

# OUR 1950s MOTORING SCENARIO

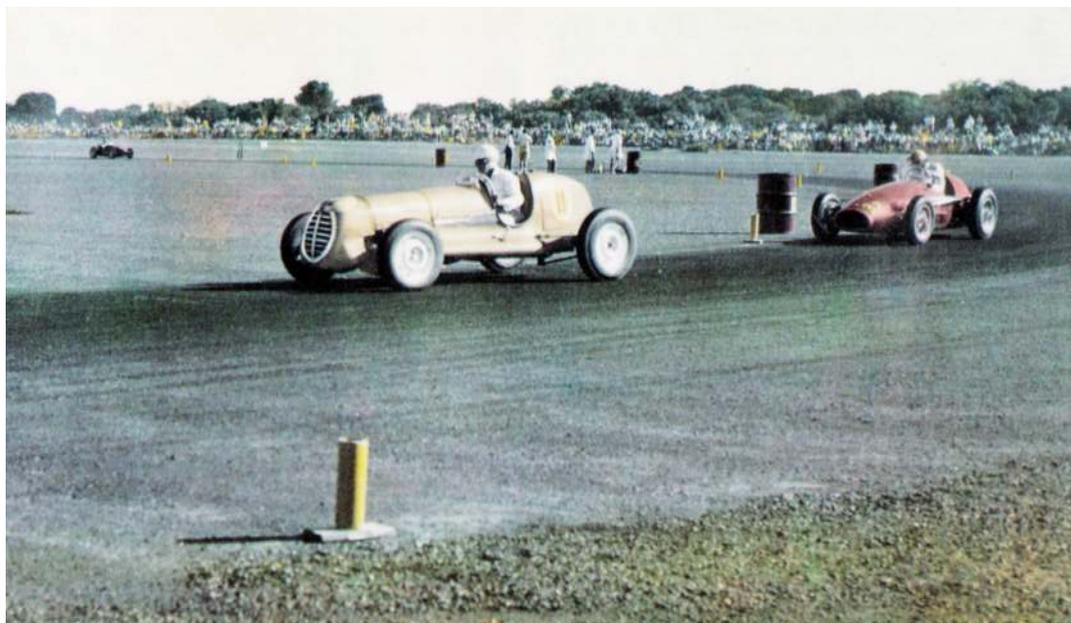
## THE EERSTE RIVIER SPEEDWAY

By *Derek Stuart-Findlay*

In the competition to find decent racing venues, the Cape Peninsula Motor Cycle Club (CPMCC) secured the use of the Hottentots Holland Flying Club airfield at Eerste Rivier, built during the war for Air/Sea Rescue training. Access was off a narrow roadway that linked the Old Faure Road, the national route to the east, and the False Bay coast at Swartklip. A 1.33-mile triangular track was laid out; it was crude, consisting of tar sprayed over gravel with numerous tricky loose spots, all spectators, however, were offered excellent views.

The first meeting was held in April 1951, and consisted of 15-lap motorcycle races. George Anderson won the main event on his 'Double Knocker' Norton in 18 minutes 46 seconds. His performance was reported with some awe: 'His power slides when he accelerated from the corners looked most alarming to the spectators, but did not seem to worry George any!' The next meeting was for both motorcycles and cars. The first sports car race featured the winner, Ralph Clarke, in his 847 cc MG, and third-placed Roddy Turner in his 1 098 cc tubular chassis A40 Special. A colourful character, Terry Bullen, came off his 490 Norton in the motorcycle race, he overdid it in a bend and disappeared into the bushes. The race was stopped, he was discovered unconscious in a ditch but soon recovered, and the corner was immediately dubbed 'Bullen's Bend'. The event for cars over 1500 cc was won by Hoffie le Roux in his blown Cisapriolia, followed by his brother Dawie in his LRX and John Radcliff in his 3704 cc Studebaker.

Although these first meetings placed Eerste Rivier on the map, it would be two years before the speedway could secure its first major competition. 1953 was the first year of the SA Drivers' Championship, contested over five events. As the Grand Central Circuit in the Transvaal was unable



*Chris Andrews in his Studebaker Special leading Tony Gaze in the Formula 1 Ferrari at Eerste Rivier, March 1955*

to participate financially, the competition was held at two venues at the Cape, two in Natal and one in East London. Although the Third and Fourth Van Riebeeck Trophy races had been held at Gunners' Circle in 1951/2, for the 1953 competition Gunners' Circle staged the Second False Bay 100 in January, with Eerste Rivier hosting the Fifth Van Riebeeck Trophy in March. The track had been extended to 1.75 miles by the addition of a loop to the south-east incorporating a sweep named the Gordon's Bay Bend.

