



# Automobilist

March 2024

AUTUMN

Southern African Veteran and Vintage Association

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1948 MG TC "Skollie"



# Automobilist

## Southern National Council Members African Veteran and Vintage Association

### *In this Issue*

CONTENTS	PAGE
SAVVA National Council & Portfolio Holders	2
Forthcoming Events around the Country - 2024	3
Chairman's Chatter	4
From the Front Desk	4
When did it All Begin	5
Introducing the Ladies of SAVVA - Bev Jacobs	6
Singing along South in a Seven	7
How the D - J was Born	8
2024 iToo D - J Rally Review	10
George to Cape Town and Back Roundtrip	12
Cars in the Park Zwartkops - P.O.M.C.	14
2024 Magnum Vintage & Classic Motorcycle & Motorcar Rally & Tour	14
Rare makes and Model Ts star on this year's Kalk Bay Run	16
Back to Back - Safe Option: Comparison of Two popular rivals from	18
The Front Cover Photograph - Trevor Burnett's 1948 MG TC	22
2028 Model A Centenary - P.O.M.C.	23



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## Southern African Veteran and Vintage Association

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# Automobilist

## Southern African Veteran and Vintage Association

### Forthcoming Events around the Country 2024

DATE	EVENT	SAVVA CLUB
1 - 4 May	VCC Platinum Jubilee SAVVA Tour	Veteran Car Club of SA
04 May	Vryheid Car Show	Vryheid Vintage Car Club
19 May	Cars in the Park, PMB	VSCC, Pietermaritzburg
04 August	Cars in the Park, Pretoria	P.O.M.C.
14 - 18 August	Magnum Rally & Tour	P.O.M.C.
T.B.A.	2028 Model A Centenary	P.O.M.C.



## *Chairman's Chatter*

Yet again – the Western Cape is / has been battered by severe storms and serious fires – apparently started with malicious intent – as the Authorities have arrested one suspect from Sunday's fires in Simonstown – which destroyed 12 homes, coupled with another 2 x fires in the informal settlements which has left 700 people homeless in extremely bad weather conditions with the Black Southeaster gusting up to +-150kph in places. But as always – South Africans are resilient – and mopping up operations are already underway. Sterke mense !.

2024 has seen a burst of activity with the Pre-DJ in February, the DJ in March and now the CHC Post 40 Event over 4 x days in April. I hear through the grape vine that numerous other events are being planned – so busy year lies ahead for all of us in "old car / motorcycle " movement.

Queenstown Automobile Club is hosting their "Wings and Wheels "Event on 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> May with every indication this will be a bumper event, with numerous active displays and activities set to take place – Well worth a visit.

The extremely competitive DJ was won by Gavin Walton on an AJS. Details of other results are featured in the Newsletter.

The George Car Show – which is hosted by the SCOCC – Southern Cape Old Car Club – in February was extremely successful – with record breaking attendance over the weekend of 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February – so well done guy's on a well organized and run event.

Sadly – news is that the VCC – Veteran Car Club in Natal, has cancelled their Jubilee Anniversary Event in May – due to insufficient entries. At this stage there are no announcements on alternate activities to mark their 70<sup>th</sup> Year.

Easter has come and gone – and judging from our current weather, winter is firmly on its way.

Take care, and always ride and drive safely.

*Gavin Allison*

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## *From The Front Desk*

In the past month I had to unexpectedly fly to Johannesburg on a Friday morning with the intention of returning late the same day but whilst in Johannesburg a request was made for me to extend my stay until Tuesday which, after a few moments thought, I willingly agreed to. Fortunately, I learnt a long time ago that when flying anywhere local I always carry an overnight bag with me, so the ordeal was not going to be too disastrous in the clothing and toiletries departments.

Why so willing to remain in this City when I have the open, rolling hills and uncluttered lifestyle of Pietermaritzburg to return to? Easy, Friday evening is pub night at my 'Mother' club the VVC and, being the third Sunday of the month, it was the Piston Ring Club's meet. So, you see the choice to stay on was an easy one to make!

And what a weekend it turned out to be, proving once again that belonging to the old car community that friendships made never die. It was wonderful catching up with old friends and acquaintances. If I were to have had a regret it would be that I did not have a suitable car in which to be visiting in.

I enjoy the Piston Ring meets in that you seldom see exotics attending but more the forgotten makes such as Holden, Hudson, Taunus, Pontiacs, Chevrolets, Oldsmobile, Sunbeams and the like that invoke memories of the past for one reason or another.

For me, belonging to the old car movement extends beyond just our own Club to which we belong but into the community as a whole. To this end, I intend to publish a detailed list of all SAVVA associated clubs located within southern Africa in the next issue of the 'Automobilist'. I trust that our members will use the list when planning get-aways and enjoy the camaraderie and hospitality offered by the clubs visited during your travels.

*Yours in motoring,*

*Chris*

## *When did it all Begin?*

Barely a decade after the motor car began to appear there emerged a fact that has been puzzling students of human behaviour to this day, namely the remarkable interest shown in cars of an earlier era. This interest doubtless arose from a sense of surprise that such a troublesome piece of machinery could have survived, say, five or ten years of use under the conditions of pioneer motoring. Cars improved rapidly and changed in appearance so it is perhaps understandable that bystanders gaped and jeered as a veteran of several years rattled past.

Manufacturers and dealers, in their advertising, were quick to exploit this interest, contrasting their earlier products with their latest effort. This was best done by securing one of their first cars for display purposes and thus arose the first examples of old car collecting. Any thoughts of a hobby were to come a couple of generations later; the motives were purely commercial. Happily, a few such vehicles survived to the present, but the majority were discarded when their advertising value was considered finished.

Possibly the earliest example of an old car attracting South African public interest was at the Port Elizabeth Show of 1912 when a 1906 Model N Ford was displayed at a time when the Model T was beginning to catch on. A notice proclaimed that the Model N had been in use for six years and was still capable of giving good service. No mileage was mentioned of course; the Model N and its successor were innocent of speedometers.

A photograph taken some ten years later in Johannesburg shows H.P. Rose's well known Hupmobile racer, used for inter-town record breaking, alongside one of the first Hupps of about 1910. The older car is claimed to be the only Hupmobile available until fresh stocks arrive, and in fact Hupp had been a best seller since 1912. It is noteworthy that the naught habit of back-dating already existed, since manufacture of the Hupmobile only commenced in 1908.

During the late '20's grinning spectators, whose descendants may be among the crowds that today applaud old cars, watched fascinated in each city as huge bonfires consumed hundreds of elderly traded-in vehicles. These spectacles, pictures of which make present day enthusiasts shudder, were a gimmick organized by the motor trade to stimulate vehicle sales of new cars during hard times. Much was made of the safety angle

in "public-spirited" announcements as most of the victims were without front wheel braking. Fortunately, for prosperity times were so bad that the new cars were out of the question for many citizens, so the fires were not all-consuming.



*Jeffs Watson in his 1913 Metz*

With the '30's appeared a young Johannesburg man for whom the very old, i.e. pre-1914 cars held a special attraction. He thought it would be fun to own one and located a 1913 Metz in time to drive it in a procession celebrating Johannesburg's fiftieth anniversary. For the first time in South Africa a private enthusiast, unconnected with the trade, had discovered the "old crocks" hobby. The reader might have guessed that he was the late Jeffs Watson, the "original and Champion", to use a spark plug slogan of those days. Soon Jeffs collection began to grow with all manner of rare and interesting old machinery, some in the form of gifts, some as swops, and some bought for sums that today would not secure a second hand bicycle.

