

THE AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIAN

Newsletter February 2021

**AUTOMOTIVE
HISTORIANS
AUSTRALIA INC**

FOUNDING PATRON: Ron Tauranac AO

Hello members and welcome to the AHA Newsletter.

From the Secretary

The Annual General Meeting of Automotive Historians Australia Inc. was held on 21 December 2020 on Zoom with 18 members present and apologies from quite a few other members. Some plans for 2021 were discussed, including reinstating our postponed Castlemaine event, organizing some seminars with the Association of Motoring Clubs (AOMC), publishing a journal, the ongoing sagas of organizations trying to manage collections and archives and more Zoom meetings for member discussions.

This edition of the newsletter includes more video from the *AHA In Conversation* series and more information about imports of Datsun cars in the 1930s. This month's 3AW motoring archive recording features Evan Green and Jack Murray speaking about their round-Australia trip for Castrol and I've found a cultural time capsule film from the 60s about this trip.

Thanks again to all the members who have contributed ideas and information for the newsletter.

Tony Lupton
Secretary

President's Report

Little has happened over the Christmas period thus the President's Report is short.

I do note the retirement of Harriet Edquist from the RMIT Design Archives at the end of last year. Harriet is now an Emeritus Professor at RMIT and has also forged links with the University of Launceston as an Adjunct Professor of Architecture & Design.

Also noted is the acceptance of Nicholas Scarff into the RMIT Masters program. Nicholas will research the history of Jaguar in Australia. It is great to see a young graduate taking on Australian automotive history as an integral part of their studies.

Of interest are two recent stories turning up on social media of Aussie cars being "found" in the USA. One, a 1932 Chevrolet, has a wooden pattern mounted as a body that is undoubtedly the pattern made by Holden Motor Body Builders to form the alloy panels for the Moonlight roadster bodies of 1931/32. How it got to America no one knows but

it apparently was hung on the wall of a barn for many years. The car is for sale at US\$22,000 so it could come home. See [Hemmings](#).

The second car is a 1939 Chevrolet All-Enclosed Coupe (Sloper) recently retrieved from a shed and now under restoration. The owner is struggling to find suitable parts as the Holden-made body is different to the Fisher body. So the question is do we (as Australians) help these guys fix rare and unusual cars that have left our shores with even rarer and hard to find local parts or do we say send it back and let us do it here? In considering this we should remember all the US and European cars that we have imported and need to keep on the road.

Going Electric

The past 18 months has seen two auto companies offer electric powerplants for older models. Jaguar can retrofit an E-type with an electric powertrain and GM offers Chevrolet sport truck owners an electric motor that replaces the small block Chev V8. See [Jag E-Type](#) and [GM](#).

Steve Carter of Buninyong, just out of Ballarat, has an electric push bike and is currently having his 1948 Singer utility fitted with an electric motor by Snake Valley engineer, Duncan Quick. Is this the way of the future for historic vehicle owners when Governments try to reach Zero emissions in 2050? I hope not.

Norm Darwin
President

AHA In Conversation Video Series

This edition we continue presenting *AHA In Conversation* videos. This one is from our 2019 conference, titled *A Life in Motorsport* and features Tony Lupton in conversation with Colin Russell.

Colin has had an amazing career as a race mechanic, engine builder, test driver, commentator and teacher and in this video talks about some of his experiences including drag racing with Larry Ormsby and building engines for the Ford Works Team.



[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Here's another in our series of historic recordings featuring 3AW motoring journalist Lox McGrath and notable characters in motorsport. This time Lox interviews Evan Green and "Gelignite" Jack Murray after their late 1965 figure-8 crossing of Australia testing Castrol's new liquid tungsten motor oil. Green, Murray and their companions drove over 12,000 miles testing the oil and their Morris 1800 and Mini Minor cars. The odyssey was also made into a 30 minute film by Castrol called *Crossroads Alice* that is now part of the BP Video Library. So you can listen to the interview and then have a look at the film.

[Click here to download the radio interview.](#)



[Click here to watch the film.](#)

AHA Conference Paper Series

THE JOY OF MOTORING

*Fourth annual conference of
Automotive Historians Australia*

HOSTED BY
RMIT Design Archives
+
RMIT School of Design

[The papers from the 2019 AHA conference The Joy of Motoring are available here.](#)

Datsun in Australia

Simon Fitzpatrick and David Wright have responded to the enquiries by Iain Ross about Datsun cars imported into Australia in the 1930s.

