, and wore overalls most of the time.

To meet expenses on the journey, each man was also given one thousand pounds in travellers' cheques. None of us wanted to waste time at borders cashing cheques.

Paddy Hopkirk's co-driver, Tony Nash, was in the money business, and offered to help. He worked out how much cash each crew would need in each country and found a bank willing and able to supply the correct notes. So we all went to the bank, signed travellers' cheques, received bundles of money, packaged in individual plastic bags, one bag per country. We had tens of this and millions of that and the amounts, often marked on colourful and impressive notes, meant nothing.

The night before the rally started, the team moved into a hotel on the outskirts of London. Peter Browning wanted us together, and as far as possible from the temptations of the city. The mechanics were with the cars, and would bring them to Wembley. We had a final briefing. Pace note crews would precede us through the European primes, to give us last-minute details of road conditions. Tactics were discussed. Brian Culcheth, being in the lightest car, was to go fast all the way. We

(Continued on page 105)

“Gelignite Jack lessened the sense of formality by putting a bungler in Lord Stokes’ pocket”

(Continued from page 101)

were to hold back a little, to keep the car in good shape for South America. Jack Murray nodded his agreement. “It’s a long way,” he said, stretching the word long while his eyes roamed the map of South America.

The meeting was interrupted by a telephone call. It was the man from the bank. Were we all there and had we, by any chance, still got our Argentinian currency? He sounded anxious. There’d been a mistake and could he come around tonight and correct it?

He was there in half an hour, and brought an armed guard. Argentina had revalued its currency, but the bank’s computer had been reset with the decimal point in the wrong place, he explained with some embarrassment. We looked at our wad of colourful Argentinian notes with new interest. There did seem to be a lot of it. Instead of the bank giving us one hundred pounds worth of pesos per plastic bag, we each had the equivalent of ten thousand pounds. He tried to smile.

The night was cold, but the man from the bank was perspiring as he left with 11 plastic bags whose contents were worth one hundred and 10 thousand pounds, a quarter of a million dollars.

FORD HAD thought of running twin cam Escorts but, being worried about reliability over such a long distance, had decided to use pushrod motors, bored out to 1.8 litres. They were converted to dry sump lubrication, with an oil tank in the boot. The tank was so large that it was to prove a hazard at refuelling point, as garagemen were constantly trying to fill it with petrol.

One unusual feature of the Escorts was a roll cage which had two tubes projecting from the windscreen pillars to the top of the mudguards. Ford drivers had been to South America surveying the route and the story being circulated was that these bars were to carry a shield to deflect condors and other large birds found in the Andes. They became known as “buzzard bars” and were the in thing, just as ‘roo guards had been the height of automotive fashion for the Marathon.

The first Escort I saw at the Wembley stadium start was Timo Makinen’s car. I knew Timo well.

“Is that really what the bars are for?” I asked him. “Birds?”

The big Finn is devastatingly honest. He laughed. “No, no,” he said, in his sing-song English. “They stop body breaking in half. Right here.” He touched a point

below the windscreen, and made a noise like a carrot being snapped in two.

Timo, who had elected not to run in the Marathon because he didn’t like long events, wasn’t confident of doing well.

“The cars aren’t finished,” he said. He and a few of his friends had booked holidays in the Caribbean, just in case. The factory was still trying to develop a stronger rear axle, and hoped to have it tested and ready for South America. Roger Clark was scheduled to fly back from Portugal and do the final testing, while the rally cars were being shipped to Brazil. The new axle assemblies would then be flown to Rio de Janeiro and fitted before the rally restarted.

Some of the Escorts only ran for the first time the previous day, Timo said. One blew its motor, a mishap which inspired a frantic chase after a service vehicle which was heading for the channel with a spare engine on board was intercepted at Dover, and the engine brought back and fitted during the early hours of the morning.

ALL RALLY starts are nervous occasions. People react differently, but the problems are universal. There are standard hassles, like some last-minute doubt about the car or a problem with the paperwork. But this World Cup Rally had elements that made it unique.

It was the longest rally that had been held to that time. It was reputed to be extremely rough and known to be incredibly fast. And it was going higher than any rally before it. Several passes in the Andes were around 4000m while one road inland from Lima, in Peru, soared to 4900m, or more than 16,000 feet.

