



## OUR POSTWAR MOTORING SCENE

# THE 1978 VETERAN & VINTAGE MOTOR SHOW

By *Derek Stuart-Findlay*

After the Cape Town City Council's impressive new Good Hope Centre had opened, the members of the Crankhandle Club (CHC) concluded that the vast pillar-less dome of an exhibition hall was tailor-made for a motor show.

After considerable debate the chairman of the CHC, Tony White, formed a committee with the Early Ford Club of SA and Lions International to stage a show devoted to historic vehicles. R2 400 was paid to the hire the centre from Tues 3rd to Sun 8th April 1978 (with access on the 2nd and the 9th), and a glittering display of vehicles was assembled. With 150 cars and 20 motorcycles covering the period 1901-1958, it was the most ambitious exhibition of

veteran and vintage machinery ever presented in South Africa.

The display of vehicles was compiled with military precision for the official opening by the Patron of SAVVA, Dr. Piet Koornhoff, Minister of Sport and Recreation. He showed great interest in the cars and motorcycles and in his inimitable fashion expressed genuine admiration for the old motor movement.

A souvenir programme had been compiled. It consisted of a 40-page booklet with every exhibit rating a picture and a brief write-up. Every facet of the old motor hobby was featured; veterans, Edwardians, vintage and post-war classics. These ranged from a 1901 Albion and Benz, 1902 Wolseley, 1904 De Dion Bouton and Humberette, 1905 De Dietrich, 1912 Austin, Arrol-Johnston, Ford Model T, and Humber, 1913 Singer and Talbot and a rare 1915 Calthorpe.

A charming little 1925 Citroen



*1901 Benz, 1904 De Dion, 1902 Wolseley*



*Count Luccio Labia's 1905 De Dietrich*



cabriolet and a 1923 Talbot-Darracq were fitted with two of the best replica bodies yet seen in South Africa.

There were some real rarities on show, a 1926 Berliet, a 1926 Talbot GP racing car, a 1930 Austin Ulster, a 1931 'C' Type Montlhery Midget MG, a 1932 chain-driven Fraser-Nash, a 1935 'R' Type single-seater MG racing car, a 1934 Siddeley Special, a 1935 Squire and a 1938 4.25-litre Jensen.

Exotic Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Alvis, Lagonda, Bristol and Aston Martin thoroughbreds rubbed chassis with more prosaic but equally nostalgic cars from Austin, Morris, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Dodge and Ford. Even South Africa's oldest Volkswagen, a 1949 model, was on display.

Roughly finished in the manner of most pre-war racing cars, the 1932 supercharged Austin 7 single-seater of Dougie van Riet was on public display for the first time in a generation. Arguably the most successful car in the great days of South African racing in the 1930s, it bore a placard listing its brilliant performance. Its owner was also to be seen looking much the same slight bespectacled figure who used to thrill crowds at East London and the Grosvenor and Rand Grands Prix.

Some cars were presented in varying degrees of completion, 'as-found' and partially rebuilt. Rodney Wilson, the Early Ford Club Chairman, had presented a few of his unrestored vehicles imaginatively. His incomplete cars formed a backdrop to an early garage scene, a feast of automobilia knocked up in a couple of hours.

One of these was his 1928 Nash Imperial Limousine, it was the last car owned by the mining magnate Sir Joseph Robinson and the only right-hand-drive Nash of that design. It had been pushed out of its shed in 1954 with one cracked window and allowed to rust away, Wilson had bought it in 1969 with less than 11 000 miles on the clock. Most people would have said that it was past restoring and too decrepit to even make the scrapyard in one piece. But to the enthusiast this merely added to the challenge.

Another car once owned by Sir Joseph and restored by Kerry Beck was a superb 1919 Daimler Limousine. This had been sold (and the Nash acquired as a replacement) after its differential had broken. It had been painstakingly

rebuilt to its former stately standards. Its 7-litre sleeve-valve engine purred gently once again and there were no signs that many components had been specially made, faithfully copied from the only other similar car in existence, owned by the Queen of England.

