

# LOOSE FILLINGS

## GREAT GEAR MEETING

**N**O fewer than eight air-cooled cars arrived - and ran - during the July 28 track day organised at Wakefield Park by GEAR (Golden Era Auto Racing club). Each year GEAR runs five or six of these no-pressure non-competitive events under Wakefield Park's own insurance and paperwork, so CAMS licences, log-books and certificates of description are not required.

At this meeting our cars had track time to themselves, and it was wonderful to see not just one air-cooled car but bunches of them crackling around the circuit. Interstate visitors Graeme Noonan (Cooper Mk7 Norton) and John Coffin (Robbins BSA) probably put in the highest number of laps, and neither appeared to have any mechanical troubles.

The tiny Smith Special, laid down on the NSW south coast in the 1950s by the late Sid Smith but never completed, made a fine debut after three hectic months of work by its new owner, Barry Parsons

from Bathurst. The car now has a 350cc iron-barrel BSA engine, which looks just right, and the car ran all day without major dramas.

The Scorpion, Peter Hill's self-built Vincent-powered car from the early '60s now owned by Col Davidson, is no longer a display car - it is now a goer, and at Wakefield Park it showed huge potential. This is a very original car, and it was real time-warp stuff to watch it cantering past with the big V-twin muttering away.

Air-cooled regulars Garry Simkin (JBS Norton) and Mike Bendeich (JMW CZ150) put in lots of laps without trouble, but the same could not be said about Terry Wright (Walton JAP 1100) or Rob Gunnell (Cooper Mk IV JAP 500). The Gunnell Cooper lost its crankshaft sprocket and related hardware and no-one had the necessary spares, so it had to be parked. The alloy JAP twin in Terry Wright's Walton nipped up after only a few laps, and inspection showed some cracks in the

### GOOD VIBRATIONS

Probably not since the 1960s have we seen so many air-cooled cars in action as we did at the July GEAR day at Wakefield Park, when eight cars appeared. John Coffin and Graeme Noonan brought their cars from Melbourne, the first appearance for each of these cars in NSW. In addition, Col Davidson at last had the Scorpion running again, and Barry Parsons had the Sid Smith special running for the first time ever, nearly 50 years after its construction started. The other four air-cooled runners were more-or-less regular NSW cars, and all eight got out onto the track. Overall it was a most encouraging day for enthusiasts of our sort of cars.

crankcase. These later turned out to be the mere tip of the iceberg, because when the engine was stripped one crankcase half was found to be cracked beyond repair. The nip-up probably prevented the problem becoming a major blowup, but the car will be out of action for some time.

Absent from Wakefield Park was the Hallidays' Mk 5 Cooper, on the back burner while they were getting ready for Goodwood (see separate story), and Cameron MacMillan's Sidney Rudge, which had dropped a valve.

At the awards presentations at the end of the day, John Coffin spoke very well and thanked GEAR for their support and for the enjoyable day.

Below left: Col Davidson's Scorpion and Barry Parson's Smith Special (behind) were welcome surprise appearances of at Wakefield Park  
Below: Scorpion leads Graeme Noonan (Cooper-Norton) and John Coffin (Robbins-BSA).  
Photos Lisa Tobin-Smith



## THE LOG

In this section of Loose Fillings we celebrate every known occasion on which an Australian or New Zealand air-cooled racing car has fired-up in public.

- February 1-2 - Ruapuna, NZ, races: Craig Pidgeon, Cooper Mk 10 Norton
- February 21 - Three Mile Hill, Dunedin, NZ: Craig Pidgeon, Cooper Mk 10 Norton
- February 22 - Dunedin road race: Craig Pidgeon, Cooper Mk 10 Norton
- July 28 - GEAR, Wakefield Park: Mike Bendeich, JMW CZ150; John Coffin, Robbins BSA; Col Davidson, Scorpion Vincent; Rob Gunnell, Cooper Mk IV JAP; Graeme Noonan, Cooper Mk 7 Norton; Barry Parsons, Smith BSA 350; Garry Simkin, JBS Norton; Terry Wright, Walton JAP 1100
- September 11-12 - MG Interclub, Rob Roy: John Coffin, Robbins BSA
- September 26 - Bol d'Or, Wakefield Park: Graham Louk (Bedson Enfield), Mike Bendeich (JMW CZ150)
- October 23-24 - Mt Tarrengower: John Coffin, Robbins BSA
- October 28 - GEAR, Wakefield Park: Col Davidson, Scorpion Vincent
- November 5-6 - Sandown Historic meeting: Graeme Noonan, Cooper Mk 7 Norton.

