

## BITS AND PIECES

**M**IKE Gosbell's ex-Crouch Mk IV Cooper JAP 1100, surely one of the most original 50-year old racing cars of any sort in the world, sold for \$52,000 at the Shannon's Sydney Motor Show Auction in late November. The new Sydney owner is not an air-cooled fanatic, but was attracted by the car's condition.

➤The Flather Norton, a Manx-powered one-off built in 1956 for Sheffield steel merchant Dennis Flather by expatriate Australian speedway rider Bill Harris, may have re-surfaced. The UK owner of a car known as the Juno Special believes this may originally have been the Flather, and is actively investigating its history. Bill Harris was later co-founder of Alexis Cars, and returned to Australia in 1965. He was very much part of the NSW historic scene up to the time of his death in 1995.

➤Resurfacing in Sydney recently was the BRM, the 1950s Manx-powered car built in Melbourne along Mk 9 Cooper lines by Alan Staton at Ken Gayfer's Bakers Rd Motors (hence "BRM"). In its present form there is no engine at all, and the rear half of the chassis has been completely revised. Alan Staton died in Fremantle in 1997. Loose Fillings has made contact with Ken Gayfer, a key figure in the 500cc movement in Victoria in the '50s.

➤Contact has also been made with Paul Bernadou, son of the late Leon Bernadou who was a close friend of father-and-son team Bill and John Wynne, builders of the very successful air-cooled JMWs.

➤John Caffin, current owner of the very special ex-Rainey supercharged Manx-powered Mk 9 Cooper, has been talking to John Surtees, who is keen to find a "good home" for the car in the UK. This unique and fascinating Cooper has a fine Australian history, as well as being potentially an extremely fast device. Surely we can find another "good home" for it here?

➤At Sheffield historic hillclimb, near Christchurch on November 12, Peter Bruin's Norton-powered Mk 8 Cooper set ftd, and Alan Kerr's Cooper Mk 6 was also competing.

➤Spare racks and rear stub axles for Coopers are planned by Barry Lapham, 02 9437 9644 (bus). The stubs will be two-piece, machined from drop forgings with the outer flange integral with the axle. The racks will be NC-machined and all-new, with a one-piece rack. Prices will depend on quantity.

# LOOSE FILLINGS

## AIR-COOLED AT ROB ROY

**F**IVE air-cooled cars were entered for Historic Rob Roy on November 26, the only non-arrival being the Penrite Mk 9 Cooper-Norton when driver Ken Bedgood was unable to attend.

However, Mark Dymond took another of the Penrite Coopers – their 1100cc JAP-powered Mk 5 – to third ftd, beaten only by a 911 Porsche and the ex-Beechey 289 Mustang. Mark's best of 24.26 sec. could be the fastest-ever time for an air-cooled Cooper at Rob Roy.

Neal Videan, first time out with the ex-Davison Mk 5 Cooper Irving, lost a back wheel on his second run, fortunately without major injury.

Graeme Noonan, giving his Mk 7 Norton its Australian debut, was frustrated by start-line problems all day and did not record a time.

John Coffin, first time out with the Robbins 500, ran a best of 34.49 and had a ball.



Fifty years ago this car has just been completed. Like so many Australian-built 500s it contained many original ideas and was unusual in having a professionally built body. What was it? Where is it now? All this, and more, inside.

## THE LOG

**R**OB Roy saw four air-cooled cars, an encouraging note to end the year. Since the last *Loose Fillings*, the following public appearances qualify for mention in *The Log*:

➤October 20: Sandown Historics, John Caffin (Rainey Cooper Norton)

➤October 20: Lowood Sprints, Mike Gosbell (Cooper JAP 1100)

➤November 25-26: Wakefield Park races, Gary Simkin (JBS Norton), Andrew Halliday (Cooper Norton)

➤November 26: Rob Roy, Mark Dymond (Cooper JAP 1100), Neal Videan (Cooper Irving), John Coffin (Robbins 500), Graeme Noonan (Cooper Norton).

Since *The Log* was introduced (*Loose Fillings* #4), a total of 15 different cars have run in public at 12 events. Not a mass invasion perhaps, but we are starting to get the numbers.



# The Marshall 500

*Bob Joass described his first 500, built in the late 1940s, in Loose Fillings #4. Now he writes about his next car, which became the Marshall 500*

Having disposed of my original 500 as per the previous story, and having saved a few pounds, I decided to start again, but this time using what were at that time slightly more up-to-date ideas and methods of construction. In the 18 months since the first car I had become acquainted with a welder/fabricator who offered assistance (at a price, fortunately reasonable), and so work started on Number 2.