Another example of the craftsmanship devoted to these restorations was the rebuild of a 1913 10 hp Singer. Considered by motor historians as the first large car in miniature, it had established the name of Singer in the pre-WWI years. The car had been bought new by the Boonzaaier family and in 1952 had been found decaying under a tree in Rondebosch. After being rescued by Angus Kinnes and stored under cover for 25 years, it had been bought by Mike Stewart who at the time of the show was undertaking the restoration. Mechanically it was in reasonable condition but the body had required a complete rebuild and he was in the process of fashioning a new timber framework. He had rebuilt the cooling fins for the radiator core and the hand punch used for this agonizingly slow process was included in the exhibit.

The 20 motorcycles on display ranged from a rare 1910 4-cylinder in-line shaft-driven FN, a 1914 Douglas, a 1917 Indian, a 1918 Sunbeam, a 1919 AJS V Twin, through 1920s models from Norton, Raleigh, Sunbeam, and B.S.A. to a 1935 Zundapp. A 1942 Harley Davidson with sidecar was in its original SA desert campaign khaki and U.D.F. mark on one of its tyres. The 1950s were represented by a Triumph 500 Speed Twin and three Vincents, one of which was a 1955 Black Prince.

The show attracted thousands of people, including visitors from all over the country, and although attendance during the week was disappointing, the crowds packed in over the weekend. Adults came to remember the cars 'they should never have sold' and children to be fascinated by the weird machinery and to play on an old Dennis fire engine.

By the Sunday all costs had been covered but from a financial point of view the charities supported by Lions International had not benefitted as generously as had been hoped.

The motor show had been an ambitious undertaking and from a spectator point of view an out-



*Ralph Clarke's 1912 Austin*



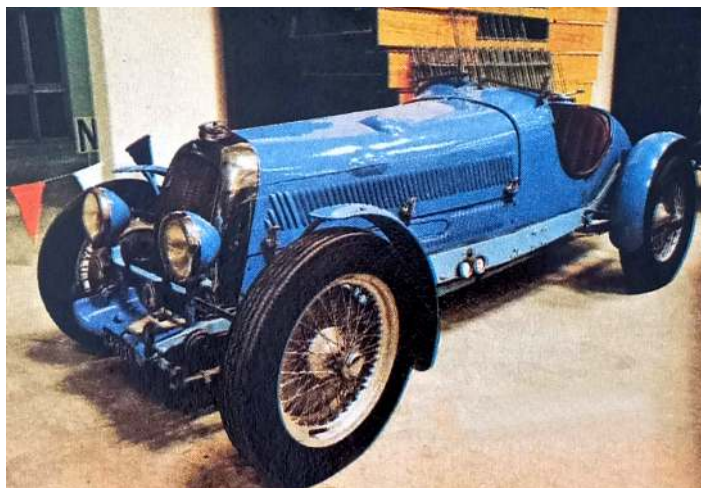
*Liefie Bosch's 1912 Ford T*



*George Kinnes' 1912 Humber*



*Mike Stewart's 1913 Singer*



*Boetie van Zyl's 1926 rebodied Talbot GP racing car*



standing success. But a few lessons had been learnt. The CHC has participated in many car shows since then but the venue has almost always been outdoors with expenditure on overheads kept to a minimum.

Although it's sad to note that many of the exotic models on the show have left our shores, it's quite encouraging that they have been replaced by an array of other intriguing classics.

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**Right: Vic Ayson's** →  
**1931 MG Montlhery Midget**

**Far right: Peter Crowley's**  
**1931 Lagonda**



**Kerry Beck's 1919 Daimler**



**Rodney Wilson's 1928 Nash Imperial**



**Danie Loubser's 1932 Morris Minor**



**Wally Beck's 1934 Alvis**



**Rodney Wilson's 1932 Sunbeam**



**Above left: Jack Huysamen's 1935 Squire**

**Above: Dennis Smith's 1936 Morris 8**

**Above right: Mike Cheminais' 1935 Rover Speed Twenty**



**Left: George Kinnes' 1952 Bristol 401**

**Below: Jack Huysamen's 1958 Aston Martin DB Mk III**



**Dickon Daggitt's 1938 MG WA**

**Right: Mike Coucher's 1938 Bentley 4.5 litre**