About the same time a few huge and somewhat battered old sports cars, driven by grinning young men and their girlfriends, began to frighten local motorists in their Terraplanes and Grahams as they roared past in a cloud of dust. These were the handfuls of Bentleys, 36/220 Mercedes and 30/98 Vauxhalls bought for a song in Great Portland Street while their playboy owners were enjoying life in London at Dad's expense. Today, while their erstwhile owners are dispersed, some as victims of epic Air Force deeds, some destined for balding tycoonery, and others withdrawn to pleasant Lowveld and Natal estates, many of the great cars they brought out have survived. Lovingly restored after the carefree neglect of those days, their value now a hundred times the fifty-odd pounds paid when they were a mere seven years old, these survivors from the backbone of our flourishing vintage cat movement.

## *When did it all Begin?*

*continued*

Old cars appeared from time to time in parades, university rags and “old crocks races”, to use a now forgotten term. At the last race meeting held at Johannesburg’s Earl Howe Circuit, a once proud RLS Alfa managed a few laps in company with a field of “Tin Lizzies” in the Old Crocks race before catching fire and being consigned to a Sauer Street scrap yard. Wartime scrap drives resulted in countless fine cars, in particular those with high aluminium content. Being sent to the furnace. War’s end saw not a few rescued in partly dismantled form, the crappers not having completed their work in time.

The war was barely over when groups of motoring enthusiasts began meeting informally all over the country to compare and discuss their cars and to organize rough and ready speed events. Almost any venue served, the dirt roads of a new township, a quite public road, a firm sandy beach or a disused military test track. Their cars were a motley collection, all pre-war; G.P. racers of the ‘20’s, specials, sports cars of the ‘30’s and vintage cars.

The latter, however, had to be of the more sporting sort; vintage tourers and American oldsters were of no interest. Only Jeffs Watson remained faithful to the veterans, but even he had acquired a 4½ litre Bentley and several racing Bugattis. At this time the Sports Car Club was formed in Johannesburg and numerous highly informal trials and even races enlivened its early years. However, the cars were old and often ‘vintage’ only because they had to be, and only a minority of enthusiasts were proud of the fact that their machines were potential collector’s items. Rare cars were stripped, hotted up, lowered, shortened and generally spoilt in the craze for increased performance. As post-war sports and touring cars became available, the search for greater speed via old cars began to lose its point since the newcomers soon showed that they had the edge.

At this stage one might say the present hobby began to emerge, crystallised by the memorable first National Rally for Vintage and Veteran Cars, held in 1954. Immediately old cars became desirable, whether or not they were of the sporting sort, the keynote became originality, not modification, and throughout the country clubs came into being to cater exclusively for historic machines. From then onwards some of us know the story.

(Maybe some of our more “Senior” enthusiasts might like to recount their earlier experience before vintage cars became a countrywide hobby.—Ed.)

## *Introducing the Ladies*

*in SAVVA Clubs: Bev Jacobs*



My earliest memories were of my father, Larry Collins, building, restoring and fixing vintage cars (Model A Fords, MGs etc.) and motorcycles (BSAs, Velocettes, BMWs, AJSs and many others).

In 1983, my dad rode in his first DJ Commemorative Rally and my Mom

and my brother and I went to the finish to cheer him ‘over the line’. On a trip to the UK, he bought and imported a 1928 Royal Enfield (1000cc), built a side car and he and I completed the 1989 DJ, with me navigating in the sidecar. After 2 more years in the combination, I told my dad that I wanted to ride my own motorcycle in the DJ. He rolled his eyes but went and found a 1929 BSA Sloper (500cc) for me. Every weekend, he would take me to the rubbish dump to teach me to ride, do hill starts and emergency stops, all with hand gears on the tank, kick start and dodgy brakes! And so grew my passion for this amazing hobby!

The day came and I had to take my license at the Benoni traffic department, in front of all the cops who had come to watch this spectacle! When I booked the appointment, the cop looked at me, in my business suit (I worked for a fashion retailer), and with a look of horror, exclaimed that he thought I was a ‘lady’! I passed (second time round) and completed my first DJ in 1992 on the AJS. The following year, my dad bought me my trusty steed, Tinker-Belle, my 1935, 250cc Triumph 2/1, which I have now been riding for 31 years.

I have entered 23 DJs and finished 22 of them (one non finish was due to gearbox failure) and have loved every single one – the ride, the riders and the spirit of this awesome event- the highlight of my every year!

I have also competed in many Fairest Cape Rallies and other fun runs like the Century Runs.

In July 2023, I was elected as Chairperson of the Cape Vintage Motorcycle Club (CVMC). I hope to ‘give back’ to my Club, the fraternity and my fellow riders for all the great times spent with them over the years.

## *Singing along South in a Seven (1973)*

Gradually, as our day of departure drew nearer I began to have my doubts about the trip. After all, perhaps we were expecting a bit much of the little Austin. Preparations in the form of new tyres, wheel bearings and seals all round had been done. Brakes were checked and adjusted and a general tune-up completed, although much of our faith in the success of the trip rested with past trouble free runs in the Seven, including two previous South African trips.

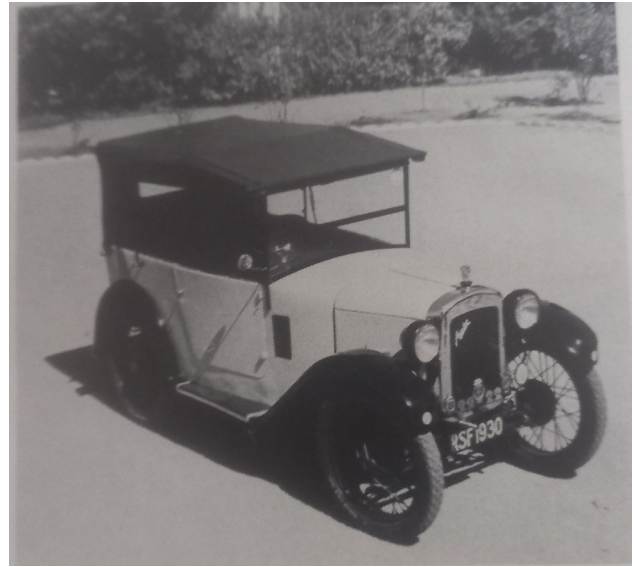
With the car duly loaded, we pulled out of Salisbury (Harare) at 21h30 on Tuesday, and for the first 50 miles (80 km) or so I imagined all sorts of new noises developing, but gradually, as we became tuned to the engine, our anxiety lessened.

At Enkeldoorn, we removed the passenger's seat and rigged up a bed with part of the back seat, thus enabling one of us to rest up. No drama developed as we passed South, passing Fort Victoria (Masvingo) at 03h30 and arriving at the border at 09h30 on Wednesday morning. Our plan was to press on to Johannesburg where we hoped to spend the night with relatives.

Wylies Poort, as usual, presented the first barrier and this was taken in our stride, although very slow due to the intense heat. A thunder shower south of Pietersburg (Polokwane) caused a mad rush to get the suitcases off the carrier and under cover. That evening, at Warmbaths (Bela-Bela) found that the rear left brake shoe was binding. This was duly adjusted.

