

LOOSE FILLINGS

GOOD VIBRATIONS

The Bruce Campbell story in this issue reminds us that the history of 500cc cars goes back to the 1950s and earlier, with drivers and constructors all around the world. Sixty years later, motorcycle-engined cars are still distinctive, still deliver great performance for the money, and still have their loyal band of believers. The big difference to-day is how few of them there are: our cars are the fortunate survivors. Good reason to celebrate them - and preserve them.

HOLLYWOOD to HOCKENHEIM

Ballarat-born Bruce Campbell, mentioned in the last *Loose Fillings* as probably the most active Australian 500 driver of 1950 – despite doing all his 500cc racing in Europe – turns out to have been much more than a one-season racer. He was a most remarkable character indeed.

Thanks to UK 500cc historian Nigel Challis, *Loose Fillings* was directed to a reference to Campbell on the 500 Owners Association web site www.500race.org.

Nigel also put us in touch with one of Bruce Campbell's sons, Bruce jnr, who provided a lot of additional information and some excellent photographs. *Wheels* magazine ran a story about him in its June 1955 issue, and *People* magazine ran a story in August 1957.

Campbell snr's mother was American; he was born in Ballarat in 1911, but grew up and was educated in Seattle in the US after the family moved there in 1917. At school he was a useful swimmer, but he

caught the racing bug and had his first races, aged 17, on dirt in a Fronty Ford. The magazine stories say that by the early 1930s he was racing up and down the West Coast, and went on to race midgets and stock cars in many parts of the US, and ran twice at Indianapolis under assumed names. In 1934 he also became the star of

Bruce Campbell (white overalls with Australian flag) at the Nurburgring in 1950. Photo courtesy Bruce Campbell jnr.



“Crash Campbell’s Hollywood Stunt Men,” which turned his considerable experience in actual movie stunting into a successful road show which played to huge crowds.

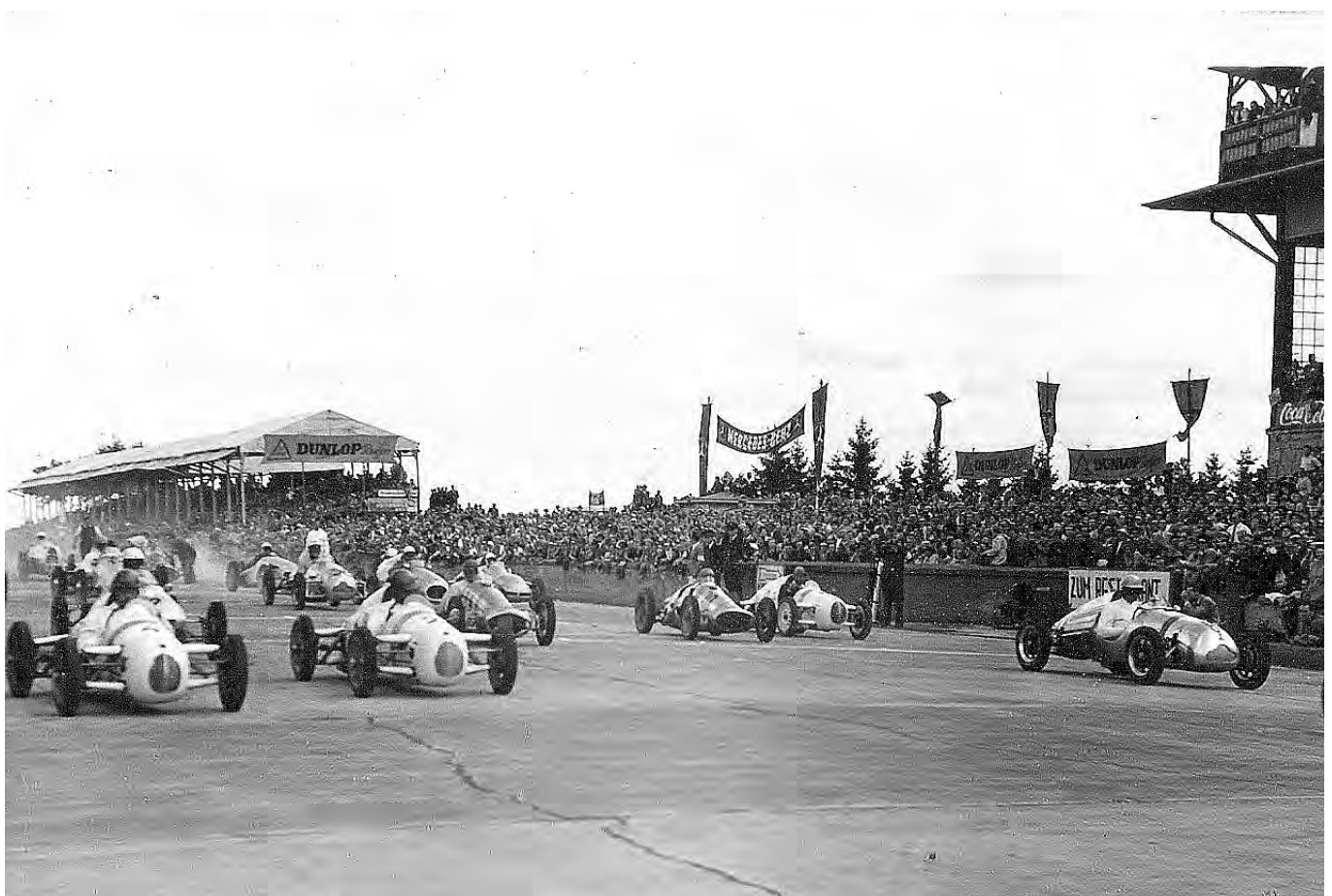
He joined the US Army in WW2, won the Legion d’Honneur and the US Bronze Star for valour as a tank captain in Europe, and after the war stayed on in Germany, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He appears to have been a competitor in some of the earliest post-war motorsport events

