

lowered the lap record from 1min37sec (jointly held by McLean) to 1min30sec (86.64mph, 139.4km/h).

The 1953 NZ Championship road race was held on a new circuit around the wharves of Dunedin. McLean had discovered the cause of his continual chain-breaking and was trying an 1100 engine again. The circuit was perfectly suited to the Cooper twins, and McLean qualified to start from pole position, with Gibbons in the third front-row position, on the other side of the Roycroft Alfa. No-one could hold the ex-GP car in the race, but Gibbons finished second, McLean having lasted only six laps before losing control and crashing. That was the last straw and after three miserable seasons with the car he never raced it again.

Instead he sold it to Peter Harrison of Rotorua, who entered it in the first international NZ Grand Prix, at Ardmore in January 1954. Also in the field was Alan Freeman of Wellington with a similar car, and a 1000cc JAP twin. Freeman actually qualified second-fastest among the New Zealanders, with only Roycroft faster, the two locals lining up seventh and eighth on the grid. Harrison was considerably slower.

Freeman was in an incredible fifth place overall on the first lap, Australians Jones (Maybach Special) and Brabham (Cooper-Bristol) being among those behind. It couldn't last of course, and by the end of the lap he was tenth, albeit with Roycroft the only local entry ahead. After only five laps however the Cooper was out with a broken rod, and thereafter raced with a JAP 500 engine. Harrison kept circulating to place tenth, though two Cooper 500s were among the cars ahead of him.

Gibbons had chosen not to enter the Grand Prix, running instead in a couple of shorter handicap races on the support programme. He finished fourth in the first of these, but won the other. He then came through from the back mark to place fifth in the Ohakea Trophy, still run on a handicap basis, with fastest lap and fastest time on scratch, though Roycroft and the Alfa were not in the field. Harrison had run in the preliminary race but scratched his entry from the Trophy race.

Gibbons concentrated on hillclimbs after that, but Harrison, after racing his car with a Matchless 500 engine in 1955, was back with JAP 1100 power for 1956. He ran in this form in the Ultimate Race Car Feature at the GP meeting, without success, and withdrew his entry from the inaugural Levin meeting one week later.

In the South Island meanwhile, Ronnie Moore, after one brief race in a supercharged Kieft-Vincent 1000 in 1952, had equipped

his Mk5 Cooper 500 (Mk5-L2-51) with a Vincent 1000 for the 1955 season. He entered the Mairehau and Dunedin races that year and the next, but didn't start any of them.

He did make one spectacular appearance in a major race, however, in the 1956 Lady Wigram International Trophy. He qualified seventh-fastest, and third among the New Zealanders. In the race he held a sensational fifth place overall, with only the foreign entries ahead, until an oil-line broke after five laps. For the following season he had a Cooper-Climax sports car and the Cooper-Vincent was entered in the Grand Prix for his father, Les. Once again it was a non-starter, and thereafter limited its activities to lesser events.

The next Cooper big-twin driver to appear in major events was Auckland Wally Henwood, who acquired the Mk3 first run by Arnold Stafford, and since then by a variety of drivers with 500cc engines. Henwood equipped it with a 1000cc Vincent engine and new bodywork, and although entering the 1957 NZ Grand Prix was probably a bit ambitious, in the non-qualifier's handicap race he came home a clear winner. At Levin in March, in the last Gold Star round of the season, he finished in an excellent fourth place. Fifth was a 1500cc Cooper-Climax sports car driven by Bruce McLaren.

The next Gold Star series started at Teretonga Park in November – too early for most of the major players. Henwood was thus able to hold third place until he spun at about half-distance, and retired soon afterwards. He qualified to start in the NZ GP heats but retired, and although he raced at other Ardmore meetings that season and also at Levin, met with no success.

The non-qualifiers' (and others) race

at the Grand Prix was run on a scratch basis in 1959, and Henwood ran in sixth place before dropping back and once again retiring. At Ohakea later in the season he won the 1100cc class of the warm-up race, from a pair of Climax-engined sports cars. K G Dalton entered the ex-Harrison Mk3, now with 1100 JAP back in place, in the same two races, but without success, before it reverted to 500 power once more.

Where the Cooper twins had excelled – and would continue to do so – was in hillclimbing. Bob Gibbons had won the NZ Championship event every year from 1954 to 1957, and the North Island title event in 1954, 1957 and 1958. The sport's governing body had introduced a Gold Star for this activity in 1957, run over several events, and Gibbons was a deserving inaugural winner, though he didn't travel often enough to repeat the success in 1958. He won the Houghton Bay event, the biggest hillclimb in the Wellington area, six years in a row, and a dozen other events in the southern half of the North Island in the same period.

Ken Sager then won the 1961 and 1962 Hillclimb Gold Stars, and Grahame Harvey made it three in a row with the same car in 1963. Steve Boreham in an ex-Syd Jensen late-type replica was runner-up in the 1965 series, and in the next three, before winning five titles in a row from 1969. He used a variety of engines, including 650, 700 and 750 BSA, a Vincent 1000 and, it is believed, a Norton 500; published results from the day don't make it clear which engine he used when. It must have been the air-cooled Cooper's last great run of success anywhere.

Below: the ex-Arnold Stafford Mk9 with Ken Sagar's championship winning 1100 JAP. Photo courtesy Derry Greenelee.



