



MOUNTAIN

MANIFOLD

*The Journal of the Australian Historic Motor Club Blue Mountains*



*Keith Henley's 1935 DU Dodge pulls a crowd at the club Christmas Party at North Katoomba School, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2023*

Club meetings are held on the **FIRST WEDNESDAY** of every month.

The meeting starts **at 8pm SHARP** at North Katoomba School Hall

Entry via Mistral Street, North Katoomba

## AHMCBM OFFICE BEARERS 2024

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## Club Aims and Objectives

The Club is set up to bring together people who have an interest in road-going vehicles more than **25 years** old

- To promote the restoration and preservation of such vehicles
- To foster friendship and cooperation by meeting together and going on outings
- To promote interest in and use of vehicles which come within the interest of the Club
- To assist members, where possible, by the use of the Club Library.

## From the Editor

Hello, Merry Christmas & welcome to the December 2023 bumper Christmas edition of Mountain Manifold!

You'll no doubt notice the absence of the Club's meeting minutes in this edition. In the last club committee meeting, we agreed the details of our club meetings such as our finances & other club-only content did not belong in a publication that is freely available to the general public on our website. Meeting minutes will continue to be emailed to all financial members with a valid email address. If you're not getting them via email, please check with Maureen that she has your correct email address on file.

The main focus of this magazine from now on will be, as I've said before, a record of the doings of the club, it's members and the cars we drive. In short, the stuff that actually brings us together!

On that note, Tim Sandford has shared the story of his beloved MGA, Lyn & Bryce Sutcliffe give us an account of a recent trip to Tassie where they visited the Baskerville Raceway at Old Beach near Hobart and the National Automobile Museum of Tasmania in Invermay, and Wayne Halls has written up an account of Norm Johnstone's recent outing with his historic Formula Vee at Eastern Creek.

But wait, there's more! Some photos from recent club outings: a damp Rhododendron Festival in Blackheath, the Catalina Park History talk from John Lanser at the Blue Mountains Historical Society at Wentworth Falls, and some belated photos from the Shannons CMC day at Eastern Creek.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to take the photos and write the articles shared in this mag. These are our stories and it's a privilege to be able to record them here.

As always, if you have any ideas on anything that would be of interest to the club please get in touch with me. All contributions welcome, and I'm always willing to help with writing or editing if you've got the story but not the words. It's the stories that matter!

Cheers,

Gerard.

Featured in this edition. Click on the title to jump straight there!

[Club Car feature- Tim Sandford's 1959 MGA](#)

[Norm's track day, Eastern Creek](#)

[Lyn & Bryce's Tassie Trip](#)

[Rhododendron Festival](#)

[Catalina Park History Talk, Blue Mountains Historical Society](#)

[Shannons CMC day, Eastern Creek](#)

The story of a little black car. Tim Sandford's 1959 MGA.



I started life in Oxford (not Abingdon) England in 1959 and I was shipped out to Australia in what was called CKD form, Completely Knocked Down. Complete cars were sent from Abingdon but the CKD cars like me were shipped from Oxford. Crates came to Australia packed with engines or chasses or rear axles or boxes of other parts while many other parts such as generators and starter motors were made here in Australia. This process of having English car parts with many Australian parts and the whole assembled in Australia helped reduce import tariffs and many makers used the system. It also ensured that here in Australia we maintained a solid manufacturing and engineering base which is now sadly gone.

My "birth certificate" is stamped on the heater shelf and it says I was made by Nuffield (Australia) Pty Ltd of Joynton Avenue Zetland NSW. Like some trucks and other vehicles I was actually assembled in the works of the Pressed Metal Company in Cosgrove Road Enfield but all Australian BMC cars carry Zetland as their birthplace.



My birth plate shows that I am:

Type YGHN 2,

Car number (this means chassis number) 7/68906 507, Engine number 16GAU 201.

My body number B 26 is stamped on the vertical wall behind my master cylinder.