in Germany, driving a variety of cars. Bruce Campbell jnr. points out that records of these events, and of his father’s racing in France, Belgium and Italy, are now very hard to find.

Fortunately, as noted in the last *Loose Fillings*, details of his 1950 season in Germany are carried on the German web site www.formel3guide.com His car is shown simply as an RC Special, but photographs provided by Bruce Campbell jnr, and another photograph in the UK weekly

The Autocar from November 24, 1950, provide more detail. The car’s name was derived from those of its constructors, Reiderich and Campbell. It had a multi-tube chassis, front suspension was Fiat 500, rear suspension VW swing axles,

Top left, plug check with RC Special, 1950. Top right, MH2 at Hockenheim, 1953. Bottom, race start at the Nurburgring in the early '50s, with two German-built Monopoletta-BMWs in the foreground. Photos courtesy Bruce Campbell jnr.



trailing arms and torsion bars. The engine was a BMW flat twin which drove an early-model VW gearbox.

Campbell returned to Australia in 1951, but in 1953 went back to Germany as a private businessman, and raced an MH2, a car built in Switzerland by Manfred Herbster. The car was intended to allow use of a 500cc BMW engine for F3, or a larger engine for the 2-litre Formula 2. In only his second outing with the car, in a

500cc race at Hockenheim, Campbell was very badly burned when the car caught fire.

After almost a year in hospital he came back to Australia to stay. Bruce Campbell jnr. told *Loose Fillings* his father started the Victorian branch of the MG Car Club, and was a great enthusiast for hillclimbing, and for the development of motor racing at Phillip Island and Albert Park. In the early 1960s he did some stunt driving for Simca,

and in the late 1960s he moved to Queensland. He died in 1980.

Campbell maintained his European motor racing friendships – after his death the family was surprised to receive condolence messages from Stirling Moss and Prince Bira. Bruce Campbell jnr. pointed out that his father always raced with an Australian flag on his overalls. “Despite being a naturalised American citizen, he was always a proud Australian.”

South Australia produced some of our earliest and most innovative air-cooled cars, but Bob Burnett-Read’s BSA-powered car did not appear until Collingrove hillclimb at Easter 1953, and was relatively conservative in design and construction. Just for those reasons it might have been expected to have had a longer career, but its last reported appearance was only two years later. In 2008 Burnett-Read said he had tried unsuccessfully to trace the car, and that it may have become the basis for a speedcar.