Having decided to approach Johannesburg from the Krugersdorp side, we swung west just out of Pretoria and promptly got lost. What with all the hills (seemed like mountains) on the approach and no signs, we arrived some four hours late, and gladly rolled into bed.

Thursday, after bathing the baby, we set sail for Bloemfontein. Had to stop and adjust the brake again, but otherwise no other troubles as the miles "flew" by. That evening, some thirty miles from Bloemfontein, while Allen was driving, I was rudely awoken from a doze by a Police Patrol car blasting us over to the side. All kinds of thoughts raced through my mind. "Please Sir, we are Rhodesians—we didn't know", seemed like the best excuse. However, excuses proved unnecessary as the police just stopped us for a look and a friendly chat. More was to follow when, some ten miles further on, we were waved down, this time with blue light



flashing, to be greeted with, "Heard you guys were coming - is this really an Austin Seven?" Another friendly chat pursued. Actually the little car always drew comments whenever we stopped, especially at the smaller centres. Allen, however, had grown a moustache for the trip, and whenever someone waved, was convinced it was the 'moustache'!

As the miles slipped by, with nothing to report as we pressed on through the night, spelling each other with 2 to 3 hour stints driving / sleeping.

Whilst chugging through Beaufort West the next morning (Friday), we were hailed from the sidewalk by Waldie Greyvenstein, also on his way south in his Bentley. We also bumped into Kalfie van der Wat, to our immense pleasure, who was broken down in some modern tin. We spent some three hours in Beaufort West cleaning up and having a bite to eat., before pressing onto Cape Town.

Headwinds in the karoo slowed us down, but in view of Du Toit's Kloof, we were unperturbed. From our past experience with the Kloof we had decided to attack it in the cool of the evening, and as it happened, just sailed up - 15mph - at 22h00 to arrive in Cape Town at the unearthly hour of 03h00. Slept (tried) until 06h00 in a lay-by, before slipping into the city to rest up with friends. The trip south had taken us three days and 2½ nights motoring, and the cost, which included fuel for the car and crew, was R25.00. (laughable by today standards - Ed).

After a most enjoyable rally, we left Cape Town at 05h00 on Saturday. During most of the morning, whilst studying the karoo at 30 mph, we were passed by other rally competitors, to a chorus of hooters, returning north. The Thompson brothers roared past in their Bentleys - I still shudder at the thought of their petrol consumption.



## *Singing along South in a Seven (1973)cont'd*

During this stretch Allen did a quick detour to look at his 'Veteran', which he saw from the road. Proved to be a cape cart parked in a deserted farm house, next to an old stationary engine flywheel. Certainly looked worth checking from a distance.

We had decided to return via Kimberley, hoping to see the "Big Hole". However, with the car performing better than ever, we arrived there at 04h00 and just chugged on - so much for the Hole! This route did, however, prove to be far more peaceful and comfortable.

Kimberley to Johannesburg proved to be the slowest section of the whole trip. We just couldn't keep up our speed against the headwind. Frankly, I doubt if we were even able to average 20 mph. The train from Cape Town, bearing madly waving return rally competitors, just left us in the distance. At Wolmaransstad a garage owner proudly showed us his 1928 Austin 12. A most unusual 2 seater which had been his father's, and which he had hopes of restoring.

Johannesburg was made at 16h00 on Sunday afternoon, and after a hot bath, we decided to press on. After threading our way through the Sunday evening traffic - it is worse than Salisbury (Harare) at 08h00 in the morning - we rattled on. Towns came (slowly) and went, as gradually the miles (really should call them 'kilometres') passed. Messina, at last - home only just down the road. Through Beit Bridge in the heat of the morning, and this section proved to be the hottest of the trip. Eventually, a few miles from Fort Victoria (Masvinga), we drew up to find that the car was boiling for the first time since leaving home. However, a short rest and on we sailed. The car seemed to sense home, and as familiar landmarks passed, speed increased, until even at 40 mph was passed - downhill.

Home at last. Rolling into Salisbury (Harare) at 21h00 on Monday, we had done the return trip in a total time of 64 hours.

**By C.P. 'Val' Barratt**

## *How the D-J was Born*

When you know that I went to school with Ian Scott, son of 'China' Scott, and Reg Long, son of R.S. Long and brother of Alf Long, and played golf with Syd Flook. A winner himself of the D - J and brother of twice winner Percy Flook, you will understand that motorcycling came to me at an early age.

I was on the Loskop Rally organised by the Pretoria Old Motor Club, riding an ex-Bobby Scott machine, a 1928 350cc OHC Chater-Lea. Major Chater-Lea was my hero, establishing many world records on a Cammy Model. There was a long stretch of road. When you are alone on a bike with your thoughts, your mind wanders. A hawk lifted from a telegraph pole and a rabbit ran in front of me for half a kilometre. It was then that the idea of a D - J came to me.

I shared my thoughts with Oliver Barrett, then Chairman of the Vintage & Veteran Club, and he thought it was a brilliant idea. "Go for it", he said, "you have my full support." I must pay tribute to Oliver Barrett at this stage for helping me to get the D - J off the ground.

A finisher's badge was the first thing I got from the late Doug Tarr, whose father earned it in 1914, and had replicas made. Engravers were organized to engrave the finishers' names on medals the same night as the prize giving.

I wrote the rules and regulations, but these were pruned to suit the modern rally of the day. Some of the rules still stand to this day.

Trophies were needed and everyone approached was most enthusiastic to be involved with the event. The Schlesinger Vase used to be the premier award for the event. This I learned was the property of the Rand Motoring Club (RMC). I offered them to co-share the organizing of the event and so the famous Schlesinger Vase was back where it belonged with the D-J. I must say this partnership has worked very well. Rudy Hindrichs and Alan Ravenscroft were RMC men who put in trojan work. Both have passed on and their places taken by others. And so in 1970 the first D - J was born. We had 65 entries and the standard of restoration left much to be desired. That 40 finished was a miracle.

There was much rebuilding of engines going on in the garage. This was when Cyril Richmond's expertise came to the fore. The atmosphere was electric. The D - J oozed friendship and helpfulness. A competitor's machine was found to have a cracked piston.

# *How the D-J was Born*

## *Continued*

Cyril Richmond vanished with the piston returning half an hour later with it welded up, needing cleaning up which he did with the aid of a file.

The 22nd of April 1970 was a stinking hot day and we set off into the unknown. Town Hill at Pietermaritzburg, a steep hill, claimed many casualties, mainly magneto trouble. I remember coming across a bike up on the prop stand with the rider lying next to his bike. I went up to him and asked: "Can I help you?" He sat bolt upright and said: "Don't touch me!" - probably thinking of outside assistance, got onto his bike and rode away.

If you make Town Hill the chances of making Newcastle are greater. If you make Newcastle, the chances of getting to Johannesburg are also good. Old man Rhodes, father of Arthur Rhodes, riding a Rudge going through Ladysmith was chased by a big dog. So big it looked like a small horse. The dog got old man Rhodes by the arm and pulled him to the ground. He muttered a few choice four-letter words at the dog, who, not having heard such abusive language before, turned round and loped off.