Perhaps a bit of deciphering of those numbers will help:

YGHN means it is an Australian assembled MG and the 2 means 1600cc; Car Number: 7 means made in 1959; 68906 is the number of the chassis sent from England and 507 is the Australian build number. MGA 1600s started with car (chassis) number 68851 so mine is the 45th chassis made. The Australian MGA 1600s started with build number 501 so I am the seventh MGA 1600 built in Australia. Engine numbers and car numbers never followed any set sequence and no car carries matching engine and car numbers but the 1600 engines put into Australian MGA 1600s start at 16GAU101 so mine, at 16GAU 201, is very early.

From my numbers you can see I am an early car. It is a sad thing to report but there appear to be no records of my earlier siblings so it is possible that I am the oldest MGA 1600 left. Fortunately my MGA predecessors (the 1500s with drum brakes) are still quite plentiful and of course there are still plenty of those youngster MGBs running around.

My frame left England early in the second half of 1959 and I was fully built in time to be given as a Christmas present to a young lady in Sydney. She must have been a lovely person to get such a wonderful gift! She owned me for about two years and she sold me to a lovely gentleman who lived in Sydney and rose to elevated levels in the independent school system eventually retiring as Principal and Chancellor at a most prestigious girls' school. In the summer of 1968–69 that gentleman sold me to Tim Sanford who has been my custodian ever since.

Back then Tim was in his early twenties and he drove me like he was never going to make his early thirties. He decided that my Michelin Xs – perfectly good radial tyres although they did howl a bit at the speeds we got up to – should be replaced by the then newer (and much better) Michelin XAS tyres. They had better grip and better control. Tim lived on Sydney's northern beaches and we enjoyed lots of drives with my top down. Back then the wisdom of "slip, slap, slop" for protection against the sun was literally unheard of and a "healthy tan" was something to admire. I helped a fair bit in that department!

You will notice that my grille is not original and there's a sad tale for that dent: Tim's poor wife was driving home from work one afternoon in 1971 and she was approaching a set of amber traffic lights; back in the seventies drivers actually stopped for amber lights – not like now when most go through them as well as the red! All was well until the car in the next lane decided to change into Sue's lane giving her insufficient room to stop. I slammed into the rear bumper bar of a Holden Brougham. Crunch!! My headlights were smashed (the original ones of course), my grille was mangled and my whole front was in a sorry state. The driver of the Brougham was most apologetic, getting out of his car and saying "But I didn't see you". Now where have we heard that before? Anyway Tim did his best to repair me (his skills at panel beating are as hopeless now as they were then) and he got me a pair of lovely new Lucas PL headlights which meant he could drive even faster at night with the road ahead well illuminated. Getting a proper MGA 1600 grille was a different story and even in those days when I was about ten, parts were getting hard to come by. A new MGA 1600 Mk 2 grille was bought and so to this day that's my look. There is a

positive to that grille: being more upright than the original the airflow into my radiator is better for my cooling.

I was driven at quite insane speeds everywhere but especially through corners with white-knuckled passengers wishing they could be anywhere but in a little black car roaring through the night. Notwithstanding that insanity I never actually left the road to become part of the scenery. This was a very good thing because I have neither a roll bar nor safety belts. Staying on the road had everything to do with the tenacious road grip and perfect handling of my Michelin XASs and nothing whatever to do with Tim's driving! Back then a mate of Tim's bought a new Ford Falcon GT and as you all know when first introduced they were THE road car. Capable of outrageous acceleration the big V8 had no trouble breaking traction with not much more than a good prod on the loud pedal and she was a gorgeous looking car painted that lovely golden colour with "I am a GT" badges. So there we both were in the middle of the night roaring along Mona Vale Road which back then was a two-lane country road with some lovely hills (easy to climb if you've got a V8) and some good straights. Up the hills I was doing my best at nearly redline in third while the glorious GT was only loping along in top but right up my tail. Along the last long straight before the road took a long left turn and then descended into Mona Vale roared a little MGA with its speedo nudging three figures (that's miles per hour) and its tacho nudging the orange sector. I was pretty strung out I can tell you!! In my boot was the GT Falcon, his headlights (higher than my poor little body) adding their brilliance to my Lucas PLs to light the road ahead. The long fast left-hander loomed and he was still in my boot. Without my needles backing off even the tiniest amount we plunged into the corner and rushed down the hill into Mona Vale but without the help of the GT's headlamps. We stopped there and the GT Falcon's owner got out and said to me "That bloke behind your steering wheel is completely mad! There was no way we were ever going to make it through that corner at that speed." The Golden GT and I were good friends after that.