Burnett-Read had been an aircraft engineer – a job somewhat similar to that of a test pilot - during WW2, and had flown a range of aircraft including Mustangs. He later raced an 1100cc supercharged six-cylinder MG K3.

The chassis of the Sprog was based on a Fiat 500 with a tubular superstructure. Rear suspension was swing-axle with a

Lost Australian 500s **SPROG TYPE D** Fifth in an occasional series

transverse leaf spring, front suspension was Fiat 500, wheelbase was 84 inches, and weight was quoted as 525lbs. Steering was a rack and pinion which the constructor built himself, fabricating his own rack casing, milling his own rack, choosing a production pinion, and heating and hammering the rack case to establish a suitable mesh.

The wire wheels, he said, were the most expensive part of the car. They used Amilcar knock-off hubs spoked into 15” motorcycle front rims and deep well-base rear rims discovered lying at a wheel works. Cost also influenced the choice of the integral-gearbox 500cc BSA twin,

which was less expensive than a Triumph. A report of the time said the engine ran twin Amals but was otherwise standard other than being carefully balanced; it was said to have 30bhp at 5800 rpm.

Its first outing at Collingrove lowered the existing 500cc record, and the car further lowered the record at a later meeting. It was reported to be “very stable” and “a dream to drive.” However Bill Patterson then arrived with his 500cc Mk5 Cooper JAP and put the Collingrove record out of reach. The car set FTD at a closed Collingrove in May 1954, and in April 1955 it was reported as being driven by Jack Sheppard, a friend of the constructor, but the car is not mentioned in Australian Motor Sports magazine after this.

Constructor Bob Burnett-Read and the Sprog in the pit area at Collingrove, 1954, photo from the Kevin Shearer collection



THE LOG

Character and challenge – that explains a lot of what air-cooled cars are about.

Whenever one of our cars makes a public appearance, neither the drivers nor the onlookers are likely to forget! Therefore, let the record show:

- March 27, Eddington (Vic) sprints – John Coffin (Robbins BSA)
- April 3-4, Mallala (South Australia) historic races: Michael Shearer (Pentland JAP 500); Brian Simpson (Derry Greeneklee's Cooper Mk9 JAP 1100)
- April 3-4, Broadford (Vic) classic motorcycles: David Palstra (Newbound BSA)
- May 2, Rob Roy (Vic) hillclimb: Ken Bedggood (Penrite's Mk5 Cooper JAP 1100), John Coffin (Robbins BSA), David Palstra (Newbound BSA)
- May 29-30, Winton (Vic) historic races: Brian Simpson (Greeneklee Cooper Mk9 JAP 1100 – "what a weapon!" to quote the driver)
- May 29-30, Mt Coot-tha (Queensland) sprints: John Lennon (Bowman JAP 500)
- June 9, Wakefield Park (NSW) GEAR day: Terry Perkins (Scarab Triumph 650)

The Log is a record of public appearances in Australia and New Zealand of pre-1961 historic air-cooled racing cars which are close to their original specification in terms of engine, wheels and bodywork.

FRED SCHUBACH

One of the earliest members of the 500cc movement in NSW, Fred Schubach, died in Sydney on May 26, aged 91. As well as being an unwavering 500 supporter, he was an active motorsport journalist and photographer.

He recalled the NSW Light Car Club in the 1930s as being "very pukka; one really should have gone to the right schools" – he himself had gone to Fort Street, a state school for outstanding students. Whether or not this pre-war experience influenced his outlook, he shared the post-WW2 enthusiasm for the "everyman" promise of the 500cc movement. While he never considered building or driving a car of his own, he was a founder member of the 500 Car Club of NSW, fellow members including Bill Conoulty, Bob Joass, Dave Stephenson, Ron and Austin Tauranac, and

E.A. "Wilbur" Watson. (Notable non-members were Bill and Jack Hooper, constructors of the very successful pioneering NSW 500. "They were rebels," he said later). He was elected as the first secretary of the 500 club at its inaugural meeting in June 1947, and was elected president for each of the two following years, which is as far as it has been possible to trace the club's early history.

