

Slowly the number of operational air-cooled cars is growing. The challenge continues, however, to get all of them in one place at the same time. GEAR NSW plans a 2003 meeting with a slot just for air-cooled cars, which is something to aim for, and Historic Rob Roy - in November again? - could be another target. Meanwhile, we continue to find facts and photographs about the Australasian history of these ever-optimistic cars. Life with an air-cooled car was never dull.

LOOSE FILLINGS

BITS & PIECES

☛ "A man to watch in the future," wrote UK monthly Motor Sport in its April 1951 issue, describing an all-the-way win in a heat of the Junior Brands Hatch Championship. The driver referred to, in a Mk V Cooper JAP, was B.C.Ecclestone. He wasn't called Bernie then.

☛ Records of New Zealand air-cooled cars, both factory-built and one-off, are available from Max Fisher (fax +64 9 534 2245) or Ian Garmey +64 9 294 9310). Their listings also include former NZ cars which have been exported to the UK, USA

or Australia.

☛ Golden Era Auto Racing club (GEAR) intends to provide at least one class for air-cooled racing cars in 2003 at one of the mid-week non-CAMS, non-racing GEAR days at Wakefield Park.

☛ At GEAR's January 2002 meeting Garry Simkin gave his just-completed Mk IV Cooper Vincent its first public outing, and an onlooker introduced himself as Keith Soames, who in the late '50s also ran a Mk IV Cooper Vincent. His car was the ex-Brabham, O'Dea car, the remains of which were used to build the Donland Special now being rebuilt by Andrew

Farmer. Keith Soames, whose father won one of the 1920s motorcycle TTs run near Goulburn, is nowadays a prominent figure in Sydney real estate sales.

☛ At HSRCA's January historic meeting at Oran Park, John Gale had another outing

Mt Druitt, February 1954: the Stan Jones team (count them!) ministers to his immaculate Mk IV 1100 JAP. Paul England reads a plug, Charlie Dean stands at the rear. Jones also ran the 1954 NZ GP-winning Maybach at this meeting, which followed the one-off 24-hour race. The Cooper is now owned by Earl Davey-Milne. Norm Linehan photo, courtesy John Cummins.



with his ex-Crouch Mk IV Cooper JAP 1100, and an onlooker introduced himself as Gordon Stewart, the noted Sydney tuner who had cared for the car back in 1951, when it ran in the 1951 AGP at Narrogin in West Australia – where it remained until 1986.

☛ Michael Cooper, son of Cooper Racing Cars' John Cooper, was flown to Australia to drive a new-style Cooper S in the AGP celebrity race. Thirty-odd years earlier his father was secretly flown to Australia to appear in a This is Your Life episode about Jack Brabham, and was likewise gone before anyone could do anything about it.

ALWAYS, WITHOUT FAIL...

MAX Fisher offers this important reminder: On 500s (or in fact on any car) where an open steering shaft is splined to the steering box or rack and retained using a pinch-bolt in a groove, always without fail install a hose clip on the shaft on the underside of the top steady bearing. This makes it impossible, in the event of the pinch-bolt not performing, for the shaft to slide back and off the spline. Unlikely? Max has seen it happen twice.

CLASSIFIED

For sale: Cooper Mk V JAP 500, history in UK and Australia with Tom Hawkes and Bill Patterson with 500 and 997 JAPs. Brian Reed, 20 Carnoustie Ave, Jan Juc 3228

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

For sale: photocopies of 28 issues of IOTA, UK 500 club magazine between June 1949 and October 1953. Terry McGrath 08 9279 7003, fax 08 9377 3939

Wanted: rev counter, 0-8000 rpm, for restoration of Ron Ewing's Harley-Norton. Bob Morey, (02) 6280 7570 (bus), (02) 6292 9661 (a.h.)

THE LOG

OVER the relatively quiet December-February period there have been some outings:

☛ December 9 – Gebbies Pass hillclimb, New Zealand: Craig Pidgeon, Cooper Mk X JAP (F.T.D., no less!)

☛ January 16 – GEAR club, Wakefield Park: Garry Simkin, Cooper Mk IV Vincent

☛ January 26-27 – HSRCA historic races, Oran Park: Andrew Halliday, Cooper Mk V Norton (which finished all its races), John Gale, Cooper Mk IV JAP 1100.



'Excuse me, is this the way to Shelsley Walsh?'

Terry Wright has shipped the Walton-JAP to the UK for the 2002 hillclimb season.

MYSTERY SOLVED

ONE of the mystery air-cooled cars shown in Loose Fillings #3 has been identified by Mike Truter as a car he owned in Singapore about 20 years ago.