Simon discovered an article from SA Motor (RAA magazine) from September 1969 from the daughter of an owner who purchased a car in 1935, which refers to the original article in Datsun News.

Simon also searched the Trove database and found the following links:

Datsun Cars – Eastern Distributors

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/10956587/562554>

Reliability trial

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/204284067?searchTerm=datsun>

Court case – Eastern Distributors - Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/205943716?searchTerm=datsun>

Simon also recalls that some time ago the National Archives of Australia passed on to Japan a number of Japanese company records prior to 1941 which were seized by the Australian Government at the outbreak of war.

The Datsun article in the December AHA Newsletter triggered a memory from David Wright's primary school days.

David wrote: while visiting the home of a school friend named Lancaster in 1954 or 1955, I spotted a small tourer in the garage which appeared to have been laid-up for some time. It was about the size of an Austin 8 of the mid-1930's and I was told it was a Datsun which had been imported from Japan. The Lancaster family lived at Chandler Road, Noble Park, close to the Heatherton Road intersection, and I took particular notice of this vehicle as it was the first I had heard of a Japanese car in Australia.

Unfortunately I lost contact with the Lancaster family and I have no subsequent knowledge of this car.

Interestingly, the Victoria Police Motor Vehicle Registration List of 1940 contains an entry for a Datsun sedan and tourer manufactured in 1934. Both were 4 cylinder cars (56x76mm) with 7.8 treasury horsepower. The listed weight for the tourer was 10cwt and the sedan was 12cwt. An engine number 13946 is quoted in this listing. These specifications accord with my recollection of the Lancaster's car in Noble Park.

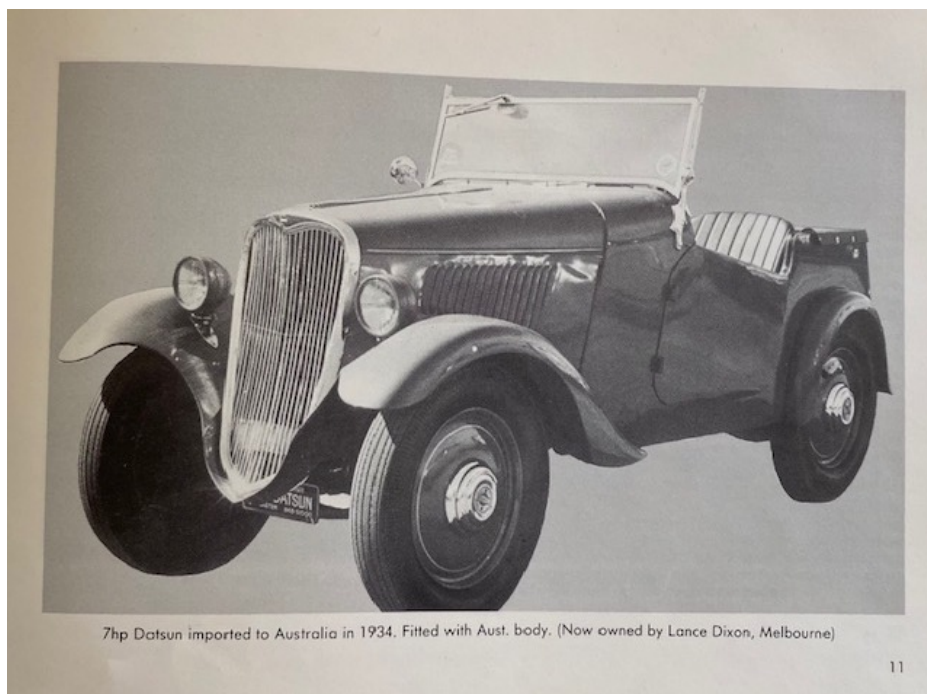
Thanks Simon and David for those contributions.

Introducing Datsun to Australia, shown below, states that the car in the photograph was owned at the time by Lance Dixon. Does anyone know anything about this car?