Having seen, envied and digested Ralt 1, and following its general form, I put together the front end of the chassis as per photo. This somewhat followed the Ralt, in that it used 2 inch diameter main tubes, but in detail it was considerably different.

Ron Tauranac got the Hooper brothers to bend a single length of tube into a U shape, with the resulting parallel tubes about 20 inches apart back to the rear of the seat, from where they tapered inwards towards the rear, joined by a short cross-member which also carried the swing-axle rear suspension.

For my car the U section was welded up from three pieces cut to suit (fortunately my fabricator had a power hacksaw – ah, technology!), then welded up on a jig built on the half-inch timber top of the fabricator's 8 ft x 4 ft welding table.

The inverted U of the front suspension carrier was welded up from 2 inch square tube in the same way, then welded to the main rails after the suspension pivots were

in place.

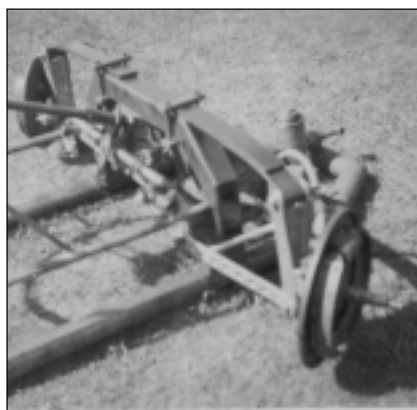
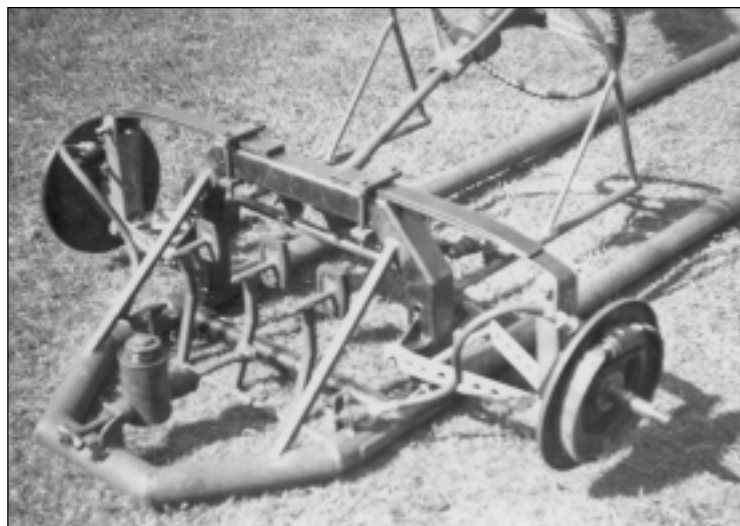
Front wishbones were made along the same lines as Ralt 1 or the Hooper, from 1.25 in x .25 in steel, copiously drilled, then cadmium plated, as were the vertical links, which followed Cooper pattern but to different dimensions. Stub axles and brakes were Morris 8/40, the Ralt front wheels were carried on Morris 8/40 hubs, the master cylinder was 8/40 – handy little gadgets, those 8/40s, and there were lots of them in wreckers yards.

The steering system was a pinch (with permission from Ron) from Ralt 1. Directly below the steering wheel was a

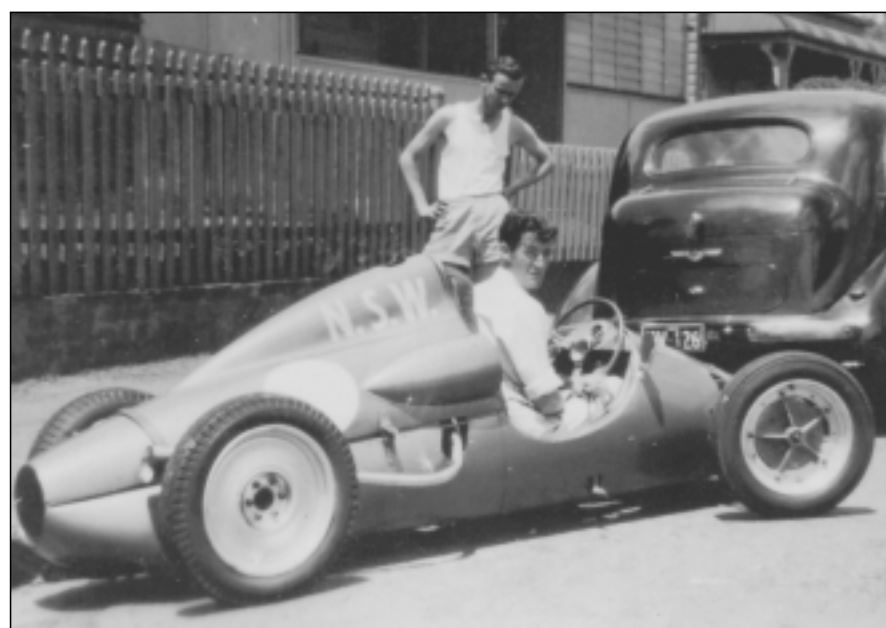
Model T Ford epicyclic steering box, with the lower end of the Ford steering shaft carried on a bearing on the front cross-member.