"I am very vague about dates," Mike told Loose Fillings, "but I can tell you that I found the car in Changi when I went to look at an Austin Healey. The Healey was no good but I spotted the "mystery" car hidden in grass two feet high and I ended up buying it. I cannot remember how much I paid for it. I never did anything with it, as I was at that stage involved with about 16 other cars!

"I finally sold it to a fellow in Penang, for whom I delivered it to a factory in Jurong. I don't believe it ever made it to Penang, and fear that it may have been

scrapped in a clean-up of the factory in Jurong.

"When I bought the car it had no engine. I was told it had previously had a JAP engine, which had been removed and sent to Australia. I bought a 500cc Norton for it. The fellow who bought the car never collected the engine, which went to a bike nut who now lives in Bulli.

"The chassis could be Cooper or Kieft, possibly as modified locally by Lim Peng Han and known as an LA Special. Somewhere I have a photograph of him driving the car at a Gap hillclimb, where I believe he set F.T.D. Peng Han was a very well-known builder of specials, all called LA Specials. I do not believe any of them have survived. He was a very interesting driver, being the only Asian other than Prince Bira, as far as I know, to have raced at Brooklands. He is now in his late 80s and lives in Singapore, and could probably put your average bloke to shame when it comes to downing a pint."

MARK DYMOND

MARK Dymond, eldest son of Penrite Oil Company's John Dymond and team leader of Penrite's collection of historic cars, died of cancer in Melbourne in mid-January.

He switched to four wheels in the late 1980s after racing motorcycles, and drove the Carter Corvette, a Mk 1 Lola, a very fast AC Ace-Zephyr and the immaculately-presented Mk V and Mk IX Coopers. A close associate described him as "a damn good driver, an easy going bloke who would help anyone in need." 42 years old, Mark left a partner and two children.



It's hard to believe this is a 50-year old racing car. This is the Mk IV Cooper Vincent first seen at Mt Druitt in December 1950 with John Snow, which recently emerged from a comprehensive restoration by current owner Garry Simkin. Photo Terry Wright.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA FOR TAURANAC

RON Tauranac, designer of Brabham and Ralt racing cars, was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the 2002 Australia Day honours.

Born in England in 1925, he came to Australia with his parents and his younger brother Austin in the late 1920s. He was an early convert to the Australian chapter of the post-war movement for "affordable" 500cc cars, and his first racing car, the Norton-powered Ralt 1, appeared in 1949.

A long letter in Australian Motor Sports magazine in January 1949 (before the first Ralt was seen in public), and some of the detail in the 1951 AMS article about the Ford 10-engined Ralt sports car, show he was already a keen student of suspension design.

His friendship and exchange of ideas with Jack Brabham continued when Brabham went to England in 1955, and in 1960 he accepted the offer to join Brabham's planned venture to manufacture his own racing cars.

From the one-off MRD Formula Junior of 1961 to the last Tauranac-designed Brabhams in 1971, more than 600 cars were built, including the Repco V8-powered cars which won World Championships in 1966 and 1967. He resumed manufacture under the Ralt name in late 1974 and had built more than a thousand Ralts when his last design, the RT35, went out of production in 1991.

Sadly for those of us interested in air-cooled cars of the '50s, it is the Brabhams and RT-series Ralts which are Ron Tauranac's most enduring contribution to Australian racing, because none of the early Australian-built Ralts appear to have survived.

The first car was heavily revised in 1951-52, sold to Merv Ward in late 1954 and raced very effectively by him until 1957. Several owners later it was crashed at Gnoo Blas in 1960 and written off.

The second car was a Ford 10-engined sports car which first appeared in 1951 and was the only Ralt ever built with a live rear axle. It was Austin Tauranac's road car for a while, and is believed to have been written off in Queensland in the late 1950s.

The third car, raced by Austin from mid-1954, was based on the pioneering NSW 500 built by the Hooper brothers, and was last heard of in South Australia in the late 1950s.

The fourth Ralt, with 998 Vincent power and de Dion rear suspension, appeared in late 1956, was bought by Noel Hall in late 1957 and vigorously campaigned by him, but in the early 1960s, several owners later, this car too appears to have been lost.