Living so close to the red line will eventually take its toll and in 1972 my number 1 piston came to pieces allowing the gudgeon pin to make nasty grooves in the cylinder wall. Boring my block was straightforward but because back then workshop facilities were non-existent and financial resources were about the same, the boring was done with my engine in place. That is not ideal because it is impossible to get rid of all of the metal removed in the boring process and after a couple of years my oil pump succumbed to metal damage and needed replacement. At the time when that work was done the workshop situation had improved a little but the money hadn't and my engine and gearbox were removed with a hired engine hoist in the house driveway. My engine was very thoroughly cleaned out, my oil pump was replaced and my cylinder head cleaned up. Another consequence of being driven furiously through corners with my tyres howling was that my original skinny spokes gave out and all of my wheels were taken to Ryders Wheel Works in Riley Street Sydney where thicker spokes were fitted and the wheels all trued. It is a testament to the standard of Ryders' work that my most recent check in 2017 showed the wheels still strong and running true.

We drove up to the vineyards in the Hunter Valley where lots of excellent wines were purchased. They were all stacked into boxes and crammed into my boot (the boot lid was held "securely" with several okky straps and loose bottles were stashed in between the boxes. The passenger's footwell and passenger space came in for the same treatment and the long-suffering lady passenger resigned herself to being wedged in until we got home. Just north of Singleton we could smell smoke. That was strange because although it was early summer we couldn't see any tell-tale red glow anywhere in the night sky. The smoke got thicker... and thicker. It was inside the cabin. Tim stopped and found that my timber floor was on fire underneath where it was close to

the exhaust pipe. Somehow he put the fire out and no wine was sacrificed in the extinguishment. I got a new marine ply floor on both sides and a neat exhaust pipe heat plate so I never have to worry about catching fire again!

One night on the way home after a party Tim had a bit of a "concentration lapse". It could have been tiredness or it could have been something he took in at the party, who knows? But the result was my left front tyre hit a kerb and got a bit dented. It didn't seem like a big deal at the time but horrors will often lurk unseen for years and then appear. In this case the lurking horror was a cracked king pin which showed itself like this: in 1974 Tim was driving me up the old Pacific Highway (gently of course, the tyres were only howling a bit he promises) when while rounding a left-hand bend the kingpin broke. It could have been a disaster and that means either a head-on with some innocent coming the other way or a plunge over the embankment down into a valley or even a simple roll over but I managed to bring us to rest close to the wire mesh barrier on the left of the road. I didn't even scrape my paint. I got new king pins with nicely reamed bushes on both sides out of that little "incident".

In 1976 Tim moved up to the Blue Mountains and the move was quite an epic. My passenger seat was taken out and I was filled up with pot plants. Can you imagine that?? Me, a proper sports car as a nursery cart!!!

Living in the mountains gave lots of opportunities to drive through the wonderful roads which twist and turn and are a true delight for a sports car like me. My daily drive was from Hazelbrook to Faulconbridge so every day I had a terrific time roaring through the Woodford Bends which was a two lane road and heaps of fun! Tim took the opportunity to finally give me a new coat of black paint and I looked splendid.

The Blue Mountains area has other darker aspects and one of those is bush fire. In December 1977 Tim was out fighting the incredibly intense fires in which a girl lost her life at Lawson and more than 40 houses were destroyed as well as many sheds that contained treasured old cars like me. I was parked down at the Hazelbrook Bush Fire Brigade shed (now Hazelbrook RFS centre) and when the fire threatened all of the other cars could be driven or pushed to safety. Me? With my 'fly off' handbrake nobody could move me so the fire burnt my front and right side; I lost my beautiful Lucas PL headlights, my front park/indicator lights and my new paint was damaged on my front and right side. It was frightening but I survived and Tim drove me home the next day and our house and sheds were all saved.