Tommy Viljoen, a champion speedway rider riding a 1913 fixed drive Norton came a cropper. He left the road and went over the top and lay on the ground in a dazed condition. He was taken to a doctor who pronounced him fit and returned to where his bike was only to find it was gone. Someone had loaded and taken it to Newcastle.

Sy Simons, motoring editor of the Rand Daily Mail, had given the event very good publicity resulting in hordes of people at the refueling stations to see the bikes.

The Mayor of Newcastle invited the riders to his parlour to a cocktail party. Can you imagine 50 hungry riders with plates of dainty snacks before them? They tore into this lot like a pack of wolves and in no time devoured the lot and then concentrated on the booze on offer. In his welcoming speech Dr. Naude for the next three years told the same joke about 'Jou Hol' meaning of course the legendary Don Hall. He was at the restart the following morning to send the riders on their way.

We used as much of the original roads as possible and the bit outside Heidelberg was a bit bumpy, pot-hole after pot-hole. It was here that tool boxes opened and spewed tools all over the road and head lamps

were coming loose and falling off.

Such was the interest in the first D - J that spectators were waiting at vantage points from Heidelberg to City Deep where a crowd of about 200 were there to see us arrive.

When I got to City Deep a big lump came to my throat and tears to my eyes. "I made it, boy, I made it!" I was riding a 1930 Sunbeam. It never missed a beat and was to do many more D - J's, and, now the D - J celebrates its 21st birthday. I never thought at the time of how long the D - J would go on for. But motorcyclists enjoy a herding instinct and it will probably go on for as long as there are organisers and sponsors. The enthusiasm is there and it will probably go on forever.

The older riders will remember the first wet D - J. It rained throughout the event. Boy, was it cold! Talk about brass monkeys. D-J riders are made of stern stuff and carry on to finish. Then there was the down run from Johannesburg to Durban. We passed through a hail storm so terrible I thought the event would be cancelled. Rain all the way. Riders came to the finish absolutely drenched to the skin. The things we do for fun!

I had to give up riding about 10 years ago on doctor's orders but have been involved in all 21 D-J's in some form or other. Mainly scrutineering. Talking about scrutineering reminds me of one event when I came across a universal chain I never knew existed. I was doing Dave Folb's Connaught and noticed the primary chain was much too tight. He said nit to worry, the chain loosens up when he gets going. The next bike was Reg Clark's Douglas. The primary chain was much too loose. He said not to worry, it tightens up when he gets going.

It has been a happy 21st D-J. My heart bleeds for those who broke down. Strong hearts chaps, have another go next year. At the 21st prize-giving party I was presented with a picture depicting a 1914 Harley-Davidson and a 1936 Excelsior Manxman in the form of a clock from the motorcyclists of the VCC of Sa. A real treasure which I will keep for all time.

Winning the D-J is not the all important thing—that's a bonus. What is important is having taken part and earning the finisher's medal!

**By Dick Osborne, Vintage & Veteran Club, 1991**

# 2024 iTOO DJ Rally Review

By Roger Houghton

Gavin Walton scored his sixth win in the iTOO-sponsored DJ Rally which finished in Benoni on Saturday, 16 March. His score of 453 seconds put him 19 seconds ahead of Martin Kaiser, with Mike Ward, last year's winner, in third place with a score of 483 seconds. There was a total of 71 timed checkpoints on this year's rally, with 36 on Day 1 and 35 on Day 2.

This was the 52nd running of this famous regularity trial which commemorates the annual motorcycle road race between Durban and Johannesburg, which was held almost every year from 1913 to 1936 before the authorities withdraw permission for the race due to safety concerns. It is for this reason that competing motorcycles must have been manufactured prior to 1937. This year the average age of the motorcycles in the field of 76 starters was 92 years.

Gavin Walton, who lives in Springs, and had won previously in 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2022, once again rode his trusty 1936 AJS 500, which he has now ridden in 20 DJ Rallies. He was the winner on Day 1, seven seconds ahead of Ward, when the route went from Hillcrest, outside Durban, to Newcastle, and placed second on Day 2, when he finished 27 seconds behind Kaiser as the riders continued from Newcastle to the finish at the Benoni Northerns Club in Ekurhuleni.

"This year's event was most enjoyable with many of the roads repaired that had been potholed last year. The organisation was very professional and there were no protests about the results, which is always a good sign," commented Gavin after the finish. Martin Kaiser, who rode a 1934 Sunbeam 500, was runner-up for the second year in a row, while Mike Ward, riding a 1935 Velocette 500, had to be satisfied with third place this year after winning last year's rally. Ward was also the winner in 2004.

Martin Davis, winner in 2006, 2007 and 2011, finished seventh this year, riding a 1929 Ariel 500.

This year there were 56 finishers and 20 non-finishers from an original field of 76 motorcycles, which included only one sidecar combination this year. Only one motorcycle failed to start the rally and that was the Brian and Steve Lange, the only entrants on a sidecar combination this year, placed 46th on their 1928 AJS Big Twin 997.

The oldest motorcycle entered for the event was the 1918 Indian Power Plus 1000, to be ridden by Yuvi Jasti. However, Yuvi could not finish preparing the motorcycle in time and entered on another machine, finishing last of the classified finishers. The award for the oldest motorcycle to complete the route went to Hans Coertse who rode a 1922 Harley Davidson. The oldest

rider on the event, 87-year-old Cliff le Roux retired his 1936 AJS 500 on the second day.

Youngest rider to start and finish the event was 28-year-old Sasha Corlett, who was 39th on a 1936 BSA 500. In doing so she beat her mother, Valerie, who rode a 1928 BSA 500 into 43rd position. Sasha's father, George Corlett, a former winner of the DJ Rally, was forced to retire his recently purchased 1928 Norton CS1 500 International after forgetting to turn on the engine oil tap, resulting in serious engine damage.

This motorcycle was previously owned by Tony Lyons-Lewis, who competed in 38 DJ Rallies, 15 of them on this Norton, before retiring from competitive riding last year. The 1926 Norton Model 8 500 which Tony rode on 19 DJs prior to buying the International has been sold to Henk Rossouw who rode it to a 40th place finish this year.

Trevor Binder, father of South Africa's MotoGP racing brothers, Brad and Darryn, had a good DJ Rally, finishing a creditable 15th overall, riding his 1925 Indian Scout 600. His total error at the 34 control points was 1198 seconds.

Four of the record five women riders qualified as finishers. Best placed was Bev Jacobs in 11th position. She also put up the best performance by a Triumph motorcycle, riding a 1925 250 cc model.

The other women to finish were Sasha Corlett in 39th position, Sasha's mother, Valerie Corlett, who was 43rd and Benita Palmer in 47th position. Tamarin Skead failed to finish on her 1929 AJS M5 350.

(Unfortunately) There were two accidents involving competitors during the rally. Keith Kendall, son of Graham Kendall, Chairperson of the Classic Motorcycle Club, was T-boned at an intersection controlled by traffic lights. He broke his foot, which is a big blow for him as a regular competitor in the Comrades Marathon who was looking forward to a good run in this year's event, which takes place on 9 June. The other rider to come to grief was Richard Hyson, who fell off his 1924 Indian Scout 600 and cut his knee.

The DJ Rally was organised by a team from several local motorcycle clubs, under the auspices of the promoter, the Vintage and Veteran Club of South Africa (VVC). Tom Linley, the Clerk of the Course, acquitted himself very well in his first year in this position.