The club lost impetus in the early 1950s, but informal meetings were held in members' homes and at Austin Tauranac's garage at Circular Quay, and in 1958 the club briefly revived, still with Fred Schubach as president. Other members in these later years included Bob Britton, Tony Fatouros, Peter Graham, Bob Joass, Ron Shirley, Wilbur Watson and Peter Williamson.

Motoring journalism was only a part-time activity, never his profession – he eventually held a senior management position in the plastics industry – but under the by-line F.A.Schubach he wrote for Australian Motor Sports magazine from 1948, then for Motor Manual from 1950, also contributing to the early editions of Motor Manual's motor racing annuals. From July 1955 through to May 1966 he wrote a monthly motorsport column for NRMA's monthly journal, The Open Road. He was a keen amateur photographer, and his motorsport work provides a useful record of NSW motor sport in the late '40s and early '50s.

He was also an enthusiastic sailor and skier, and he and his wife Heather were accomplished amateur painters. He is survived by Heather, their children Simon and Penny and their families.

BITS AND PIECES

● Wakefield Park's historic race meeting on September 18-19 organised by Historic Sports & Racing Car Association, will make special provision for air-cooled racing cars. A free marquee will be available, and owners of air-cooled cars can choose either to simply display them, or participate in parades, or (if they and their cars have the necessary CAMS paperwork) race or run in regularity events. More information from Dick Willis, willisrg@smarchat.net.au, 02 6652 2099.

● Reg Hunt's Vincent special, which won the 1953 Australian Hillclimb championship (after losing the 1951 title by a bare .02 secs to Jack Brabham's speedcar) was bought at a Sotheby's auction in Melbourne in April by Paul Zahra, who also owns the Tasmanian-built Walkem Vincent.

The total price of \$52,900 (including no less than 15 per cent buyer's premium) is impressive for an Australian special, per-

haps influenced by the Vincent engine. The car's Centric supercharger, also offered by Sotheby's, found a different buyer.

Built in Melbourne, the Hunt special first appeared in late 1949, powered by a 500 JAP. It had Morgan-type pillar front suspension and swing-axle rear, and on narrow 19-inch tyres it could look spidery and precarious. Hunt, however, was a talented driver, and was very successful with the car in 500cc and later Vincent-powered form.

It was sold briefly to South Australia in the mid-'50s, but it has spent almost all its life with the Hunt family. In recent years it has been extensively restored, the original chassis being offered for sale with the restored car.

● Also sold recently is the Peugeot-engined Ralt which was restored and raced in historic by Doug Grant and which has been bought by Graham Dell in Sydney. While this is a water-cooled car, it is of interest to *Loose Fillings* because there is a strong possibility that it is based on the Ralt Vincent used briefly by Ron Tauranac in 1957 before being bought by Noel Hall, and later raced with quite some success by Reg Mulligan.

● Streamlined Coopers set many 500cc and 1100cc records in the early 1950s, and John Cooper occasionally raced one. At least one streamliner later raced with success in the US fitted with a Porsche engine, but none ever came to Australia. However, according to a report in the Canberra Times in 1952, Alec Mildren (who at that time lived in Canberra, and who later drove a series of Coopers and won the 1960 AGP) planned to import "a streamlined Cooper" to which he proposed to fit an un-named 3-litre aircraft V8 engine. Nothing came of the idea, but it could have had huge impact on motor racing, Australian and world-wide.

● South Australian Cooper racer Derry Greeneklee has decided to retire, being in his 80th year, and has handed on his very effective Mk9 JAP1100 to Melbourne driver Brian Simpson. Brian had his first run with it at the Easter Mallala historic meeting in regularity, and followed with Winton at the end of May.

From the mid-1990s, the Greeneklee Cooper has been developed to deliver performance not seen from a car of this type since the early 1960s, and race wins at historic meetings on medium-speed circuits like Winton, Mallala and Wakefield Park have been suitable rewards for his skilled preparation and driving of a very demanding car. Brian Simpson too is an experienced and skilled driver and preparer of racing cars, so the Cooper will be in good hands, with Derry, hopefully, still in attendance.