Tony Lupton



(Photo - Tony Lupton)



(Photo - Tony Lupton)

Projects, Books and Research of AHA members

Warren Turnbull's Holden Histories

*Warren has provided some background on his publications *The Monaro Story* and *Holden's Black Book* along with details about his current project about GMH Production Broadcast sheets.*

Like most, my research journey started by reading lots of books on Australian cars, and after some time became more focused on GMH and Monaro in particular. In the mid 90s, after reading some stuff that was very wrong, I decided to

stop complaining and start writing. I soon teamed up with Ben Stewart who was also quite knowledgeable in this area. After three years of research we compiled a back to back book The Monaro Facts/The Monaro Story.



At the time this book was controversial, being two books in one and an automotive book without pictures, but we just could not find photos or brochures for all cars, so with an all or nothing policy throughout the book, we went with nothing. Eventually the book did get recognition and has been used by many other authors as a reference.

This soon opened other doors and I was allowed to introduce a criteria-based demerit system for all Monaros entered into stock/authentic class at Monaro nationals. This has since been adopted by several other Holden groups.

As part of the Monaro Story I included identification plate interpretation, as there was no consistency in the numbering systems between the 4 different assembly plants, with them also changing their systems all the time. This became very useful to Monaro enthusiasts.

I took this further when working for Just Holden's Magazine, interpreting tag information for a wide variety of GMH vehicles. In 2010 I started compiling all I had learnt about GMH numbering systems into a single book, and in 2013 published Holden's Black Book, 1948 to 2006. This was further updated in 2018 to cover all of GMH production, 1948 to 2017.



It covers all model, trim, paint, sequence, chassis, engine, VIN/ISOVIN and compliance codes for all vehicles build by GMH for sale through the Holden dealer network, so does not cover Chevrolet/Toyota etc built by GMH or Apollo, Nova etc built for GMH.

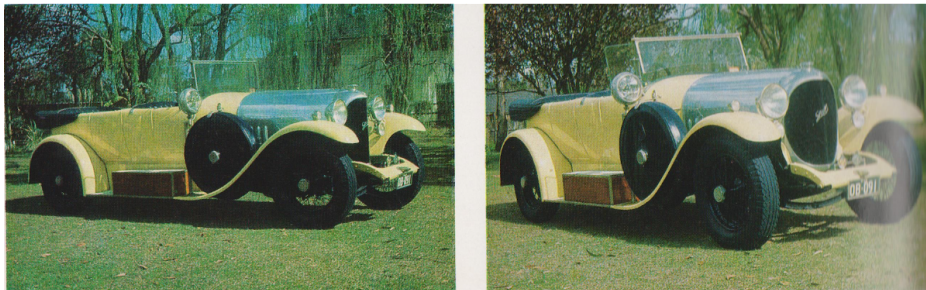
Although published there are still some numbers that I have never found, such as some HR driveline order codes that appear only on Melbourne manufactured HD and HR Holdens. And some codes turn up that GMH documentation says should not exist, such as code 8 (SS) on VS utilities, which use 7 (S) as the utility only came as S V8 not SS. I have found 2 with code 8 and all the rest, some before and some after, with code 7. So the hunt still continues.

I'm currently working on GMH Production Broadcast sheets from their introduction in 1969 to 1989, when they went from a single A4 sheet (shown) to several sheets. This is the most challenging as these sheets are very rare and change all the time. I have been working on this, on and off, for over 20 years.



I have also helped a number of other enthusiasts with their work, from contributing information I have gathered to proof reading.

More on the Spyker cars in Australia



As previously reported, Dutch automotive historian Fons Alkemade has asked for information about any Spyker C4 models in Australia.

Bob King alerted me to information on the Spyker cars in James Flood's books. The Spyker is mentioned at page 272 of Flood's third book.

The photo Bob provided from Flood's volume shows a 1921 Spyker Sports Tourer. The caption describes it as a 5.7 litre, 6 cylinder 30/40 h.p. model, with a Maybach engine that developed 70 h.p. at 2,000rpm. It was owned by Owen Bourke of St. Ives, New South Wales and Bob recalls seeing the car, probably when it was owned by Bourke.

Thanks to Bob King for that information. Anyone with any more information on the Spyker please contact Tony Lupton.