## BITS AND PIECES

- Australian-built cars predominated in the air-cooled entry at the July GEAR meeting. Of the eight participants, six were locally built, with capacities from 150cc to 1100cc. This is probably not far from the ratio of locally-built to imported cars back in the 50s-60s period. Survival, however, is another story, because while about three-quarters of the imported air-cooled cars survive as at least largely-complete vehicles, probably only about a quarter of the locally-built cars are known to still exist.
- Cameron MacMillan's Sidney Rudge missed the July GEAR day because - to quote minder Robert Rowe - "a valve put up a valiant fight before the piston engulfed it." But not, however, before bending the rod and damaging the offending piston beyond further use.
- A mystery air-cooled car has been acquired by Barry Parsons, within months of his completing the Sid Smith car which ran at July GEAR. The mystery machine came from the NSW central west area, has 13-inch wheels, Cooper-style independent suspension and well-made multi-tube chassis and alloy body and tanks. The uncracked bodywork suggests the car has had very little use. There is no engine or gearbox, but the very high tail has small

openings on each side which could have been for exhaust pipes, so the car could possibly have run some form of parallel twin.

- Neil Videan's ex-Davison supercharged Cooper Mk V Vincent continues its extensive overhaul in the hands of 500 veteran Garth Rhodes, who has already made new rear uprights and driveshafts. Meanwhile in Brisbane Peter Harburg's ex-Patterson Mk V Cooper, which he recently bought from Brian Reed, is having its 500 JAP rebuilt by the same man who owned and prepared Nortons ridden by the late Barry Sheen.
- Patterns to cast crankcase halves for an alloy JAP twin have been brought back from the UK by Terry Wright.
- Enthusiastic John Coffin took his Robbins BSA to second in class at MG club's Rob Roy meeting in September, and at Mt Tarrengower in October ran a best of 64.8, just behind Ean McDowell's Stanguellini Formula Junior, to finish fifth in a class dominated by supercharged MGs.
- Despite very wet conditions at Sandown historic meeting (November 5-7), Graeme Noonan fixed a dragging clutch in his Cooper Norton and finished two of his three regularity starts, DNF'ing on the Saturday after a spin. He estimates the car ran 30 laps at Wakefield Park and another 30 at Sandown, where it was pulling 7000 rpm on the main straight. Spectators and fellow competitors commented on the car's great exhaust note.

# Classifieds

**For sale:** Cooper Mk V Norton, ex Bob Gerard (UK). Don Hall, 08 9386 2346.

**For sale:** 1961 Lynx Vincent, ex John Marston, oldest surviving Lynx. Very original, partially restored (see Loose Fillings # 4) includes new Terry Prince Vincent crankcases, other Vincent parts. Approval in principle with blown 1200. Asking \$20,000. David Lawry, 08 8373 1633, jlawry@picknowl.com.au.

**For sale:** Scarab Triumph, NSW race history from at least early 1960s. Rebuilt Bonneville engine, new 4-speed box, single Amal. No trailer. \$20,000, all offers considered. Graeme Worsley, 02 6362 8734.

**For sale:** Sidney Rudge, the former Sidney Vincent recently refitted with fully rebuilt 4-valve iron-head Rudge 500, in which form it began its long Australian history in the 1950s. A clever and well made car. \$14,000, keen to sell. Cameron MacMillan, 0408 676 527.

**For sale:** Cooper Mk 4 JAP 500, superbly presented, not run since total rebuild. Ex-Saywell 8/80 car, first Cooper to race at Bathurst. \$35,000, Matt Segafredo, 0418 280 000.

**For sale:** Bruce Gooden special dirt-circuit car, built 1950s, won NSW titles 1963-64-65. 8-inch front wheels, 10-inch rear, ran Norton, Gold Star and Jawa engines, for sale without engine or gearbox, trailer included in \$1500 price. Keith Smith, 02 6384 731.