In the Blue Mountains there is road which goes from south of Katoomba out to the lookout at the southern end of the long ridge of Narrow Neck. It has been closed to traffic for a few years now but back in the 1970s you could drive right out to the end. Tim is a geologist with plenty of experience driving four-wheel-drives in the bush and if he was also sensible (Tim? sensible?) he would choose such a vehicle for the Narrow Neck trip. As if? He took me! I bumped my chassis over the rough track meant for bushfire vehicles – and four wheel drives – and we looked at the wondrous view. Then I dragged my poor chassis back over the track. I doubt that too many sports cars have made that trip!

In December 1979 I was parked under the house because Tim's son Richard had arrived on the scene and I have only two seats; there I stayed for twenty years and in February 1998 I was registered again with plates TS 041. I had some suspension bushes done, rear spring shackle bushes replaced, brakes serviced with new rubber parts but all of my brake cylinders were

serviceable after honing. I also had my speedometer rebuilt and although my odometer had been stopped at 42,000 miles almost since Tim bought me I now started again at zero. Courtney was at that stage long legged enough to reach my pedals and she drove me down the driveway of her high school. A little bit illegal but...

For some reason now lost in the mire of memory I was taken off the road again and parked under the house. No cover over my paint and resting on my wheels. Then in 2011 I was dragged out again and this time I went for a blue slip (unregistered vehicle check). Thanks to all the work done in 1998 the only faults the examiner found were one of my driving lights was not working (if you have two lights they must both work) and my flexible brake hoses needed replacement. Those minor repairs were done and I was on the road again registered with plates BJ42MT. By then my speedo registered 9,800 miles.

March 2016 came around, I had travelled 16588 miles and I was put on the Historic Vehicle scheme with plate 56118H. In May 2020 my clutch made squealing noises and decided not to work so Tim dragged me over the pit and pulled out my engine and gearbox. My clutch was replaced and my gearbox was rebuilt. It had never been noisy but Tim replaced all of the bearings and the synchro rings. He replaced all the external gaskets on my engine and now I drop only the occasional bit of oil through my timing cover crankshaft seal which is felt. On the road my gearbox is beautiful and gearshifts are silent but Tim, being old school, still double shuffles down changes because that is how he has always driven manual gearboxes – old habits die hard!

When we are out and about people come up and comment that I am not restored and many of them think that's a good thing because old cars who are showing their age are rare.