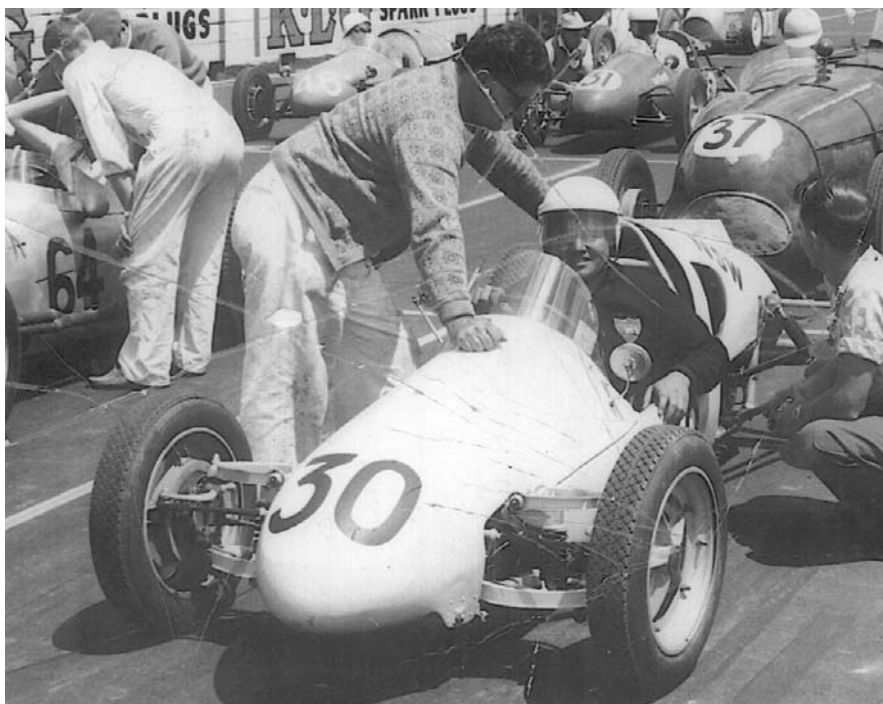


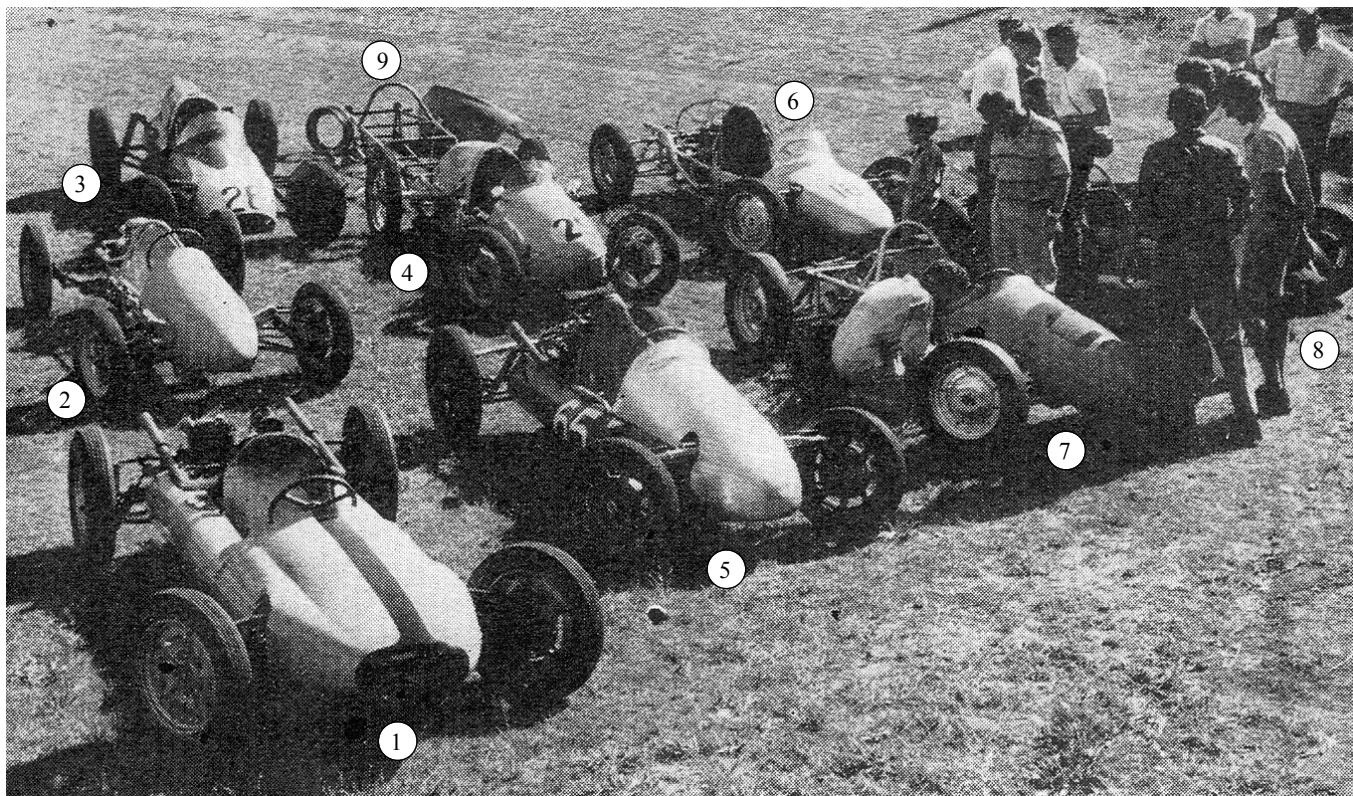
A fifth Ralt, with Peugeot power, was incomplete when Ron Tauranac went to England in 1960, but is believed to be the car now owned by Doug Grant. In addition, at least three semi-production Ralts were built in 1959-60 by other owners using Ralt-designed and manufactured chassis and suspension components.

