

LOOSE FILLINGS

GOOD VIBRATIONS

This issue includes some UK comments on originality as it applies to pre-1960s air-cooled cars. The comments agree with the Down Under view – that in their day air-cooled cars were distinctive and often quite unique, and we ought to be keeping them that way today. We ought to be using them, too. Congratulations to everyone who brought a car out this year, and let's hope to hear more from you – as loud as you like! – in 2011.

by Robert Young

GLOBAL STORMING

New Zealander Dick Campbell's successful 1957 and 1958 seasons with a Mk8 Cooper Norton were just part of a remarkable career on two and four wheels, not only in New Zealand but also in England and South Africa.

His first job, recalled current JBS owner Alex McLennan, had been making deliveries for his father's bakery riding a Harley with a box sidecar. In 1947 Campbell, then in his early 20s, set off for England with his first wife, taking with them a "globe of death" sideshow act, which involved riding BSA Bantam motorcycles inside a

spherical steel cage. Later that year, at Belle Vue in Manchester, Campbell saw his first motorcycle speedway races, and his career as a carnival entertainer was forgotten.

Through the boom years of UK speedway he rode for the Edinburgh Monarchs team, becoming the team captain. Journalist Graham Gauld recalled him as "a very nice laid back guy and a brilliant speedway rider." In the off season Campbell raced in South Africa, and formed the Dunlop "Hell Drivers" with Buddy Fuller and South African racing



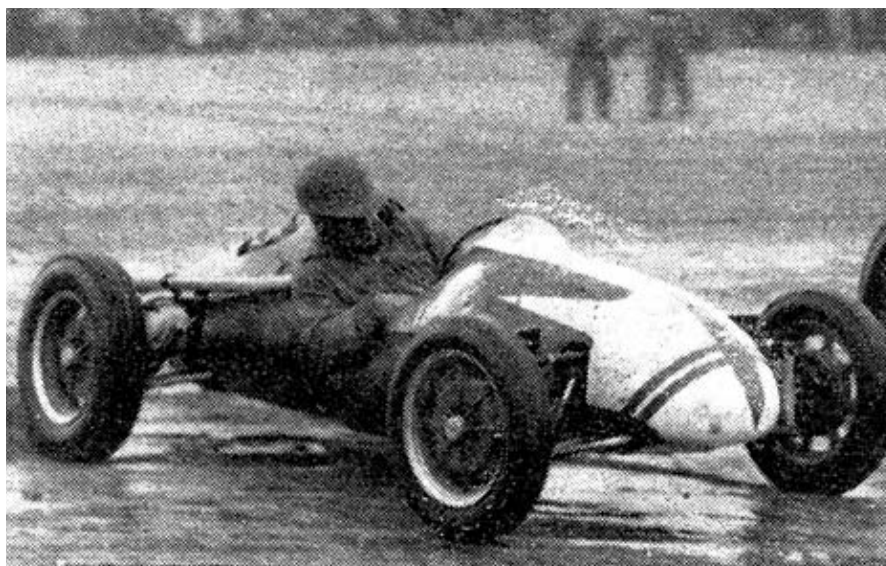
During 1956 Dick Campbell was part of the Durban Hornets Speedway team and also occupied himself with racing the Blake Road Motors' second string' Midwill-JAP of his good friend Syd van der Vyver, with a very robust and spectacular style, in hillclimbs or short circuit events. Photo Rob Young collection

legend Louis Doug Serrurier, the constructor of the LDS formula one cars. They performed at oval tracks and showgrounds, attracting large crowds. While riding speedway for the Durban Hornets in 1955 he had his first drives in a 500cc car, the Cooper-based Midwill JAP owned by Syd van der Vyver. He ran it again in 1956, competing both in hillclimbs and circuit races in exceptionally forceful style.