ALCOHOL PASSPORT

Some time ago I raised with FIA Historic Motorsport Commission members in Europe and Australia the anomaly whereby many cars that used alcohol in their period are prohibited from competing in FIA events. This was because the FIA historic rules strictly limit the use of alcohol to cars of certain dates and specific FIA formulas, such as F1, F2 and F3.

Under this policy, not only could neither of my ex Bruce Walton cars compete in the FIA Historic Hillclimb Championship, but neither could any of the later-model Cooper JAP twins which dominated hill-climbing around the world in the 1950s.

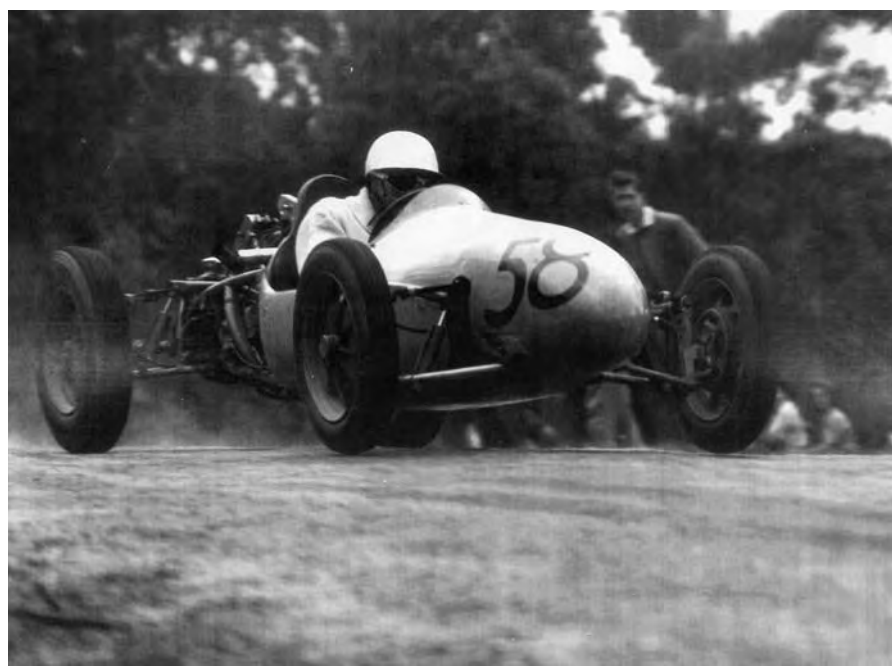
I am pleased to hear that Paul Hamilton, Australian delegate to the Commission, has initiated changes to FIA Appendix K which would allow any car that used alcohol in its period to use it in FIA historic events. The amendment has been approved by the Technical Working Group of the Commission and now only requires World Motorsport Council ratification.

Well done Paul.

Terry Wright

AIR-COOLED BY THE BOOK

The excitement and the frustration of racing a motorcycle-engined car has never been better described than in D. Tweaks' *The Maturing of an Historic Racer*. What's more, it's about racing in Australia, with the names of many recognisable historic racing figures (including the author himself) only thinly disguised, while the car itself is quite specifically identified: a Mk9 Cooper, run first with a 500cc JAP, then with a transmission-devouring 1100cc twin.



Just as recognisable are the many challenges of the air-cooled world – from how to explain to a long-suffering wife that a collection of rusty tubes is in fact a bargain-priced racing car, through to how to push-start the completed device with minimal loss of life.

It's a busy 120 pages – race descriptions, what-broke stories, workshop experiences, even reproductions of some of the pages from the five log-books in which the owner carefully recorded his maintenance and racing activity. And most unusually for any motorsport book, this one has a sense of humour. The secret of survival, some might say, for the owner of any air-cooled car. Price is \$15 including postage, copies available from Publisher Derry Greeneklee 08 8261 0888.

We can't do justice here to this superb photo (below) of Bruce Walton at Templestowe on 2 November 1958 with the Cooper's front wheels just airborne. All we have is a photocopy kindly sent in by Graham Hoinville who doesn't have a proper print. Has anyone got one - *Loose Fillings* would love to copy it?

CLASSIFIEDS

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

For sale: BB Ariel, built '60-'61, Red Hunter engine, Norton box, complete spare engine plus engine and gearbox spares, new body panels. Chris Tracey, 02 6280 5285.