The 29 starters of the 35-lap Van Riebeeck Trophy were handicapped into six groups, the first receiving seven credit laps. The competitors included Roy Humphries (Consul Special), Donald Philp (MG Special), Gordon Lindsay (1089 cc Montmorency), Tex Kingon (Indianapolis Studebaker), Raymond Rieder, J.W. Davis and Walter Frewen (Frewen Specials), Bill Jennings and Edgar Hoal (Riley Specials), Pat Brown (Lancia Special) and Stanley Reed (Citroën Special). Capetonian Peter Hard made an impression in his immaculate Kieft replica 648 cc

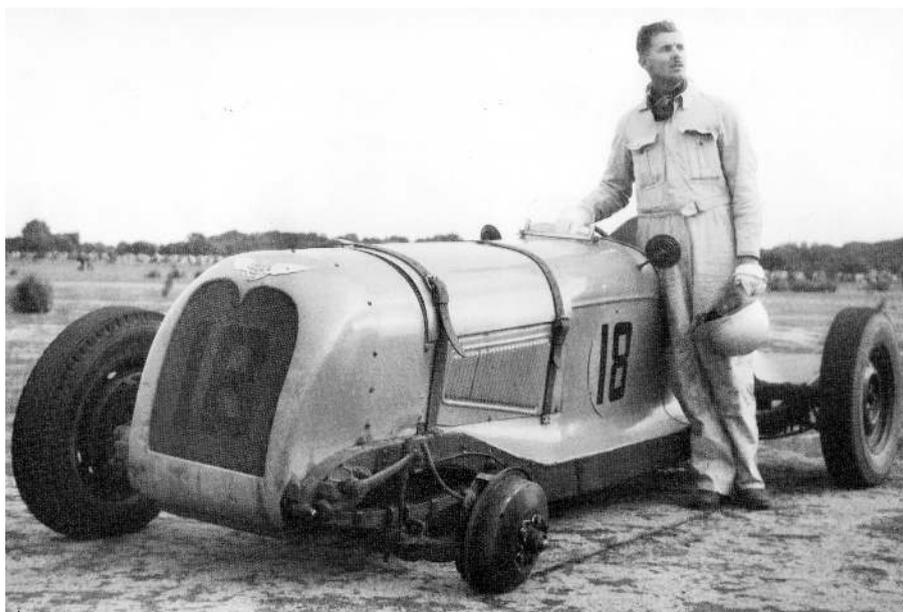
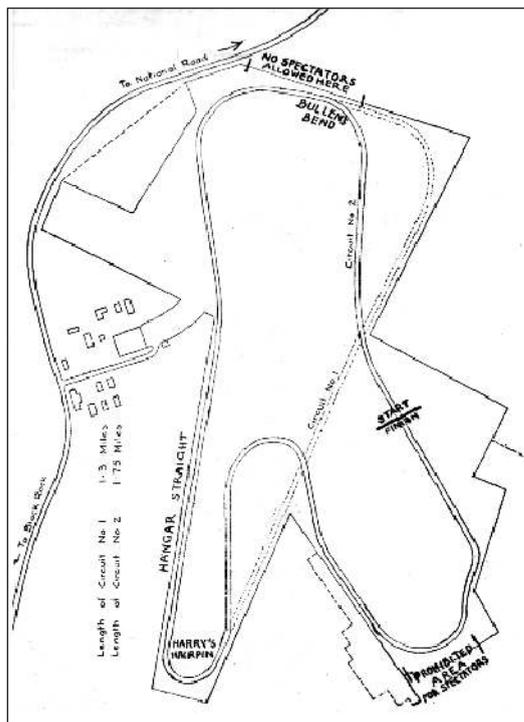
BSA-engined Harwin Special, overtaking numerous other competitors before a rod smashed through the side of his engine. Reed slid off the road at Bullen's Bend and mowed down several small trees, but did not damage his Citroën too severely; unfortunately

Lindsay's car, after a crash at the same corner, did not get off as lightly. Ultimately Neil de Kock, in his sleek 1090 cc Millicento, won on handicap, followed by Roy Humphries and Bill Jennings.