In England in 1956 he bought a 1954 Mk8 Cooper, chassis Mk8-3-54, and ran it at UK races and hillclimbs using a Norton Inter engine. He returned to New Zealand, bringing the Cooper with him, and was an active competitor in South Island races and hillclimbs. Consistent performances at hillclimbs on both the north and south islands, including two FTDs and two second places, won him the 1958 hillclimbing Gold Star.

He also set New Zealand speed records for the 500cc class, covering a flying kilometre at 173.64 km/h (107.93 mph) and a standing-start kilometre in 30.33 secs (119.89 km/h) at Tram Road, just north of Christchurch, in February 1958.

He passed into New Zealand legend at Duvauchelles hillclimb in 1958. The Cooper's accelerator cable broke, but an undeterred Campbell pulled off the cable outer, tied the cable to his right shoe – and set a new course record. The legend was taken a step further in 1959, when



Campbell was driving a 4CLT Maserati at Wigram and incurred the displeasure of visiting UK driver Ron Flockhart after Campbell passed Flockhart's race-winning 2.5 BRM into a chicane. There wasn't enough room, Flockhart said. Did I hit you? asked Campbell. No, said Flockhart. So there was enough room, said Campbell.

The Cooper passed through a number of later owners in New Zealand, and is now in Japan. Campbell returned to speedway racing with some brilliant performances in 1961, and retired in 1962. He ran a freight

and passenger service, and a rural mail service, from Collingwood, near Nelson, and died in the 1990s.

Thanks to Alex McLennan, Max Fisher and David McKinney for their assistance with this story

Above: Dick Campbell sideways in the Mk8 Norton on the sand at Pines Beach in 1958. Below: the unmistakable Campbell style in the Midwill at the unfenced Scott Road hillclimb which had steep drops off the side of the road. Photo Rob Young collection.



THE LOG

This section of Loose Fillings demonstrates to the world that, from time to time, our air-cooled cars actually run in public. The previous page of The Log covered the period March to June. The page below demonstrates how June and July appear to be too cold for historic drivers.

- August 12: Wakefield Park (NSW) GEAR day, Terry Perkins (Scarab Triumph 650)
- August 14-15: Winton Raceway (Vic) VHRR historic races, Brian Simpson (Derry Greeneklee's Cooper Mk9 JAP 1100)
- August 22: Rob Roy hillclimb (Vic), John Coffin (Robbins BSA) best time of 30.46, amongst the top ten for the day – "very happy indeed."
- September 10-11: Murwillumbah NSW, Speed on Tweed, Australian specials theme, John Coffin (Robbins BSA)
- September 18-19: Wakefield Park (NSW) HSRCA historic races, Terry Perkins (Scarab Triumph 650), Garry Simkin (Cooper Mk4 Vincent)
- October 2: Haunted Hills hillclimb (Vic), John Coffin (Robbins BSA), won class
- October 6: Wakefield Park GEAR, Barry Parsons, (JRS Triumph 650)
- October 16: Mt Tarrengower hillclimb (Vic), John Coffin (Robbins BSA), blew head gasket on second run, but won class
- November 28: Rob Roy hillclimb (Vic), John Coffin (Robbins BSA), Graeme Noonan (Cooper Mk7 Norton), David Palstra (Newbound BSA), Terry Wright (Walton Cooper Mk8 1140 JAP s/c)
- November 28-29: Eastern Creek HSRCA historic races, Andrew Halliday (Cooper Mk5 Norton) – burned the piston in practice.

BITS & PIECES

● Rob Roy hillclimb on November 28 was the last 2010 opportunity for the Victorian air-cooled brigade, and there was a strong turnout, although the day was wet and only a handful of competitors from any of the classes got below 30 seconds. Graeme Noonan was fastest of the pre-1963 500s (33.93), now using an Amal carburettor and finding low-speed acceleration much improved. John Coffin, running his spare engine after problems at Mt Tarrengower, was having his seventh outing for the year. Terry Wright ran the Walton Cooper and won his class (32.41), with a horde of MG specials in pursuit, and with a very welcome Bruce and Camille Walton in the pits. This was the Walton Cooper's first appearance anywhere in Australia since restoration and four seasons on the UK

hills. It was also its first appearance at Rob Roy since Bruce Walton's last drive there in 1961.