**For sale:** Robertson Indian, amazingly original 1950s Victorian-built special with pushrod o.h.v. Velocette barrels on Indian crankcase, 19-inch wire wheels. Paul Catt, Box 1340, Bathurst 2795, 0417 225922

**For sale:** 1949 Cooper JAP 500, immaculate, reliable. Oldest Cooper in Australia, long racing history in UK, Europe, Malaysia and Australia. Rob Gunnell, 02 9427 0816

## EDDINGTON SPRINTS 2005

**N**EXT year, this long-running annual sprint meeting will be run on Saturday March 26 and will include a separate class for air-cooled racing cars. The low-key style of the event is ideal for our sort of car, and co-organiser Neville Roberts promises "lots of runs." Having had such an encouraging turnout for GEAR's meeting in NSW, it should not be too hard to get a good roll-up of air-cooled cars for Eddington in 2005.

The course uses by-passed public road just on the outskirts of Eddington, near Bendigo. For NSW travellers, journey time is comparable to time to Melbourne, by turning west off the Hume at Violet Town. At Dunolly, 13km from Eddington, there are pubs and a motel, and also a five-star B&B. Many Eddington regulars arrive on Friday, and camp beside the river. There is a BYO BBQ on Saturday night, leaving Sunday to recover. Neville Roberts promises this is "not like any other event you've been to." More information from him on 03 5468 7295

## COOPER MK8

**T**HE pale blue Mk 8 Cooper in the top picture, chassis 8/26/54, ran at Ardmore earlier this year. It is owned by Peter Bruin, who shares driving with Graham Brayshaw. The car was imported new by Frost Motors in Levin and was run for the first year by Arnold Stafford with a long stroke Manx. It then passed to Jonny Buzza, then to Daryl Jefferies, who had Max Fisher maintain its chassis, Jefferies being an engine man. Later owners were Graham Brayshaw, Arthur Hopkins and Bill Clark, Peter Bruin acquiring it from the Bill Clark Trust. The car was originally fitted with an HRG floating disc rear brake, which Max Fisher modified to use Consul/Cortina caliper and disc, in which form, Max recalls, "it could outbrake most other early Coopers." Apart from the brake modification the car is extremely original, and has never suffered accident damage.

## MAX'S RGR

**B**ELOW is Max Fisher's RGR, which began life in the UK as a Mk IV Cooper JAP, from the remains of which a group of enthusiasts - who later formed Piper Cars - built a car which raced in England, then in 1956 was brought back to New Zealand by Ron Learnens, the first "R" in RGR. Roy Draffin (the second "R") brought back an ex-Stewart Lewis-Evans Beart-modified 1954 Manx engine (parts of this engine are now in the ex-Stafford Mk 8 shown above which was used when the RGR first raced in New Zealand. After many other owners and engines it was bought, accident-damaged, by Max Fisher in 1975 and rebuilt using a 496cc Triumph engine and gearbox. It has run in Historic races, and Max describes it as "a lovely, forgiving old car, with nice manners and easy to drive."

## DUNEDIN FESTIVAL

**N**EWs of Dunedin's round of the Festival of Speed in February arrived just too late for the last Loose Fillings. Craig Pidgeon reported that his Cooper Norton ran well at the very wet hillclimb on Three Mile Hill (the course itself was much less than three miles, but challenging) and the Cooper reached maximum revs in fourth on its three runs before the team (Craig, Alan Bramwell and Steve Kensington) elected to save it for the following day's race. On a 2.8km road course set up for the day in Dunedin itself, the Cooper ran in a very mixed field of Historic cars, ranging from a Big 15 Citroen to a Hong Kong D-type Jaguar and Peter Giddings' 8CM 3-litre Maserati. The

# News from New Zealand

by Max Fisher

Cooper was not the sole air-cooled car, because the entry included the marvellous flat-four Lycoming special and the BMW-engined Avia. Practice was dry, but both Historic races were run in the wet on an extremely slippery circuit, and while there was good dicing up and down the field there were no serious incidents. Craig started fifth, and finished fourth in both races, a performance which he said was a tribute to his support crew.

Top: Peter Bruin's Mk8 Cooper.

Bottom: Max Fisher's RGR Photos Max Fisher.