The Sixth Van Riebeeck Trophy, held at Eerste Rivier in March



*A cheerful Terry Bullen (centre) recovering from his motorcycle accident, 1951*



Raymond Rieder and a 3-wheeled Frewen Special, 1953

← The runways and circuits at Eerste Rivier

1954, was controversial from the start. Competitors were annoyed when a late entry was accepted from B.A. (Joe) Conradie who was given a very favourable handicap of six laps for his 1172 cc 'Bird Cage' Ford Special. It was an extraordinary car that had appeared in the Second SA Grand Prix in January 1936, driven by Hector Wiggill who had built it up using an engine from a Fordson van mounted on a 1918 Model T Ford chassis. Don Matthews competed in his new car, the ex-Roddy Turner Austin A40 Special, equipped with a 1203 cc motor inclined on its side; he put up one of the best performances of his career before breaking his steering gear. Similarly, after ten laps Donald Philp was well ahead when his steering arm severed. A David and Goliath contest between Peter Hard in his 648 cc Harwin and Tex Kingon in his 2.7 litre 6C34 Maserati entertained the 14 000 spectators immensely. Hard could not pass Kingon on the straight but succeeded twice on corners before being overtaken again. The finish between these two and third-placed Bill Maclean in his MG was photographic, all seeming to cross the line together. It was reported that Joe Conradie 'only had to drive at Sunday afternoon motoring speed to be assured of victory', ahead of Bill Jennings in his Riley in second place. Controls had been poor, only 4 000 spectators had paid entry fees and the CPMCC had

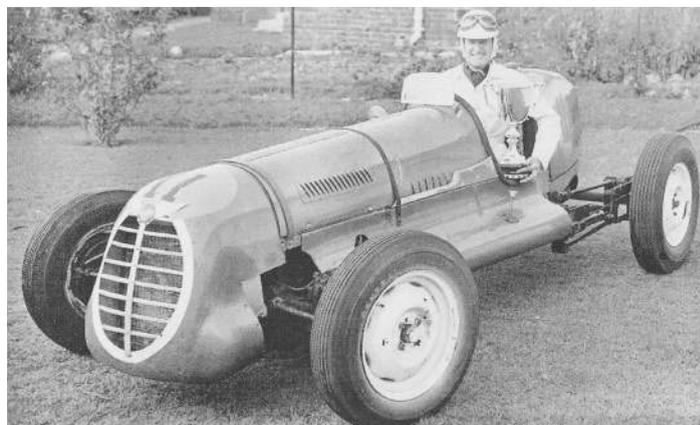
chalked up considerable losses.

The Metropolitan Motor Cycle and Car club (The Mets) had to step in to organize the Seventh Van Riebeeck Trophy in March 1955. For the first time since the war, overseas drivers were to compete in SA Championship races. Peter Whitehead of England and Tony Gaze of Australia, both in 1954 Grand Prix Ferraris fitted with 3-litre Monza sports engines, had just competed in a racing season 'down under' and had agreed to stop over in Cape Town while returning to the UK. Ferraris had swept all before them in the 1952 and 1953 World Championships, winning 14 of the 15 Grand Prix, and the cars attracted a record crowd of 34 000 to Eerste Rivier. Thirty entries lined up to do battle over 42 laps and although the short, twisty and crowded circuit was not to their liking, the Ferraris passed

car after car with phenomenal acceleration, reaching 140 mph down the Hangar Straight. Chris Andrews had entered his Studebaker Special, with a 2.8-litre Studebaker engine mounted on a reinforced Peugeot 202 chassis. At the end of the race he emerged the

winner, with Philp second, Reed third, and the heavily-handicapped Ferraris 11th and 13th. The single outlet to the National Road proved a problem, the circuit was still being cleared at 9 pm, three and a half hours after the race.

No Van Riebeeck Trophy was →



A triumphant Chris Andrews and his Studebaker Special, winner of the 7th Van Riebeeck Trophy



An MG Special (20) being lapped by Tony Gaze in the Ferrari

held in 1956 as the First International Cape Grand Prix was held at Gunners' Circle in March that year, but the competition reverted to Eerste Rivier in 1957. Four overseas drivers were featured, Dick Gibson (Connaught) and Lord Louth (Jaguar D-Type) from Britain, and New Zealanders Ray Thackwell and Ron Moore, both in 1100 cc Cooper Climaxes. Moore jumped the start and roared off well into the lead, only to spin off on a tight bend during the first lap. Vic Procter made several detours into the countryside in his 1100 cc Kieft Climax, eventually collecting a large bush which led to his retirement. Roddy Turner was second on handicap in his 2660 cc Austin Healey before slowing dramatically. Although Moore had

been given a five-second penalty for his jumped start which initially gave Bill Jennings the victory, this was reversed on appeal as his pit crew had not been advised in time; Moore's teammate Thackwell came in third.