The post-1962 classes included the Kawasaki-powered Cyclos of Darren Visser (29.68) and Leo Bates, and the Jinx of long-suffering Paul Schilling.

● What is claimed to be "the complete story of 500 racing past and present" is contained in a new UK-published book, "Bodywork Optional But Desirable," by Colin Rawlinson. It measures 246x174mm and has 154 black and white illustrations and 46 in colour. The book concentrates on UK 500cc racing, but it sounds very comprehensive (319 pages) and could make a nice companion to Harry C. Reynolds' recently-published book on F3 racing in North America. An order form is available on the Parley Books website, www.parleybooks.co.uk

● Photographs of some Australian air-cooled cars are reproduced in Neville Webb's scrapbook-style history of the Broken Hill branch of the Vintage Sports Car Club of Australia. There are several photographs of 125cc Clisby Bantams, and one of a car then known as the PDS, which is clearly a later owner's name for Brian Bosisto's 1952 BSA special, which was the first South Australian 500. This book is available from the author at 100 Eastlake City Link, Pacific Highway, Carrara, Queensland 4211, price \$65 including packaging and postage.

● Another recently-published book, John Medley's detailed biography of the wealthy Sydney driver John Snow, covers Snow's purchase and brief ownership of a Mk4 Cooper, which he imported without an engine and fitted with a Black Lightning Vincent taken from a complete bike which he imported for the purpose. Snow had his first and only races with this car at Mt Druitt on December 17, 1950, almost exactly 60 years ago. Next owner was Victorian Misha Ravidell, shown with the car at Gnoo Blas in 1953 in one of Kevin Shearer's photos (LF35 page 6) After Ravidell it became Lex Davison's Irving-prepared supercharged Cooper Vincent, with which Davison won the 1955 and 1956 Australian hillclimb championships. The car has been restored to Snow's specification by Garry Simkin, and was racing at Wakefield Park in September. John Medley's book is available from the author at Box 171, Holbrook 2644, the price \$60 including p. and p.

● Also running at the September Wakefield Park meeting was Terry Perkins' Scarab Triumph, by far the most active of the NSW air-cooled cars. Terry

CLASSIFIEDS

For sale: Waye 500, 1953, CAMS log book, JAP 500 dry-sump engine, Norton gearbox, roll bar, new upholstery \$15,000 ono, Andrew Halliday 02 9888 6175.

For sale: BB Ariel built '60-'61, Red Hunter engine, Norton box, complete spare engine 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. Freshly overhauled 500 JAP. Offers to Peter Harburg, (07) 3839 9699

For sale: Starter motor suit any 500 car, with reduction gears and sprag clutch with sprocket fitted to drive engine mainshaft, \$500. Terry Wright, 02 9418 2974 or tsrwright@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: 12 volt roller starting system to get your air-cooled car fired up. New and unused. 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

For sale: Sidney Rudge, built mid-'50s by Len Sidney, 1938 4v Rudge 500, later JAP and Vincent. Ready to roll \$25,000, John Hazelden, 03 5968 4025

For sale: Staride Norton, ex-John Cooper Manx Norton, refurbished by Ken McIntosh. Google "Staride/Norton" for photos. Race ready for a new enthusiastic owner. Can ship to any destination, \$US40,000, johnstreets@sbcglobal.net

For sale: Walkem Vincent, converted mid-'50s by the constructor from his original 1952 Walkem Manx. Comes with Black Shadow(?) motor, all components and CAMS log book. \$50,000, Paul Zahra, z.oz@rocketmail.com

has had such pleasure restoring and using the Scarab that he went looking for another 1950s car, and has now bought the single-seat 1958 Nota Consul. On display at Wakefield Park, and likely to be a runner early in 2011, was Col Cavenagh's restoration of the Coldon Triumph which he and his late brother Don built in the late 1950s and raced at Warwick Farm and Catalina Park.