All the trophy recipients were given a copy of the 2024 Vintage Motorcycle Club (VMC) calendar in addition to their silverware. Fifteen of these calendars were also handed out to first time entrants.

# 2024 iTOO DJ Rally Review

## *continued*

“From my side I was pleased that the riders were happy with the road conditions as the VVC had stipulated that the route be as close as possible to the original,” commented Brian Noik, Chairman of the VVC. The weather was hot, but the riders coped well. The VVC thanks all the participants, volunteers, and sponsors for ensuring it was a most successful rally.”

### RESULTS

- 1, Gavin Walton (1936 AJS 500), 453 seconds error;
- 2, Martin Kaiser (1934 Sunbeam 500), 472;
- 3, Mike Ward (1935 Velocette 500), 483;
- 4, Mike Venables (1933 BSA Blue Star 500), 636;
- 5, Neville Nicolau (1935 BMW 750), 745;
- 6, Kevin Kohler (1933 Sunbeam 500), 746;
- 7, Martin Davis (1929 Ariel 500), 787;
- 8, JC van Rooyen (1936 Ariel E=Red Hunter 350), 889;
- 9, Jason Anderson (1929 AJS 350), 958;
- 10, Ryan Duncan ((1934 Norton 500) 996.



# *George to Cape Town and Back*

## *Roundtrip*

by Phillip Rosser

What started off as a way out of having to trailer our cars to Cape Town for the annual Kalk Bay Veteran Run and then drive back to George, has now become a regular annual roundtrip of about 1500 km.

It was simply too time consuming and difficult to find a driver to join us to Cape Town, spending a night there and then bringing our tow rigs back to George so that we can drive our Model T Fords back. The best solution was to take a leisurely drive to Cape Town, participate in the Kalk Bay Veteran Run and then take another leisurely drive back to the start of the Vettour, ending at the George Old Car Show. This trip also serves as a marketing exercise for the George Old Car Show and it almost feels as if we collect the Capetonians and bring them back with us to the Show.

The group usually consist of about four Model T Fords driving along the R62 to Cape Town with a stop over at Barrydale. This year we have decided to drive the R62 instead of the previously used coastal route via Hermanus and Gordan's Bay. The latter road has simply become to dangerous, especially the section from Somerset West to the Crankhandle Club's clubhouse in Wynberg.

On Thursday 4 February, Philip and Rosita Kuschke and Amanda and myself departed from George to meet Ockert, Dientie and Kerneels vd Berg and Riaan v Niekerk and his dad and Ali v Jaarsveld with her Model S in tow at Great Brak River for the start of the trip.



Above: The four Model T Fords at Great Brak River getting ready to depart to Cape Town.

Day one took us along the N2 to Heidelberg where we turned off to Barrydale via the Tradow Pass.

On Friday morning we departed from Barrydale to Paarl where we stayed over at Middelpaas. This was a convenient stopover where Emil Kuschke, Gerhard and Annemarie Breytenbach and André Wessels and his

daughter joined us to Killarney. On this leg we crossed the Op De Tradow Pass, Cogmanskloof Pass (more of a "Poort" than a Pass) and the Du Toitskloof Pass.



Above & below: The usual water stop at the top of Du Toitskloof Pass.



This year we also spent an additional day on the road following an invitation to spend the Saturday, 3 February 2024, the day before the Kalk Bay Run, at Killarney International Raceway at the Passion For Speed classic car race in order to take the international racing drivers on a Parade lap around the track. More cars joined us at this event totalling ten Model T Fords (including Ali v Jaarsveld's Model S).



Above: The group of Model T Fords waiting to take the racing drivers on a parade lap



Above: The line up of Model T Fords waiting in the pits at Killarney to start the parade lap

Killarney was a great experience where we were allowed access to the pits and were able to watch classic car races. We did about three or four laps around the track, each with a racing car driver as passenger. During

## *George to Cape Town and Back Roundtrip cont'd*

the lunch break we were asked to display our cars on the starting grid where the public were allowed to view them.



Above: The cars on display on the Killarney Race Circuit starting grid during lunch time.

On Saturday evening we joined the Kalk Bay Run participants and enjoyed the hospitality of the Crankhandle Club at a get-together and briefing before the run on Sunday.

Sunday brought about a well organised Veteran Run with some exceptional cars and motorcycles, all manufactured before the end of 1918. The lunch at Simonstown ended the run and we then decided to take the scenic route via Chapman's Peak back to our guest house.



Above: The cars that dared to drive the Red Hill section near Simonstown as part of the Kalk Bay Run

On Monday we gathered at Martin's Bakery in Diep River for breakfast and also to allow the peak traffic to pass before tackling the road to Slanghoek Mountain Resort via the M5, Montagu Gardens and Durbanville. We had planned to drive over the Bainskloof Pass to Slanghoek, but due to fires in the area we had to back-track and cross the Du Toitskloof Pass again after first visiting the Painted Wolf Winery near Simondium.

On Tuesday we drove to the beautiful Huis Te Merwede for a wine tasting just outside Rawsonville.



Above: A line-up of an S and Model Ts in front of Huis Te Merwede near Rawsonville where we enjoyed a wine tasting

On Wednesday we departed for our next overnight stop at Barrydale and had some Crankhandle Club members joining us from Montagu. A stopover at the Dried Fruit Shop in Montagu had the owners delighted with our cars and sponsored each car with some water and dried fruit snacks. On this leg we once again passed Cogmanskloof Pass and Op De Tra-dow Pass.

After breakfast in Barrydale on Thursday morning we all departed to Calitzdorp for the start of the annual Vettour where about 20 cars and five motorcycles joined the group. On this leg we traversed the steep Huisrivier Pass just before Calitzdorp. We all enjoyed a great dinner and route briefing at the Café @ the Rose and also had breakfast there on Friday morning before the start of the Vettour. The Vettour treated participants to scones and tea at Eight Bells before ending in George where the trip ended with a Spit Braai at the SCOCC clubhouse.



Above: The cars and motorcycles on display at Eight Bells during our tea stop.



Above: The group of vintage and veteran cars were proudly displayed in the front row at the George Old Car Show.



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**CARS *in the* PARK**



4 Augustus 2024



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Regularity rally  
&  
Tour

Registration : 14 August  
Rally: 14 to 18 August  
Prize giving dinner:  
17 August  
Return home: 18 August  
after breakfast

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# *Rare makes and Model Ts star on the 2024 Kalk Bay Run*

**Words:** Graeme Hurst

**Photography:** Viv James and Pete Rogers

The club's annual veteran run took place on the first Sunday in February and was a resounding success with a 25-strong entry list that saw 19 cars and two bikes making it to the finish. That's not a bad result considering that entry is strictly pre-1919, something that's not negotiable (as anyone who's had the temerity to question organisers Harvey Metcalf and Hilton Franz about the rule knows!) In fairness, their strict approach has seen the annual fixture become recognised across the country for its determination to mark an important era in a 'purist' fashion and has helped pull in participants far and wide over its 14-year history.

If you're not familiar with it, the event celebrates the inaugural run of the Automobile Club of South Africa from Greenmarket Square to Kalk Bay all the way back in 1901. For practical reasons the retrospective run finishes in Simon's Town after a 56km route via Red Hill and Smitswinkel Bay although a few of the oldest cars, such as the 1901 Benz Ideal, understandably take a more direct 25km route along the south peninsula's main road. Both entry groups stop at Kalk Bay for a breather and for a chance for the public to get up close to motoring's 'brass era'.