The only overseas entrant for the Ninth van Riebeeck Trophy held in March 1958 at Eerste Rivier was Dick Gibson in a Cooper Climax, while Willie Meissner and Bob van Niekerk had entered their prototype GSM Darts. Villiersdorp resident Flip Viljoen was a new contestant with his ex-Burroughes/Radcliff Studebaker Special, by then equipped with a 4-litre Studebaker V8. He had learnt his driving the hard way - in five-ton trucks, and impressed the crowd with his firm handling of the massive car.

Eventually Gibson was the first to cross the finishing line followed by Viljoen and Philp.

The Eerste Rivier Speedway had always been dangerous, with practically no regard for competitor and spectator safety. In October 1958 a young and inexperienced Koos Swanepoel slid off the track in his red 4000cc LRX Special, the most powerful car in the race, and crashed into the spectator area at Gordon's Bay Bend, killing a man and a boy and seriously injuring two others. The accident had been the first in twenty years to involve spectators at a Cape race meeting. The circuit was closed to racing a short while later, and today the site of this unlamented track forms the grounds of an infantry base near Khayelitsha, just to the south-east

of the Spine Road intersection with the N2 National Road.

Terry Bullen was a local surfer and in the early 1960s assisted Bruce Brown with the filming along the Cape coast of the cult surfing classic *The Endless Summer*. As he headed for Jeffrey's Bay along the freeway he must have contemplated with amusement the Bullen's Bend that lay beneath his wheels.

*Acknowledgements to Killarney by Adrian Pheiffer, SA Motor & Cycle News May, June, July 1951, Motor Age May 1953, The Sports Car March 1954, Cape Times 11 Oct 1958, Classic Car Africa Aug, Dec 1996, March 1997, April, Oct 1998, Oct, Dec 2012, Cape Odyssey Oct 2001, Mike and Wendy Monk. 🚗*

## SAVVA Technical Tip:

# Solving the 3/16" Dilemma

The following was sent in by Peter Vlietstra. Peter is a bike enthusiast and sometimes I think they are one step ahead of us car chaps - thanks Peter.

Many of the parts on vintage motorcycles are held together by 3/16" fasteners. Without any real rule, cycle parts and tin-ware tended to be BSC threads, machine parts tended to be BSF threads and instrument parts tended to be BA threads. Post 1951, the BSI (British Standards Institute) tried to kill off the BSF range below 1/4" and tried to restrict the entire BSC range, so 2BA became more prevalent. The Hall Green people also used a lot of 3/16" BSW (at 24 tpi), but this is an odd one out, not included in this discussion.

Nuts and bolts get mixed up and interchanged, sometimes without even knowing it. Trying to sort this out can be a headache. To try and work out whether this was an issue or not, I drew up the following table and added in the M5 screw thread for good measure:

Thread	2BA	3/16" BSF	3/16" BSC	M5 x 0.8
Effective diam mm	4.22	4.25	4.34	4.48
Included angle	47.5	55	60	60
Pitch mm	0.810	0.794	0.794	0.800
Pitch tpi	31.36	32	32	31.75

The smaller the included angle, the deeper the thread, so the greater the overall diameter. Overall diameters all seem to range between 4.75 to 4.85 mm.

Using a combination of nuts and bolts, and doing a little fitting, I then drew up the following table of fits: (this is all rather subjective!)

		Nuts			
		2BA	3/16" BSF	3/16" BSC	M5x0.8
Bolts	2BA	Right	Tight	Tight	Easy
	3/16"BSF	Tight	Right	Easy	Easy
	3/16"BSC	No go	Tight	Right	Easy
	M5 x 0.8	No go	No go	No go	Right

This table still did not resolve my headache. I was also having difficulties getting the fasteners I wanted in BA, BSF and BSC. I could however find all the bolts I needed in M5 with hex head, cheese head, countersunk and socket head. (Classic round head is derived from cheese head using a belt sander.)

I was sitting in my workshop, pondering over a Castle as what to do next when I had an idea. I took a M5 x 0.8 tap, fitted it to my hand drill, a little cutting paste, and converted all the female threads to metric!