## NICE REPRO BADGES

**R**EPLICAS of the old British Half-litre club have been produced by Max Fisher who is offering them for sale at NZ\$12 for small and NZ\$15 large (about 30% bigger than the image above). Another dollar each should cover postage from 93a Mellons Bay Road, Howick, Auckland.



# AIR-COOLED BRABHAM AT GOODWOOD

THESE were no 500s at Goodwood Revival this year but air-cooleds were represented by the Halliday's Brabham midjet speedcar which had been invited from Sydney to run in the Tribute to Jack Brabham.

Driver Andrew, brother David and owner/father Don travelled over, with Ray and Terry Wright in support. The Brabham cars, including several from Australia and the US, had a paddock all to themselves and created a lot of interest with the speedcar being one of the star attractions.

A surprising number of current and former Australians called in to say hello, some knowing the Brabham car from the Rowley Park days which followed its heyday in Sydney in Jack's hands.

The Brabhams had demonstrations of three laps on each of the practice and two race days of the meeting. Much interest was caused by the speedcar starting technique which involved being pushed at considerable speed by a period Landrover.

Nothing like it had been seen at Goodwood before.

Your *Loose Fillings* correspondent had wondered how he was going to find the show on this, his second visit in two years. It was, as it happened, even more enjoyable than the first time when we had been in attendance on a friend's Formula Junior car. Perhaps we got more out of it because we now knew how much there was to do and see?

This time we made it to the Thursday cricket match in front of Goodwood House where the game has been played for over 300 years. Following stumps there was drivers' briefing from promoter Lord March, who reminded everyone that there were there to have a good time and give the same to the sell-out crowd of 30,000 each day.

As he finished a lone Spitfire climbed up from the nearby Westhampnett airfield (around which the motor track circles) to do a solo aerobatic display just for us.

When it swooped below the trees of Goodwood House's park then, glowing in the setting sun, climbed into a roll-off-the-top, I couldn't help a tear or two in the corner of my eyes.

Things like this make Goodwood Revival the best historic race meeting anywhere; it is so good that if you can you should try to go for all of the three days. And book early; this year was sold out long before the event. Friends of mine book the same grandstand seats on the Web as soon as bookings open which I gather is around Christmas. You can register now online or otherwise make contact as follows:

- Book online: [www.goodwood.co.uk](http://www.goodwood.co.uk)
- By telephone: +44 (0)1243 755055
- By fax: on +44 (0)1243 755058

Top left: Andrew Halliday speeds past the packed grandstand at Goodwood.

Bottom left: Jack picks up a few tips from Andrew. Below: The Landrover with David, Don and Andrew Halliday. Photos Terry Wright.



Edited by Graham Howard,  
1248 Pacific Highway, Pymble  
NSW 2075 phone/fax 02 9440 4081  
([grimes@optushome.com.au](mailto:grimes@optushome.com.au)).  
Produced by Terry Wright,  
phone 02 9418 2974, fax 9498 7452  
([tsrwright@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tsrwright@optusnet.com.au)).  
Published by Garry Simkin,  
28 McClelland Street, Willoughby,  
NSW 2068 phone/fax 02 9958 3935,  
([gjsimkin@iprimus.com.au](mailto:gjsimkin@iprimus.com.au)).

## KEVIN CATT

"One of the true characters of motor sport," to quote fellow Bathurst resident Bob Cutler, Kevin Catt died in Bathurst in July, aged 76. At his house off Conrod Straight he kept a collection of interesting cars, including the wondrous Robertson Indian V-twin, built in Victoria in the 1950s by Max Robertson, who converted it to overhead-valve by grafting on a pair of Velocette heads and barrels. Kevin would effortlessly start this formidable engine using a length of iron pipe slipped over the

stump of the kick-start lever on the Norton gearbox. Pipe-marks indented into the doors of his garage suggest the starting technique was not as simple as it looked.

In his shortened Lancia Lambda, he set a Vintage record at Silverdale hillclimb in 1957, and in 1963 won the first "Vintage" race at Warwick Farm. He ran his own garage, later became a TAFE teacher, and headed the Automotive school when it was established at Bathurst TAFE. He moved to Bathurst in the early 1960s, and was a life member of Bathurst Light Car Club.