

A TALE OF TWO GLADIATORS

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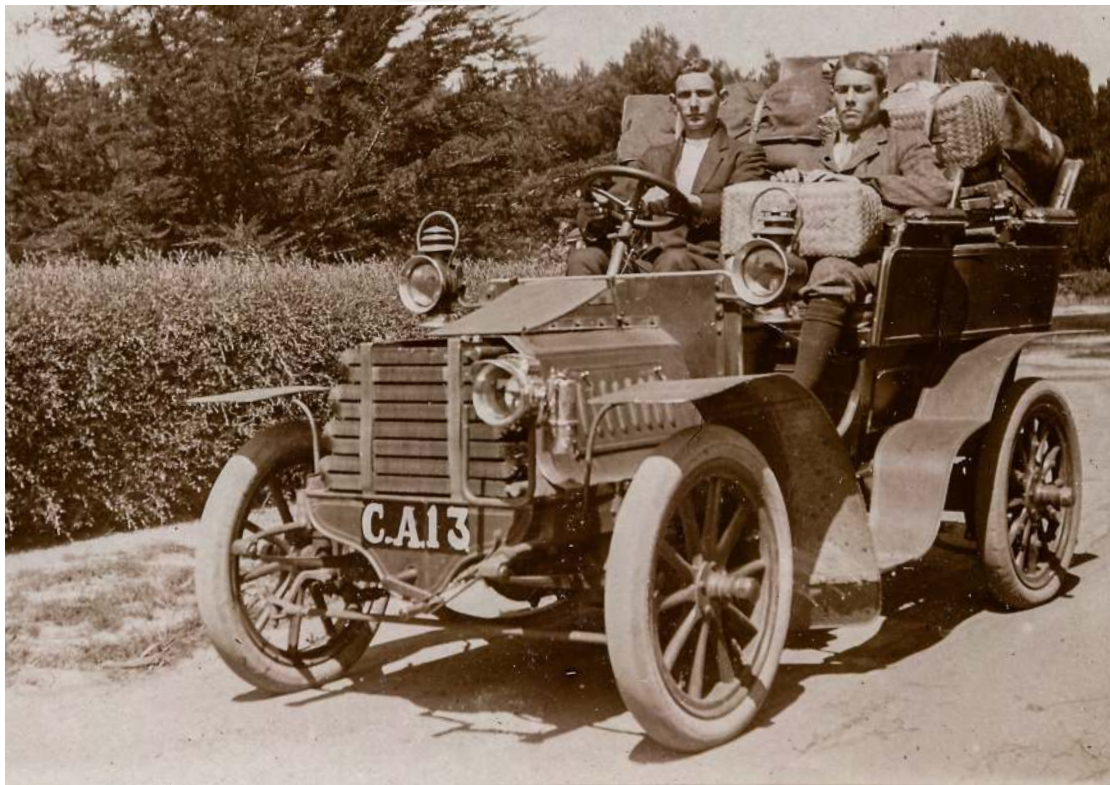
WE are constantly surprised by the newly-restored Veteran and Edwardian vehicles that emerge each year to participate in our Pre-1919 Run to Simon's Town. This magnificent 1904 Gladiator is our most recent recruit, and it brings with it a fascinating pedigree.

In 1904 a Rondebosch resident, C.W. Herold, bought a 9 hp Gladiator. He joined the Automobile Club of SA and, participating that year in the club's 100-mile Houw Hoek Reliability Trial, was awarded a non-stop certificate signed by Alfred Hennessy. The car was often used as holiday transport and remained in the family for many years, driven by C.W.'s son, Herbert, a pupil at Rondebosch Boys High School (RBHS). On 1st January 1914 car registration numbers became compulsory and the Gladiator was allocated the number CA 13.

That year young Herbert Herold and his schoolmate Desmond Kenealy spent the Easter holidays on the Steenebrug farm at Piket-



1904 Gladiator at Crossley and Webb, the original CBY 1



Herbert Herold behind the wheel of his father's Gladiator, returning from a December holiday at Wolseley with his cousin Paul van der Bijl and the family luggage, January 1914

berg, owned by Desmond's brother-in-law, Colonel Pietman Retief. They were fascinated to find the remains of another 1904 Gladiator under an oak tree on the farm. It had been the first car in the district, CBY 1, and its cylinder block had been dumped in a nearby chicken run. Colonel Retief was amused by the boy's determination to get the car mobile again and offered them a challenge; if they could get it mobile and drive it down the steep hill to the Main Road and back up to the farm, they could have the car. The holiday became a race against time, getting it down the hill was relatively easy but although they struggled to get it back up again, they succeeded and the Gladiator was theirs.

Feeling like millionaires the boys set off for Cape Town, 82 miles away. The journey to the half-way mark, Malmesbury,



Desmond Kenealy behind the wheel with Herbert Herold on their sports Gladiator at Kluitjies Kraal, Wolseley, 1914

was discouraging as it turned into a competition with an ox-wagon which passed them regularly as they undertook road-side repairs. After they had sorted out the engine the second half of the trip went far better, but they were so filthy when they arrived back in Rondebosch that Herbert's parents didn't recognize them. They were just in time for the new school term and, taking time off their studies they worked on both cars, keeping CA 13 as a four-seater, and converting CBY 1 to a two-seater 'sports model'. For the rest of 1914 they had a ball and weekends and school holidays were used for numerous trips to places like Wolseley, Ceres and Piketberg.

Desmond Kenealy matriculated at the end of that year and early in 1915 enrolled as a Mechanical Engineering student at UCT. WW I intervened and his expertise came to the fore when he was appointed as a Sergeant in the SA Motor Corps for the invasion of German South West Africa. Later he served on other battle fronts as a 2nd Lieutenant Engineer. After the war he settled in Johannesburg, married and raised three sons before retiring to Pinelands in the Cape.

Herbert Herold matriculated in 1915 and served in the infantry during the German East Africa campaign. He spent two years in the

USA in the early 1920s before returning to SA. Taking CA 13 with him, he moved to Graaff-Reinet, where he married and raised a family.

After Herbert's move from home, his father, C.W. Herold, gave the well-worn CBY 1 to his nephew, Frances Kuffner. As Kuffner had

intended to restore the car but had never started the project, when he died in 1965 his widow commissioned CHC member, Eric Blood, to restore it. While seeking parts for the car, Blood contacted Herbert Herold in Graaff-Reinet, who wrote back with the stories of CA 13 and CBY 1, how CBY 1 had been

rescued from Piketberg and the photographs of their exploits with the cars. By then CA 13 was in pieces, the engine was almost beyond repair but several crucial items like the dashboard-mounted drip feed oil tank and gearbox greaser had survived. Herbert was delighted that CBY 1 was to be restored and sent the surviving parts down to Cape Town.

The restoration commenced but after a time Eric Blood began to argue that, as he had not been paid adequately for the work he had done on the car, he would be keeping CBY 1. It was only after his death that Frances Kuffner's daughter and her husband Bill Spiers were able to negotiate with Blood's son to pay off the remaining debt, and Bill and his son Mark completed the assembly of the Gladiator.

Having survived many a near-fatal scenario, this robust little car is now for sale at Crossley and Webb. Hopefully it will be acquired by a local enthusiast and we'll be cheering it on to Simon's Town in February 2021.

Acknowledgements to Bill and Mark Spiers, Eric Edwards, Gareth Crossley, William de Villiers and Andre Ross of the RBHS Old Boys Union.



Herold (CBY 1) rescuing Kenealy (CA 13) after a mishap at a drift en route to Piketberg, 1914 🚗