This also carried bearings for a cross-shaft which in effect was a rack, but without teeth. The connection between the steering shaft and the cross shaft was a slotted drop-arm on the steering shaft, the slot engaging a pin which was carried in the cross shaft. This converted the rotary motion of the steering shaft into a horizontal sliding motion of the cross shaft, which had ball joints at each end.

This system had the added advantage –



The completed car in 1950-51 outside Bob Joass's parent's house in Leichhardt (right). The detail photographs show the rackless rack-and-pinion steering and the temporary quarter-elliptic springs.



long before Bishop variable-ratio racks – that the steering got faster as it moved toward its extremities. It was simple and very effective, although I wonder if it would pass scrutineering these days.

The photographs show small-diameter tubes above and parallel to the main tubes. These were extended full length and triangulated, as I was never happy with the torsional rigidity and beam strength of any of the ladder frames which were in common use at that time, and I knew you could not rely on alloy bodywork to do any good in that direction either.

The photographs show the front suspension used two quarter-elliptic springs, and these will no doubt raise an eyebrow as to what happened when the brakes were applied.

Explanation: not having a wheel aligner readily to hand, these springs were a temporary solution until the completed chassis could be properly checked out and the camber set, after which the spring clamps were tightened (six degrees of caster was already built into the uprights, a la Cooper).

Then it was back to my welder, who welded a joining strip between the two quarter-elliptics. I then took this cobbled-up “spring” to the spring-maker who made me a complete one with the exact eye-to-eye dimension and the centre-bolt hole drilled.

This was reassembled on the car and when I was ready for the final check it was a snack to set the camber and toe-in, tighten the clamps and bolt the centre-bolt through the top arch of the front cross member. Actually, I had two springs made at the time, and the spare went with the car.

Around this stage of the project I began to run out of money, a not unusual occurrence at the time, but salvation came over the hill in the form of one Ashton Marshall, an acquaintance from earlier years in the Sydney Society of Model Engineers.

He was a little older than I was and, bankrolled by his city dentist father, he was doing well in the world of used cars, specialising in Citroen Light 15s and Big Sixes. He had a look at my project and suggested that he buy what there was and provide the necessary for labour and materials to bring it to completion.

The rear suspension was transferred complete from Ralt 1, and was almost a bolt-on affair. Ron Tauranac by then had developed his low pivot-centre rear end for Ralt 1, and the original swing-axle system certainly suited me.

Engine and gearbox were alloy Triumph Tiger 100, and the whole car went together quite rapidly. The virtually completed car

was taken to the Pryor/Adams workshop in North Sydney and the body was built by Stan Smith, who worked with them.

Once running and generally sorted out, it was entered for Bathurst where I think it burned a piston. Ashton became impatient with it and to the best of my knowledge traded it on a Mk IV Cooper JAP which had been owned by John Nind.

I went with Ashton to a few meetings with this car, got even more fired up about air-cooled cars and we parted company about that time, me towards building more cars and Ashton to much faster things in the form of Top Fuel Dragsters, which ultimately led him to the States and the dragster scene there. He lives in San Diego, and is still selling cars.

The later history of the car is largely unknown, but a recent story in Motor Racing Australia (issue #48) about the defunct dirt race track at Bright in North Eastern Victoria included two 1960s photographs which show a car identified as a “Cooper Triumph” which appears to be the Marshall 500.