One of them, which was raced and hill-climbed by Toby Hindes in 1960, is now owned by Todd Hamilton and is amazingly original. A Ralt chassis also formed the basis for at least one early Lynx, and Ralt

components, particularly the composite wheels, of which there were at least five different types, were used on many one-off cars.

Ron Tauranac (above) aged 27, at King Edward Park hillclimb in 1952 with the revised version of Ralt 1. Photo courtesy Jeff Newey. Below: the Vincent-powered Ralt IV with Reg Mulligan at Catalina Park in 1961. Visible behind are Alan Hindes' production Ralt Vincent (no. 31) and Alan Heasman's ex-Lumb car with Ralt nose and wheels. Photo courtesy Andrew Halliday.





COMING - 500CC FUN - THEY'RE TINY, THEY'RE CHEAP - AND THEY'RE QUICK

UNDER this breezy heading the photograph above, taken in late 1959 in Centennial Park, Sydney, was published in the January 1960 issue of Sports Car World magazine. It showed nine NSW air-cooled cars in various stages of completion. None of the cars were identified in the SCW story, and while some are recognisable some of them are still unknown. As published, the original picture suffered from lack of detail. Information about any of these cars would be very welcome.

1: a very rare picture of the second car inspired by Bob Joass' Triumph special, the **Triumph 650-powered Tomec** built by Tom Bridson. It used a nose modified from a locally-made fibreglass copy of an early F2 Cooper. This car competed briefly during 1960, but its subsequent history is unknown.

2: an unidentified car, possibly the **Fatouros BSA**. It appears to have very long rear radius arms and unusual outrigger top mounts for the front wishbones and suspension.

3: the **Nota AJS**, just completed and at that time owned by motorcycle racer Ross "Splinta" Pentecost, who had been able to borrow a factory-built stretched 7R AJS engine which was a forerunner to the G50 Matchless. The car was sold without engine to Owen Tracey, who raced and

hillclimbed it with a pushrod AJS twin. It eventually went to the tip. Nota Engineering is said to have built a second car in this style for a NSW South Coast customer, but further details are not known.

4: **Wilbur Watson's EAW**, with backbone chassis and ES2-based engine, which first appeared in mid-1957 and ran 16.95 one-way for the quarter-mile. Watson gave the car to the Powerhouse Museum, which has displayed it at least once, and carefully preserves the car, its spares and records.

5: The only series-built car in the group (and even this one had an Australian-made body): the **Mk V Cooper Norton** originally raced by Bill Shipway, owned for a long time by Ron Ewing, brought back to historic racing by Ashley Cowan and now raced by the Hallidays.

6: **Ron Ewing's Harley Norton**, first seen in 1957 with swing-axle rear suspension and Norton 500, here after conversion to wishbone rear suspension and Harley-ES2 pushrod V-twin power. After an eventful 1980s career in Historic racing in Victoria, this car is now being restored by Bob Morey in Canberra.

7: **Toby Hindes' Vincent-powered Ralt**, semi-complete at this stage before its debut early in 1960 with a 500cc Vincent Comet engine. Toby Hindes raced and hillclimbed it with both Comet and Vincent twin, then

sold it in the early 1960s to Todd Hamilton, who still owns it

8 John Lumb's car, one of two inspired by Bob Joass' Triumph-engined car (see Loose Fillings #10) Although the car is obscured in the SCW article show the Lumb car powered by a Square Four Ariel. It later ran Triumph twins, and is probably the car known as the Scarab, which returned to Historic racing with Bill Boldison, was later raced by David Reid, and is now believed to be in Orange.

9: a bare chassis with some distinctive features, possibly the **Ralt-built chassis** shown in SCW in August 1958.

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