Jenny Fawbert is researching:

- Australian motor body builders to 1946
- Jeeps in WW2 Australian service
- WW2 Staff Cars in Australian service
- Dame Nellie Melba's motor cars

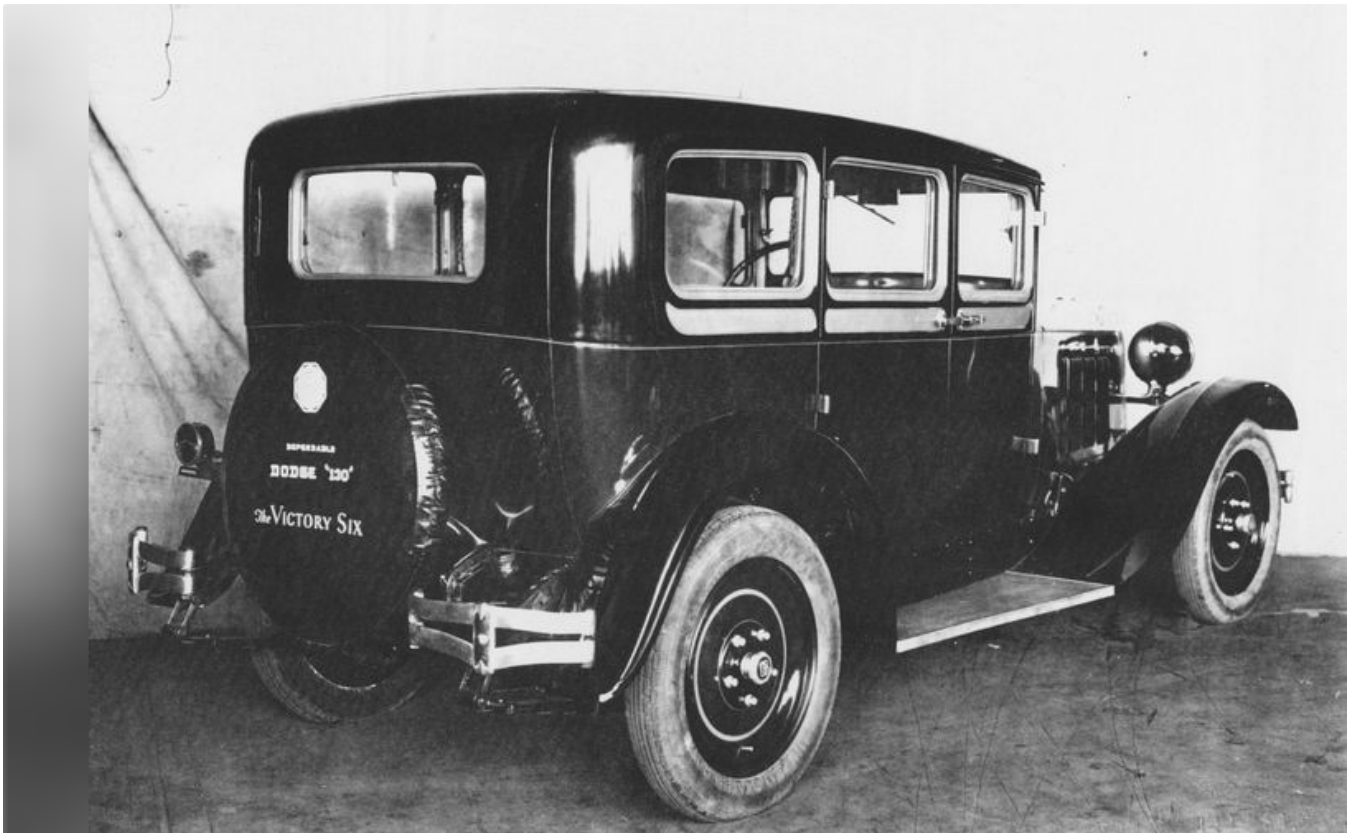
Contact fawbert@bigpond.com with any information you may have that could assist.

Members are invited to supply some details of their current work projects so other members who have any resources or information that might assist their research can contact them.

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From Coachbuilding to Automotive Body Building

Jenny Fawbert sent me a Hemmings.com story about the 1928 Dodge Victory Six and the way automotive body building evolved from coachbuilding.