Of course, there was plenty of that on show, starting with Kalk Bay Run newbie, Ryan Walker's 1912 Rover Colonial. It's wellknown in the club and has taken part many a time but not at the hands of Ryan, its recent newowner, or I should say 'custodian' as these cars are a bit like Philippe Patek watches! Actually, that's maybe an apt moniker, given that Ryan's Colonial (a name today's woke culture hasn't thankfully protested about) is the last remaining example in the world. Also boasting 'last remainder' status was Nick Middelmann's spectacular 1907 Nordenfelt, a name that in retrospect became more associated with military hardware and the development of the submarine and torpedo. That might explain why the Nordenfelt packs a 5.8-litre Bariquand et Marre engine under the hood (massive in veteran terms).

It took part with Dad Rob's 1912 EMF 30, which goes

right back to the club's early years, having been in the care of founder Angus Kinnes. EMF (or E-M-F to be precise) was an American car maker that took its name from the initials of the company's three founders and sadly ceased to exist after the year the Middelmann's car was built.

And adding to the rarity stakes being the fourth oldest of the model was John Ryall's 2.4-litre 1911 Sunbeam. Complete with a serpent-shaped air horn, it spent most of its life in Australia and is entirely original, having never been restored. That's not the case with Mike Watson's magnificent 1915 Rolls-Royce which took part. Another Kalk Bay regular, it's been in Mike's garage for 25 years having been the recipient of a new body (to Mike's design) over that time - one of five the Rolls has enjoyed during its colourful 109-year life: "It was originally commandeered by the Royal Navy in WW1 before finding its way to Mombasa where it was accidentally dropped into the harbour while being unloaded. Its then owner re-bodied it for the third time," explained Mike.

Other noteworthy entrants included event regular Ali van Jaarsveld in her 1907 Ford Model S - the only one in the country - and club stalwarts Dave Alexander and Di Dugmore in their pretty 1913 Singer, with the pair completing their second successful run following substantial repairs to the Singer's rather fragile transverse gearbox.

Also enjoying a trouble-free drive were Colin and Megan Greyvensteyn in their 1917 Dodge Brothers Tourer. Less fortunate, however, was Leonard Schneider, whose 1913 Hupmobile Roadster refused to play ball the morning of the event, and Hilton Franz who had to retire his 1912 Maxwell before it got to Kalk Bay with what was initially thought to be a fuelling issue although subsequent attempts to get it running have cast doubt on the car's magneto.

Also succumbing to mechanical gremlins was Brian Wallace's 1914 Douglas motorcycle. Thankfully the run's two other two-wheeled participants, Adrian Denness' 1912 BAT and Mark Shaw's 1914 New Hudson made it to the finish at Jubilee Square.

But it was the iconic Ford Model Ts that arguably stole the show, with many coming from upcountry to kick off a week of touring as they made their way to the George Old Car Show the weekend after as part of the Vettoer.



# *Rare makes and Model Ts star on the 2024 Kalk Bay Run continued*

The group had the chance to get 'up to The speed (excuse the irony in the pun) on the Kalk Bay Run at the prevent braai held the night before at the clubhouse, during which a series of films of previous runs was screened in place of the usual history talk by Derek Stuart-Findlay.

The screen time clearly provided some inspiration as in a demonstration of just how capable these famous Henry Ford icons are - the visiting T owners and Ali van Jaarsveld opted to organise a photo stop at the top of the Chapman's Peak Drive following the event's lunch and final stop!

Standouts on the Model T front included Riaan van Niekerk's 1915 'Depot Hack' which was built up from a chassis in 2007 for the Model T's centenary run, with the previous owner swapping a Vaaljapie tractor for the oak body made by a furniture maker. Riaan and his 80-year-old father drove the car from George for the run, no mean feat on seats that rival a church pew for comfort!

Also getting attention was Gerhard Breytenbach's red 1910 Model T one of two the life-long T fan owns up in Polokwane. Like so many veteran cars, his red T has enjoyed a lot of use and alterations to keep it rolling during its 100+ years, which made determining its exact year a challenge. "The body is from 1909 and the engine is 1910 with a lot of other parts from 1911 so we decided it's a 1910 model." It was originally supplied in Canada in the left-hand-drive configuration - but is now used for tours such as this. "I have another black one which I've had for ten years and which I drive to work and to the gym," explains Gerhard who is clearly a T die-hard. "I fell in love with Model Ts when I was five years old and hope to drive mine until the day I die."



*Johann Rust and Harvey Metcalf in the 1901 Benz Ideal*



*John Brewster and Bruce Stewart in the Club's 1902 Wolseley*



*Ali van Jaarsveld and Peter Truter in the 1907 Ford Model S*



*Gerhard Breytenbach in his 1910 Model T*



**Ryan Walker's 1912 Rover Colonial and John Ryall's 1911 Sunbeam 12-16**



**Mark Shaw on his 1914 New Hudson Motorcycle**



**Nick Middelman's 1907 Nordenfelt 30-35 at the start**



**Dave Alexander and Di Dugmore in their 1913 Singer**



**The Middelman family's 1912 EMF and 1907 Nordenfelt at the Kalk Bay stop**



**Philip Kuschke's 1915 Model T Ford Runabout and Ali van Jaarsveld's 1907 Ford Model S**



**Eric Edwards' Canadian 1911 Ford Model T leads the line up at the finish**

## ***2024 Kalk Bay Run Photographic Review***

## Back to Back - Safe Option

*No young man's lifestyle was complete without a sports car in the swinging sixties. Mick Walsh compares Two popular rivals from Rootes and MG*

Image is arguably a very crucial factor in the marketing of a popular sports car. It's that accumulative character of styling, performance, pedigree association, reputation, status and fantasy. All are part and parcel of the critical selling of any car, but particularly sports cars. Many of those vital characteristics are transient, and there is nothing like good old nostalgia to transform the response to, and status of, old cars in the eighties.



Sunbeam Alpine

But there is one derogatory, dismissive reaction to certain models that time will never change, even in these liberated times, and that is the label 'woman's car'. It's enough to make stylists, Marketing men and salesmen scream with despair. Once the label has stuck, no amount of competition success, performance goodies, or restyling can change that condemnation.

Triumph Spitfire, MG Midget, MGA, Triumph TR7, Panther Lima, Fiat X1/9, Mazda RX7, Alfa Romeo Spider — all have been so labelled in their time! But more than all of these (with the exception of the Spitfire), the Sunbeam Alpine has been called 'a woman's car' by the hardy, blinkered strike-breaking, sports car driver. It's a very British prejudice, I am convinced. Out in the Californian sun, posing through the streets of Monaco or dodging tram lines in Milan, the Alpine would invite the most flattering of judgements. But the trad Brit open car *fanisa* very discerning type, or pretends to be.

For various reasons the MGB never quite fell foul of this dreaded sexist label, although the more purist

enthusiast would disagree. Maybe it was the simple fact that it wore the hallowed octagon badge, with a pedigree as healthy and British as Harris Tweed or Penguin books.