Oxygen would be needed but no one knew how he would behave when tired and driving fast and breathing pure oxygen. There was talk of a “rapture of the deep” effect in reverse — a euphoria induced by oxygen saturation which had caused, people said, drivers to steer happily over the edges of cliffs. The altitude also affected vision and turned simple jobs, like changing a wheel, into excruciating feats of endurance. Drivers looked at their rivals, their team-mates and themselves, and wondered. Most rally fields can be divided into potential winners and losers, but this event was likely to be known for its survivors.

For a factory team, there are special obligations. One of ours was to be photographed with the head of British Leyland, Lord Stokes. He had come to farewell the team and to flag away

individual cars.

Jack Murray lessened the sense of formality surrounding the occasion by putting a bungler in Lord Stokes’ pocket. Jack had been introduced to the most powerful man in the British motor industry as Gelignite Jack and along with the introduction came an explanation as to how he had acquired his nickname. Jack took the conversation as a fair warning to his lordship and a challenge to himself.

After all, he had a tradition to maintain. In 1968, just before the start of the Marathon, he had become the first man to water ski on the Thames outside the Houses of Parliament, and had eluded the water police in a chase up-river that would have done credit to Hollywood. He reckoned that slipping one of his celebrated fire crackers in the pocket of such a powerful man was an equivalent feat . . . a sort of joyous nose-thumbing at tradition and authority. Besides, he was pretty sure that Lord Stokes was a sport.

Happily for the boss of Leyland, the requirements of posing for the picture caused him to put his hands by his sides, and he felt the bulge in his pocket. He threw the thing away with an oath that revealed he had much in common with Jack Murray. Paddy Hopkirk, watching from a distance, almost choked as he tried not to laugh. The Leyland PR men, circling behind the photographer, turned the colour of Wembley’s brilliant turf.

When the time came for us to start, the engine rediscovered its misfire. The car coughed and spluttered its way around the oval and was reluctant to climb the ramp, where Lord Stokes was now waiting, flag in hand, to wave us on our way.

Our chief was one of a number of celebrities officiating at the start. He spotted Jack, sitting with one arm out the window and fist clenched as though clutching something — and his lordship almost backed off the ramp. He gave the flag to someone else. I imagine he had visions of the ramp erupting in flames.

Jack opened his fist and waved. Nothing there. He laughed. Lord Stokes moved forward. “You bastard,” he said, and they shook hands, and we were on our way.

Outside, the crowds were thick, lining the road on either side of the exit from the stadium. Jack fossicked in his bag (he always carried it and reckoned he had enough gear to give an elephant a curette) and took out another firecracker. He lit it and tossed it behind the car, with a whoop of joy. It was something he had done at rally starts for nearly 20 years. Bungers, smoke bombs, sirens, horns that groaned



The car's acceleration was so lazy that we were being out-run by boys on push-bikes



and horns that played musical chords had been his trademark at scores of starts. I'd never seen one of his pranks misfire.

But this time, as we drove away, a small boy ducked beneath the barrier restraining the crowd and ran towards the smouldering object. He reached it just as it went off...

Through London, the car continued to run unevenly. Its acceleration was so lazy that children, running with the rally cars from street lights, had to wait for us to catch up. Even when moving, we were being out-accelerated by boys on push bikes. At Dover, the police were waiting.

"Did you throw some object from the car at Wembley, sir?" they asked. A boy had burned his hand. Yes we had. Was he badly burned? No sir. We gave details, they smiled and said they were sure everything would be all right but if they wanted us, they could get us. Where? Possibly somewhere in South America? Of course. They wished us luck.

I began to think about luck. I'm not a passionate believer in it as an inexorable shaper of one's destiny. And I know that in motor sport, bad luck can be confused with poor preparation, poor planning or poor driving. But there's no doubt that good fortune is the most desirable yet most elusive of companions on long rallies. Sometimes, it seems, it's with you or it isn't and there's nothing you can do except drive on and wait for things to get better. I didn't like the way this event had started. A boy with a burned hand. A sick motor car.

An Abingdon mechanic was outside the Dover impound area. Number six injector was blocked. He blew a tiny piece of grit from the hole. "With this system, if one of these things is fouled," and he puffed in the hole for emphasis, "you're only running on four, because it affects another cylinder. They run in pairs somehow. Bloody fuel injection."

He told us the man from Lucas would be waiting at the Sofia control.

"He might be able to do something. I haven't got a thing. In fact, I don't think there are any engine parts for these things in Europe. They've all been sent to South America. There aren't any here because we were told these bloody engines don't give any trouble."