[Here's a link to the story.](#)

AHA Resources Page

David Neely's History of Jackson, Jones & Collins

Automotive historian David Neely has provided our resources page with a history of [Jackson, Jones & Collins – A Sydney firm of motor body builders. Click to read the article.](#)



Parramatta Road, Leichhardt, Sydney in the 1920s.

David, together with Tom Clarke, wrote *Rolls Royce & Bentley in the Sunburnt Country - the first fifty years in Australia*. It is a fine documentation of both marques that also contains many histories of motor body builders who were building motor bodies for both makes in Australia.

Sydney's First Gathering of Motorists

Jenny Fawbert has written a fascinating paper on Sydney's first motoring get-together. [Read the article on our Resources Page.](#)

GM on Designing and Planning Automotive Dealerships in Australia

Michael Bogle's paper on GM's approach to automotive dealership design is a very good read. [Read the paper on our Resources Page.](#)



Land Title Data as an Automotive History Research Tool

Norm Darwin has an interesting take on using land survey information in automotive research. [Read it on the Resources Page.](#)

If you have an article that needs publishing please forward it for consideration to info@autohistoriansaustralia.org

Third European Conference for Automotive History, Turin 2021

Our British and European friends are planning a real live conference in Turin in 2021. Doesn't that sound good!

Conférence Européenne sur l'Histoire de l'Automobile



Third European Conference for Automotive History
organised jointly by
Anders Ditlev Clausager of the Society of Automotive Historians In Britain;
Thomas Ulrich of the Automobil-Historische Gesellschaft e.V., Germany;
Together with the **AISA, Associazione Italiana per la Storia dell'Automobile**
Supported and hosted by



Torino / Turin—Italia / Italy / Italien
1-3 ottobre / October / oktober 2021
www.pan-european-automobile-history.com
info@museoauto.it

CALL FOR PAPERS:

Together with the Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile and the AISA, we are pleased to invite you to our third European conference for automotive history, to be held in the Mauto, Corso Unità d'Italia 40, Turin, Italy, from 1 to 3 October 2021, with invitations cordially extended to AHA (Australia), AHG (Germany), CONAM (The Netherlands), PHAF (France), SAH (USA), SAHB (Britain) and UIA (Serbia), as well as to other interested organisations and individuals.

To further international discourse, conference presentations will focus on subjects which have a cross-border European or International interest, or are of general interest to automotive historians.

The provisional programme is as follows:

Friday 1 October: arrival, informal dinner in the hotel.

Saturday 2 October: conference in the museum starting at 9am, with a break for lunch, followed by dinner.

Sunday 3 October: a morning session of further papers, finishing at midday.

Speeches should be made in English, with accompanying Powerpoint presentations. The length of each presentation is provisionally set at 30 minutes, with 10 minutes for questions and discussions.

Please note that the programme is subject to change.

The organisers reserve the right to cancel any part of the programme.

The closing date for submissions of papers for consideration by the organisers is **1 April 2021**, please supply an abstract or outline, including estimated length and number of slides. Please contact:

**Anders Ditlev Clausager, 62 Viceroy Close,
Birmingham B5 7UT, England
Telephone +44 (0)121 440 4745
email: sahb.secretary@btinternet.com**

Members are encouraged to send in contributions or ideas for inclusion in member updates. Whether it's something about motoring history you think members may be interested in, a project you're working on or have finished or a suggestion for AHA, let us know about it.

Local Links

Websites for some of our Australian motoring friends

[Association of Motoring Clubs](#)



[Veteran Car Club of Australia \(Victoria\) Inc.](#)



[Victorian Historic Racing Register](#)



[Royal Historical Society Victoria](#)



[Council of Heritage Motor Clubs \(NSW\)](#)



International Friends



The Society of Automotive Historians

In Britain

Information about SAHB is available at their website: <https://thesahb.com/>



Information about SAH (USA) and their events can be found on their website:
<https://autohistory.org/>

Automotive Historians Australia can be contacted by email at info@autohistoriansaustralia.org, by mail at P.O. Box 319 Balaclava 3183 or via our website at autohistoriansaustralia.org

AHA would appreciate you distributing this newsletter to your friends, networks, clubs and associations.

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