For sale: Cooper Mk5, ex Hawkes, Patterson etc, huge Australian history with 500 and 8/80 JAPs including 1954 Australian Hillclimb Championship. Freshly overhauled 500 JAP. Offers to Peter Harburg, (07) 3839 9699.

For sale: Starting motor suit any 500 car, K series BMW by NipponDenso complete with reduction gears and sprag clutch modified with sprocket fitted to drive engine mainshaft. Cost over \$750 but have changed plans so will sell for \$500. Terry Wright, 02 9418 2974 or tswright@gmail.com

For sale: motoring and motorsport books and magazines, mostly US and European, email for 12-page list. Graham Howard. grimes@ix.net.au or 02 4787 8772

For sale: Arnott JAP, 1952, one of two special long-chassis cars ex Ivor Bueb, modified in England by Pip Preece to coil-over suspension and lengthened by 10" in the centre of the chassis. Immaculate condition. Contact Rob Williams, NZ 09 427 8120 or roshwill@orcon.net.nz

For sale: motorcycle books, going inexpensively, list in past *Loose Fillings*. Peter Molloy, 02 4341 0679

For sale: 12 volt roller starting system to get your air-cooled car fired up. New and unused. Starts singles and large twins, comes with jump-leads, starter cable and button and "hockey stick" jack to raise the other rear wheel. Garry, 02 9958 3935, or gjsimkin@iprimus.com.au

Wanted: Have bought 1936/7 Skirrow midget speedcar and need 8/80 JAP twin bits especially duplex Pilgrim pump as in photo, 27/013 dirt track Amal carb parts and any long 4 stud barrels. Have a look under the bench please! Terry Wright, 02 9418 2974 or tswright@gmail.com



MORE KEVIN SHEARER PHOTOS

Still no final answers for either of last issue's photos from the collection of the late Kevin Shearer. The Mk4 Cooper V-twin is very probably Keith Martin's car, the first Cooper to race in Australia, location probably Fishermens Bend in January

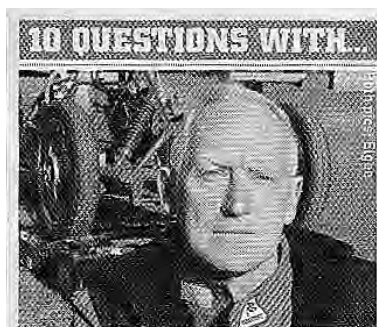


More Kevin Shearer photos. Left - tow-starting a two-man Cooper, but whose, where and when? Below - car and location not too hard, but who and when? Right - Victorian air-cooled stalwart John Coffin recently profiled in Auto Action - (reproduced with permission).



1950, driver Arthur Wylie, who may be the man in the white overalls. The four-spoke steering wheel looks to be from a midget speedcar

The Mk5 Cooper may have been photographed at Albert Park, but its owner, and the date of the meeting, are unknown. Two more uncertain photos are below



JOHN COFFIN

AGE: 72
OCCUPATION: Retired
RACE CAR: Robbins 500 Air-cooled
SERIES: Hillclimbs

What is your first memory of motor racing?

Australian Grand Prix at Albert Park in 1952

What do you love about it?

Friendship

What was your first race car?

Home built Sprint Car

What happened in your first race?

I finished, happily!

What's been your best race, and why?

Breaking 30 seconds at Rob Roy hillclimb in the Robbins 500.

What's your dream car?

Cooper Vincent Supercharged

What's your motor racing dream?

To run a Cooper Vincent at Goodwood Revival

Who's your racing hero?

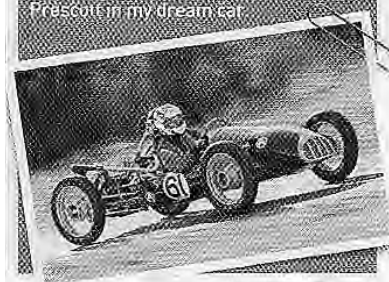
Niki Lauda

What's your favourite motor racing movie?

Le Mans

What would you do with \$1 million?

Share it but keep enough to drive at Goodwood. Shelsley Walsh and Prescott in my dream car



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