We crossed the English Channel and, in misty rain, threaded our way across the north of France. Late that night, we entered Germany. It was cold and rain drifted down. The time schedules were easy but the Abingdon man had suggested we try to clear the engine problem by

driving hard, and so we blasted along the autobahn at 160 km/h. Heavy rain fell. Brian Culcheth passed, his Triumph showering us with spray. We began the routine of driver changes and eating and sleeping in the car.

THE MEN from Kuwait had the melancholy distinction of being the first to retire. They got lost in the damp gloom of pre-dawn Germany, and mistook Switzerland for Austria. It was all so different to Kuwait. However, they showed a certain spark of initiative by telephoning Wylton Dickson in London. Could he please tell them where Basle was because Basle, they explained, was where they were lost.

A little later, victim number two retired from the event. Paradoxically, it was concern over engine performance in the high altitudes of Bolivia and Peru that put this car out in the lowlands of Europe.

Car No 1, the Triumph 2.5 PI of Bobby Buchanan-Michaelson, had a feature that was common to the works cars. It was a manual control which allowed the co-driver to select an air-to-fuel mixture that was correct for the altitude. His car, like ours, carried an aircraft-type altimeter and all the co-driver had to do was set a lever at a notch which corresponded to the reading on the instrument. Unfortunately for Buchanan-Michaelson, someone had bumped the lever at the start, and he drove away with the air supply set to work perfectly for 4900m. Running with a murderously lean mixture, the poor Triumph grew progressively hotter and crankier until it consumed its pistons.

Rauno Aaltonen's Ford was also in strife. The gearbox split and he lost oil and time, dropping points at the early controls.

On the second day, we drove through Germany and Austria and, early that night, reached the Hungarian border. It was the first Iron Curtain country of the rally. There were long queues, which the Russians in the Moskvitches ignored.

Just west of Budapest was a time control. It was at a garage on the outskirts of the city. Barbed wire had been laid in coils around the area and soldiers patrolled the makeshift fence. We were on one side of the wire, a crowd of cheering spectators on the other. A group of Argentinian students waved banners welcoming their drivers.

A couple of aircraft droned overhead. They were slow and incredibly low and beamed spotlights on the crowd. As each plane flew directly above us, reflections from the control point outlined the shape

of a large, propeller driven aircraft, about the size of a DC3. We could see a boxy fuselage, with an open door. One of our friends in the rally was Terry Kingsley, an RAF pilot driving an Austin Maxi.

"Know what's in them?" he said, jerking his thumb towards the rumbling in the sky. "Russian paratroopers. They're ready just in case of trouble."

WE REACHED the Bulgarian capital of Sofia at dawn. The control was in a courtyard containing Roman ruins. At one end of the courtyard was the entrance to an enormous hotel. We were a few hours early. Having anticipated this, Peter Browning had booked the team into the hotel, so we could get some rest.

We found the Lucas man, explained about the miss in the engine, and then trooped off to the hotel in search of sleep. Instead, we got an argument. A woman behind the counter took our passports as the necessary preliminary to any conversation. Once she had them in her hand, she told us no rooms were available. She insisted British Leyland had not booked accommodation. We had the letter. No, there were no rooms. No, she would not hand the passports back. No rooms. No meals. You can't stay. You can't leave. Don't make trouble. Behind her stood a man, large and grey-faced, like a figure in a waxworks. She handed him the passports. He said nothing.

It transpired that the woman had confused British Leyland with British anyone. The first drivers with British passports had got our rooms. So we stalked the corridors, gazing across at the Roman ruins and searching for lounges, chairs, even soft carpet. I found a bathroom, had a cold shower, dried the bath tub and slept in it.

"No mister," the woman shouted, but balked at entering the bathroom to dispute possession of the tub. We left having been charged full rates for rooms.

The sun was bright and the morning was growing warm. The change in Sofia was amazing. When we had driven into the city, the cobblestones were glazed with frost and the old buildings were tinged with the pink of sunrise. The city was empty and, in the brittle light of dawn, we seemed to be driving across the icing of a decorated cake. But as we left, the sunny streets were thronged with people. They jammed the pavements, cheering and throwing flowers in our path. I thought of the woman in the hotel and wondered: which was the true face of Bulgaria? □

Continued next month.

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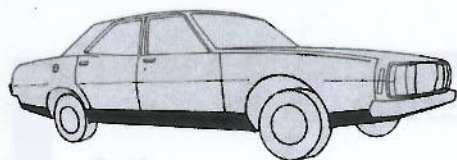
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