But things were much more exciting in the early sixties when British sports cars, and motor bikes for that matter, were still in demand all over the world. 'They may not have been the most advanced designs, but they were certainly the most affordable. and still the lucrative market in America had yet to devise home product to match the romance of British sports car, and MG, Rootes and Triumph were certainly not going to give any secrets away. We'll ignore the TR4 in this match, partly Because



MGB Roadster

of its higher price, and larger capacity but more because of its aggressive, muddled styling.

The Sunbeam Alpine and MGB were purer design conceptions, which in their original form have a simplicity which in years to come will be as respected as the SS100 or Fiat Balilla. The creator of the Sunbeam Alpine shape, Kenneth Howes, once remarked that his ambition was to see his sports car on display in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, but I doubt if Syd ever had such grand aspirations for his MG. Owners of either car would never waste energy arguing as to which cars the most attractive. 'They are too blinkered for that.

Once an MG man, always an MG man. He would not even glance at an Alpine, let alone allow the taboo subject to enter a conversation, except perhaps to ridicule. The Alpine owner, I am sure, would be less obsessive, and might even confess that the very reason he bought a Sunbeam in the first place is because he couldn't afford an MGB. To my mind, for what it's worth, and perhaps to augment the office post-bag, I'll nominate the Alpine as my favourite. Not because I

## *Back to Back - Safe Option continued*

have a fetish for fins, or because I like American sports cars, or because I still hold a grudge against the MGB I once owned.

In terms of character and styling flair, I think Ken Howes and Roy Axe simply had more imagination, without being saddled by the conventions of the Abingdon marque. It is easy to imagine the response of John Thornley and Syd Enever to the suggestion of fins on an MG. 'My dear chap, white walls if you must, but fins? Heavens, No'.

Kenneth Howes came to Rootes from the Loewy Organisation, and the design studios of the Studebaker Motor Company again under the direction of Mr Styling himself, Raymond Loewy. Kenneth had turned his creative pencil to all manner of subjects from ashtrays to push chairs, to all of which he gave his unique futuristic flair. It is no surprise that he later left design to create science fiction cartoon strips, and collect abstract art. He had joined Rootes in 1956, and was later put completely in pace of the styling of their new sports car. The original clay buck featured flowing scalloped wings with strong hints of the Studebaker Hawk, surely the best looking of fifties American cars. The management opted for the plain style, and the final shape proved as



**Sunbeam Alpine Interior**

effective as it looked in the wind tunnel at MIRA, with a drag co-efficient lower than an MGA.

Originally called the Sabre, the production shape was clean and elegant, spoiled only by the rather clumsy bumper styling and 'eyebrow' headlight rims. The evolution of the Abingdon challenge to the Sunbeam had rather more diverse origins. MG must have been one of the last sports car manufacturers to

discover door handles and wind-up windows, both of which featured on a flashy Frua styling exercise for the MGA. This project was later abandoned and cut up to avoid customs duty when Syd Enever conceded that a completely new monocoque was required. Strangely, the MG record car, EX181, became the basis for the new car which finally reached the market place in 1962, but not before Renault had extracted compensation from Abingdon for cribbing its 'woman's car', the 1959 Floride. Nobody could find the new MGB's styling offensive: conservative and conventional, certainly, but it was no way as distinctive as the pretty MGA it was to succeed.

It is in the styling department that perhaps the source of the tag 'woman's car' can be found, The Alpine was a shade too glamorous, too pretty, and far too obvious a concession to American taste to be a true-blooded British sports car. It was a perfect co-star for Elizabeth Taylor in Butterfield Eight, and Geraldine Moffat in Get Carter, although it must be said that 007 drove an Alpine in Dr No. Can anyone recall a movie starring an MGB?

So the Alpine takes the advantage in the styling stakes! Some of you will argue that handling and performance are what makes a great sports car, but surely it's the look of the car that is the initial temptation. No one wants to drive an ugly performance car, let alone restore one to its former glory and with



**MGB Roadster Interior**

the nostalgic classic scene, ultimate performance seems less important. For the younger generations of classic enthusiasts, the style of the car is paramount. Why else would they drive ponderous fifties tanks? The Alpine design is synonymous with the swinging sixties, whereas the MGB has less nostalgic focus.

## *Back to Back - Safe Option*

Under those sporting skins, and during hard testing, the fundamental schism between the philosophies of Rootes and BMC soon become clear to the contemporary motoring press. Both cars were assembled largely from parts borrowed from their companies' bread-and-butter saloons, and in that respect the Alpine is technically the more innocuous car of the two. Although it has no outstanding faults, by the same token it has no noteworthy attributes.

The body design is an obvious example, The integral body/chassis construction of the MGB was a completely new design, while the Alpine is a heavily strengthened version of the underframe used on the Hillman Husky. To lower the centre of gravity and increase the chassis stiffness, hefty X-bracing members were used. The engines also have clear links with saloon counterparts. The Alpine engine was a development of the old Minx block, almost identical to the Super Minx specification, with the refinements of its speedier sister, the Humber Sceptre. The four-cylinder cast iron block had an alloy cylinder head and single overhead camshaft.



**Sunbeam Alpine Engine Bay**

Power for the MGB came from the beefy BMC B Series engine with origins as exciting as the Austin A40. The bore was smaller than the Alpine unit, but a longer stroke gave the MGB a 200cc advantage.

The cast iron head held a side camshaft, pushrod operated valves and twin SU semi-down draught carburetors. Peak power was higher than the Hillman engine and it also came in later: 98bhp at 5400rpm instead of 81bhp at a lazy 5000rpm. They were both mechanically sound, very orthodox, well developed, but characteristically very busy engines.

The 'B' Series block may have had the advantage in throttle response, but the vibration level of the Alpine design was much more refined.

The chassis design is again pretty basic and of almost identical specifications. Both cars have coil springs and wishbones at the front, although the MGB has primitive lever arm dampers, compared to the telescopic specification of the Alpine. An anti-roll bar is also fitted between the lower links to cut the Rootes car's tendency to sway through corners. The rear end of both cars is the predictable, cheap live axle, with semi-elliptic leaf springs.

As for the interiors, the MG is certainly better laid out, with more legible instruments. Its dashboard is less cluttered, with all the dials merely a glance forward, rather than a spread across to the passenger side. The effect of the MG's simple layout is a workmanlike style, much more allied to a traditional sports car than the Alpine, which is more reminiscent of a top range Rootes saloon, with no fewer than seven dials to the MG's four. The Alpine's seats are also better equipped, with all manner of adjustments, unheard of in a sports car, and even



**MGB Roadster Engine Bay**

the steering wheel can be altered for length. The stylish Microcell seats gave the driver a wide choice of driving positions, although the Vyanide coverings did not match the trad' leather finish of the smaller and less accommodating MG seats. Rootes firmly believed that you could have performance and handling, yet still stay relaxed, warm and dry, although the comfort and cossetting was often at the expense of weight and performance. So again the MG fulfills the more rudimentary requirements of the sports car image - no gimmicks, and no nonsense.

## *Back to Back - Safe Option*

Abingdon obviously made a real effort to produce a low car, and with deep seats and high door sides you really get the impression that you're down inside the body and protected by it. Again, the whole feel, no matter how contrived, is of driving a real sports car, whereas the Alpine has a much more touring impression to it. Perhaps the Alpine was just too easy to place on the road!