ORIGINALITY — THE VIEW FROM ENGLAND

In the UK the 500 Owners Association has developed a list of eligibility requirements which in 2011 will be mandatory for competing cars wanting to score points in their circuit racing championship. The club caters only for 500cc cars built between January 1947 and December 1960. The originality process is administered by the club itself, and onus of proof is on the car owner. At the moment the 500 OA has 56 cars which meet its requirements.

The following comments from the Association's registrar, Richard Utley, make interesting reading.

"One area that I would like to highlight is the restoration process. Over the years many cars have been modified from their period spec, and when recently restored have not shed those parts, and have sometimes had them added to. The restoration of a car is a very expensive process; so if you are going to spend the money, I believe it well worth it to go the extra mile, and do your research, and either locate the correct parts or if that is not possible have them made. An unmodified, period correct car is of much greater value than a messed up modified car. The value of the car and the pride of ownership will be reflected in the care and attention to the details.

"Our cars should be run as near as possible to their original period specification. I consider that we are the custodians of

these cars and have a responsibility to pass them onto future generations in the most original condition possible. Modifications to seats, steering wheels, instruments, mirrors, brake cylinders and pipes may appear on the face of it to be a small change, but they can alter the whole character and originality of the car."

To quote the club's extensive (and very interesting) website, www.500race.org, "Historic competition is a discipline in which one of the essential ingredients is a devotion to the cars and their history. The registration scheme aims to discourage the construction of ineligible cars and the unreasonable modification of original cars."

This seems a pretty reasonable philosophy, but it is worth noting that the UK approach differs from the Australian approach in the way originality is actually assessed. The lengthy and highly detailed UK system is spelled out in full on their website. By contrast, the Australian approach developed under CAMS basically just says the specification of each car today must match the specification of that car at some time in the period.

There are other differences as well. The UK system is able to use their annual point-score series as a lever to get owners to meet eligibility standards. In Australia it is only possible to enforce originality via the expensive and sometimes difficult CAMS Certificate of Description. This is certainly nice to have, but fortunately it is

not essential for many of the events where older air-cooled cars compete.

And despite the concern for originality, the UK system accepts some modern replica components. Wider wheels are permitted so cars can run the historic Dunlop racing tyres. Modern replica Norton engines, which are externally identical but more competitive than the originals, are also allowed. This was because of the difficulty in finding original engines, particularly long stroke versions.

But the intentions of the two systems are broadly similar. After all, it doesn't matter what country you're in: what is the point of restoring a 50-year-old racing car to anything other than its original specification?

SHEARER PICS

In the last issue of *Loose Fillings* we reproduced two more photographs from the collection of the late Kevin Shearer. One photograph showed a Mk4 Cooper being towed through a pit area with a mechanic bravely perched over the engine. It seemed likely this was Misha Ravidell's ex-Snow Cooper Vincent, and that the pit area was at Gnoo Blas, the public road circuit outside Orange.

Gnoo Blas historian Denis Gregory has advised Garry Simkin, the car's present owner, that Ravidell was entered for the April 1953 meeting, but was not mentioned in the race report. The photo indicates Ravidell arrived, but perhaps had some sort of engine trouble.

The other photo was clearly taken at Strathpine, the airstrip course just north of Brisbane, and the car (with its distinctive square scoops in the engine cover) is the ex-Les Taylor Mk4, now running a Norton Manx. Queensland historian John Holmes suggests the lanky driver would be Charlie Swinburne, the "S" of the Lewis-Pitt-Swinburne LPS partnership.

Left: from the Kevin Shearer collection. Believed to be Kevin Fuss, Ross Special, Port Wakefield, 1950's sometime. Looks bad but the the car and driver survived.



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