CLASSIFIEDS

For sale: Waye 500, built in 1953, CAMS log book, JAP 500 dry-sump engine, roll bar fitted, new upholstery, eligible to run overhead cam Norton, ready to run, \$15,000 ono, Andrew Halliday 02 9888 6175

For sale: 12V roller starting system to get your air-cooled car fired up. New and unused. Garry, 02 9958 3935, or gjsimkin@iprimus.com.au.

For sale: JMW 1956 rolling chassis complete as originally built by John Wynn and his dad. Original Adler 250 cc 2 stroke (dismantled). Original hand made wire wheels by John himself. A full history including pics of the car at many events and medals won in it. New original JMW badge. No time to finish this great, quick, air-cooled car located in Melbourne. Inspection welcome. Open to all reasonable offers: Tony 0411-707-547, ajsmax@optusnet.com.au.

BITS & PIECES

• Kerry Smith wrote to say he was delighted to read (and keep) the article written by Peter Molloy in LF42 on tuning for the use of methanol:

"I have not seen this subject addressed in such an easy to read, straightforward technical article before. I found the information to be clear and obviously based on long experience with the modern technology."

• Recently arrived from New Zealand for that enthusiastic Adelaide racer and collector of air-cooled Coopers, Derry Greeneklee, is Cooper Mk9-28-55 fitted with an 1100cc JAP engine. As per the law in NZ at the time, the car was issued with a certificate of registration, and number plates CN 852 on 30 December 1955 to Raymond (Ray) Victor Drew. The next owner was Jim Berkett who also owned - at the same time - the JBS Norton as still owned by *Loose Fillings* publisher Garry Simkin. Peter Slocombe of Wellington, Richard (Dick) Butters and Basil Brimelow were subsequent owners, the car at this stage still being powered by a long-stroke double-knocker Manx Norton.

• Anyone planning to be in Europe early this year should see the 500 Owners recreation of the Commander Yorke Trophy Race, at Silverstone on April 20th and 21st 2013, at the VSCC Spring Start Meeting. The event will consist of a 20 minute practice on Saturday morning and a 25 minute race in the afternoon. A second 20 minute race will follow on Sunday.

• The new owner of the Scarab is Ian Barton, from Bittern on the Mornington Peninsula. He owns the Bulant singleseater, six Jaguars, six motorcycles including two Velocettes. He plans to run the Scarab asap, with his son driving.

JOHN TROWBRIDGE

The Tasmanian motor sport community is mourning the loss of John Trowbridge on 26 January, after a long illness. John was a quiet fellow who was the practical experience behind a great number of Tasmanian racing cars.

John is reputed to have built 47 different racing cars between 1956 and 1984. The full extent of his involvement with aircooled cars is not yet determined, but is likely to have been at least 10. Three that we are sure of are the Five Day Special in 1959, the JAT Ariel in 1961 and the Trowjw Yamaha in about 1965.

Rob Saward

MORE ON THE MEIKLES

Regular readers of *Loose Fillings* will recall in edition 40 David McKinney's excellent article "Kieft Mysteries in New Zealand", and my response in *Loose Fillings* 41 enlarging on the Meikle Kieft myth. I repeated my informant's statement that Jim Meikle, creator of the Cooper Jet Car, did not have a brother. *Loose Fillings* subscriber John Climo refuted that claim and supplied photos (c1962) from his old school, Wesley College, showing the two Meikle brothers, Jim and Eric, as teachers in their academic gowns.

A chance meeting and conversation at a

Below: Eric Meikle (left) with the Kieft, Jim Meikle with what is now Ian Garmey's Mk5 Cooper, and an unknown person, with a so-far unidentified car.

car club swap-meet led me to Eric Meikle's widow, Mrs Mavis Meikle - unbelievably living within 10 minutes' of my home! Mrs Meikle proudly told me that she was an OBE - "Over Bloody Eighty". She is indeed a very sprightly 80-plus with an excellent memory and wonderful sense of humour.

Mrs Meikle has the accompanying picture on her hall wall showing Eric Meikle with the Kieft, Jim Meikle with what is now my Mk5 Cooper, and an unknown person, possibly the factory manager of Meikle's Irish Tapestry Company with a so-far unidentified car. I was certain that this picture was taken at the rear of the Irish Tapestry Company's South Street, Newtownards (near Belfast) factory. I took a photo of the factory before it was demolished some years ago which showed an identical wall and door but I have since learned that the photo was taken at Bloomfield House, the Meikle family residence in Belfast. Perhaps those broken brick and concrete walls are a feature of Northern Ireland?

Mrs Meikle told me that Eric hadn't owned any racing cars as he was more of a motorcycle enthusiast, though he had on occasions driven Jim's cars.

Mrs Meikle was able to give me the address of George Meikle, Jim's only son, now living in Queensland. George has been able to greatly expand on and correct what little was known about father Jim and his cars, and his motorbike collection, but sadly he knew nothing about that mysterious Kieft. George's mother, Yvonne also lives in Queensland and has been following my probing and questioning with much interest.

It has been a fascinating exercise which I am sure will be ongoing, I have met some really interesting and helpful people, but, we still don't know where that Kieft is!

Ian Garmey