Both hoods require a well rehearsed and carefully planned operation, and in the event of a sudden shower the driver would do better to grit his or her teeth and press on. To quote Ken Miles in a Car & Driver group test, the Sunbeam top 'is probably the most miserable miscarriage ever made'. In concept, the Alpine design would appear the more practical, as the hood is not detachable, and when folded down stows neatly behind a metal cover. In reality, the operation takes at least 15mins, during which time most of your finger nails have been broken. Car magazine recommended using a tyre lever.

'The early MG hood was almost as bad. The design required the complete removal of the hood cover from the frame and rear body. The frame itself was then detached, folded up, and stowed in the boot beneath all the luggage. A folding frame that collapsed behind the seats was later available as an extra. Considering both were proclaimed as 'modern' sports cars, the designs were quite ludicrous, and unacceptable compared to the effortless operation of continental competitors.

Once on the road, the cars are less compatible. At average road speeds on smooth roads the handling of the Alpine is fairly close to the MG, with mild understeer being the natural characteristic, while bumps and pot-holes will cause the live axle to hop sideways. The big difference is when the cars are driven harder. The MGB is undoubtedly the quicker car, but its great virtue is predictability. Under fast cornering, the understeer will change to gradual oversteer, until finally, if pushed hard enough, the tail runs right out. On wet road surfaces, the same happens except much more slowly, but the good steering enables easy recovery. The rack and pinion system is generally very precise and stable, although at the expense of high shock transmission, and a slightly heavy feel. Ken Miles was more critical: 'It steers and rides like a truck, with fairly wild oversteer present at all times. The front wheels will do anything you want them to do - the problem is keeping the rear tyres from passing you on the outside of a turn. The steering effort was also uncomfortably high.'

The MGB in this group test was second only to the Alfa Romeo Duetto in lap times around the Long Island National Speedway, ahead of a TR4A, Fiat 1500 Spider, Sunbeam Alpine and Datsun SPL. Ken Miles felt that the good roadholding, however, was no substitute for an unpleasant ride, and stiff suspension. His final comment was very telling: 'I don't like to put so much effort into driving a car like this. If MG would devote a little attention' to things like controls, steering and suspension, they would have one of the best cars in the world.' I hate to think what this great driver would have made of a seventies, rubber-bumpered version. More than anything else, it was the pedal effort and layout that most annoyed Ken Miles: 'Atrocious. The worst of any car I have ever tested.' I have to agree they are badly placed, and suspended, making it almost impossible to heel and toe. I should know, I spent two years practising in my MGB!

The Alpine understeers naturally, which becomes even more predominant the faster you drive. The heavy steering and a lack of power makes it tiring to push faster than it wants to go. When the car does break away, perhaps because of the shorter wheelbase, all four wheels tend to slide at once. Needless to say, acceleration, of course, can induce the tail to come out. The steering on the Alpine feels lighter for the first half turn either side of dead centre, but with more lock the over-developed castor action stiffens the steering. It is, however, very precise for a recirculating ball system, and better insulated than the MG's rack and pinion. Ken Miles knew the Alpine intimately, having raced it and its bigger brother, the Tiger. He felt 'the car actually handled fairly well considering its high centre of gravity, and rather short wheelbase'. The most severe handling trait was caused by weight transfer forwards due to a high C of G, so that the chassis flexed at the front suspension, taking all the castor 'out of the geometry and making the car's path unpredictable. Ken conceded that the ride wasn't bad, but noted a certain looseness of fit that was disturbing on bumpy roads.

Not surprisingly, then, the MGB's primitive, rugged, traditional character is very much a throw-back to the spartan image of an English sports car. Even from the outset, it could never have claimed to be a modern design. There were token design considerations to the sixties, with such advanced technology as wind-up windows and, yes, even door handles. But it was that pure, rugged quality that was its most appealing character. And, as all the advertising claimed, you had to be, or

## *Back to Back - Safe Option*

would be, transformed into a special kind of man if you owned one.

Supermen like 'Luke Anthony, Pacific coast scuba diver, and Lute Eldridge, Lockheed F-104 test pilot'. Both were among that 'special breed of men' that the advertising claimed owned this 'distinctive breed of car' and were manly enough to handle 'powerful responsive cars', These men of the Right Stuff automatically owned an MG, but even Joe, bored with life, trudging, head down into a future of stale movies, the same old parties and aimless: weekends' could perk up his lifestyle with the octagon spirit. Yes, the ads blatantly stated that the MGB would change your outlook, even your whole life, a car 'where you give the orders and it takes them in style.' Not forgetting, of course, the 'canny ability to attract good company', namely beautiful women. How did mankind get by without an MGB?

The Alpine marketing team took an altogether more modest approach to the selling of their sporting product. The 'design of distinction' was how Rootes heralded the pretty Alpine, and the ad copy had heavy emphasis on refinement with catch lines like 'How to get a Sunbeam Alpine ready for the winter? Roll up the windows', or 'Some said the ashtray wasn't big enough'. The other

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## *The Front Cover Photograph - "Skollie"*

My 1948 MG TC (TC7196) was born on the 24 November 1948 and exported to one of the Rhodesias, uncertain of which one, coming to South Africa in 1978. Dates were confirmed and it was found to be a matching numbers car. I saw the car under a makeshift carport and tent in Hillcrest in 2013. The elderly gentleman who owned her said he had raced her in Southern Rhodesia before importing her to South Africa. He decided a complete restoration was called for and subsequently stripped her down to the last nut and bolt. The restoration never took place as he developed acute arthritis. An inspection with a friend, John Collings, indicated everything was there, however, the tub was in an extremely poor state. A price was agreed upon and the car was now mine. A new tub was ordered from the U.K. together with an upholstery set and other bits and pieces and freighted to South Africa. In the meantime rubber kits

angle was the freedom factor, the car 'for people who haven't forgotten how to have fun', the natural choice for an ex-soap box derby ace. That's not to say Rootes ignored their illustrious racing past. Where Abingdon reminded punters that dad's youth wouldn't have been the same without a TC, Rootes recalled the Sunbeam Grand Prix greats of the twenties. And any competition success; like class wins at Sebring, was used to boost the flagging performance image.

And it was performance more than anything else that was the deciding factor between the two cars. The Alpine just cried out for more power, and too often road testers concluded that this 'tight, secure, predictable, handsome car was ideal for a suburban housewife's runabout chores'. There we are again, back to that dreaded label 'woman's car', but if that means you feel relaxed at the end of a long journey that's fine by me. And that, more often than not, was the conclusion of most motoring scribes of the day.

The MGB was a relatively conventional attempt at a real sports car in the most basic sense, whereas Rootes had the courage actually to redefine the same concept. The result was a perfectly comfortable, refined, fast tourer, a title later officially given by its makers to the Series IV Alpine.

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June 1986  
Photographs: Internet)

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and other parts were obtained in the USA.

I was given a new XPAW block and unworn crankshaft fitted with new pistons and head. The original head was beyond salvation, fortunately, the XPAW head was in good order. The assembly of the new tub was magic but did require some tweaks. Day came for start up and thereafter final assembly with the most difficult part being the fitment of the front mudguards. I fitted a Nissan steering box, which has improved the steering greatly. A new wiring loom incorporated flashers and LED globes installed to head- and tail lights.

Finally, two things I would like to do if I had the spare cash is to fit a supercharger and a slightly lower diff ratio. Would I do it again? Yes, if I was 20 years younger and had a big piggy bank!

**Trevor Burnett, Kloof**

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