### GRAEME NOONAN'S MK 7 COOPER

**C**LASSIC motorcycle racer Graeme Noonan has recently landed a 1953 Mk 7 Cooper Norton which has lengthy UK racing history. This is the first car from the Mk 6-7 group of Coopers to come to Australia, although John Crouch did advertise Mk 6s for sale.

This group had chassis using four parallel 1½-inch tubes, and introduced the cast-alloy final drive “triangle” and rear uprights, which allowed longer driveshafts and more suspension travel.

The Fiat-like spring arches, especially at the front, continued to be very complex

### FOR SALE & WANTED

> **Ewing Norton ES2**, built late '50s by Ron Ewing. Log-booked, spare ES2 plus remains of 1300cc Harley Norton. Realistic price, Malcolm Thorn, 03 9807 1244

> **Cooper Mk V JAP 500**, ex - Hawkes/Patterson, raced Europe, '53 AGP, won '54 Aust. Hillclimb Championship. History with both 500 and 998 JAP. \$40,000, Brian Reed, phone/fax 03 5439 5296

> **Cooper Mk V Norton** - ex Bob Gerard UK, immaculate. Don Hall, 08 9386 2436.

> **Donland Special:** complete, Historic log-book, 650 Triumph power. Nice square-tube chassis with Cooper suspension. Ian Wells, 03 9808 7325

> **Wanted:** photos of Alan Staton's BRM500. Graham Howard, 1248 Pacific Highway, Pymble 2073, phone/fax 02 9440 4081.

fabrications, a problem solved with introduction of the first of the curved-tube chassis, the Mk 7, at the end of 1953.

Graeme Noonan's car was bought by a Len Stone in Basingstoke, and appears to have been mainly a hillclimb car through into the '60s before it was given a Hillman Imp engine in the '70s. About 1995-96 it was bought by Bernie Allen, a noted Norton restorer, who re-fitted it with a Manx and gave its debut at Historic Goodwood in 1998, which was where Graeme Noonan first saw it.

It was sold to a US buyer who then had a change of plan, and Graeme bought the car in August (below).



# My Cooper Vincent

*In a very long career, Brian Lawler has competed in an amazing range of machinery. Here he writes about his experiences with the Mk IV Cooper Vincent imported for John Snow, converted by Phil Irving to supercharging for Lex Davison, and now being restored - many owners later - by Gary Simkin.*

It was in September 1964 that I first had a major connection with the 998cc supercharged Vincent Cooper that was then owned by Les Hammon, who had a service station in Katoomba. Les' son rode a Vincent and other quick racing bikes with great success, but was unfortunately killed in an accident.

I had heard about this very quick Cooper

from Victoria, and one day I found I was to be competing against it, driving my Scorpion, which was broadly similar but with better suspension and brakes, and with a Black Lightning Vincent engine from which, after many hours work, I had been able to extract a few more horsepower - 135 bhp. on fuel at the clutch, to be precise.

Les and I duelled for the entire meeting and the Scorpion finally came out on top - only due, I am sure, to my being younger and more fearless in those days.

After the last race Les came up and asked if I would sell the Scorpion, or maybe trade his Cooper, plus a Black Shadow Vincent with 3000 miles up (wish I still had it!) plus - wait for it - a Hargon saw, which was a portable circular saw mounted on motorcycle wheels, powered by a 500 c.c. BSA engine and with a long boom holding the four-foot diameter blade, which was driven by a pair of 12 foot v-belts. The idea was that this device could be wheeled up to a tree then, having felled the tree, also used to cut planks from the trunk. That was the theory, but as a timber-cutter once said to me, he would rather play with a tiger snake!

Anyway, the deal was done. I rode the Vincent home, my mate towed the Cooper on the Scorpion's trailer, and I picked up the Hargon saw a few weeks later.

The Cooper was used mainly for hill-climbs by myself for the next 18 months with great success. However, I was never happy having the supercharger drive-chain, which ran at 5000 r.p.m., sitting just six inches behind my left ear. I remember one fellow asking me what I was so worried about, since the chain had a guard. Sure - of 18g aluminium!

About 1967 I sold the car to a club syndicate which included Bob Butcher and Bob Booth, who were going to run it at club level. Well, after major modifications, mostly horrifying, I lost track of it, but it had been a lovely car.

Left. The Cooper at Katoomba around 1963 while owned by Les Hammon showing the high mounting for the cabin-blower supercharger. Car 124 is Brian Rawling's self-built s.v. Minor powered Bulant.



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