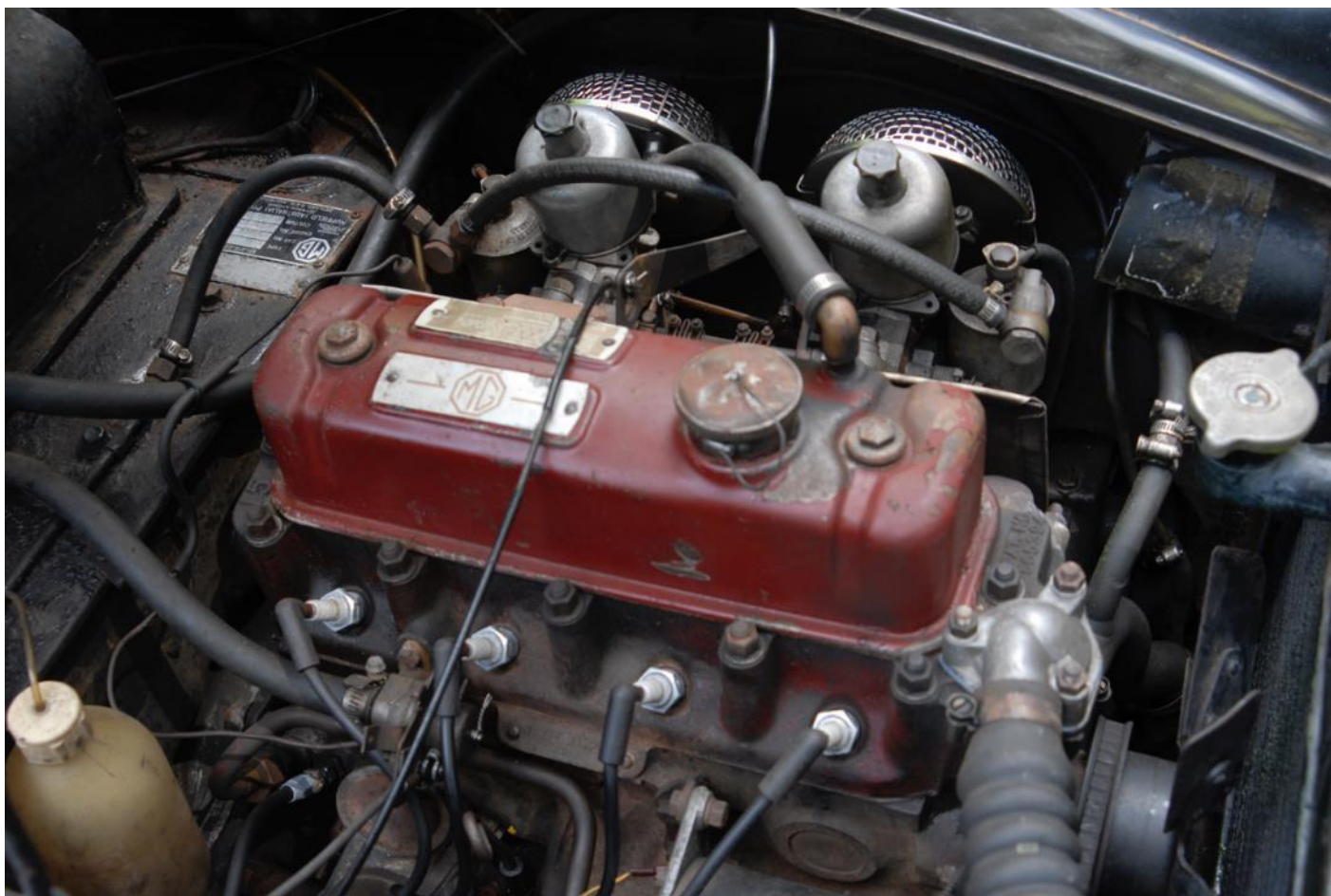
Tim Sandford.













## Summer Thrills: HSRCA Auto Fest, November 24-26, 2023



Picture this: roaring engines, screeching tires, and vintage racing cars tearing up the track. The HSRCA Summer Fest turned back the clock, showcasing classics from a different era in an epic battle for the checkered flag. It's not just a race; it's a blast from the past with cars that define the golden age of motorsports.

Featuring our very own Norm Johnson in his rebuilt Formula V, who in an earlier race narrowly avoiding another out of control vehicle, attained 5<sup>th</sup> on the starting grid in the final race. Following a few tweaks to the car the Johnson Team managed to battle up to 4<sup>th</sup>, the top 3 were just too quick on the day.

Having a break from the races was an opportunity to get up close and personal with the stars of the show in the pits. Chat with owners who've poured their hearts into restoring these beauties and the camaraderie among the teams retelling the race and helping each other out with tips and parts. It's not just about horsepower; it's about the stories behind each car that made the festival a unique experience.



In amongst this, two familiar faces deep in the official scrutinising were found ensuring the cars are safe to go (Mike and Ern)

Then it's back to the races with the Super Sprints and the Little Spridgets nipping at the Porsche leaders like a pair of annoying gnats all the way, followed by the speed of the formula racers.

An enjoyable day had by all!

Wayne Halls.

Norm Johnstone also sent us a report of his weekend driving his historic Formula Vee:

I had previously been using Hoosier tyres but was now using Dunlop tyres for the 1st time; they were far better but more expensive. Friday was spent bedding in the new tyres and new brakes. Saturday was qualifying and although not raining the track was wet and very slippery. I drove of track twice to avoid spinning cars, when I had the track by myself I could concentrate on driving. In an 18 car field Tony did a 1min 11 sec, Dave did a 1min 12 sec and I did a 1 min 15 sec to qualify 3rd fastest which I was very happy with. 1st race on the Saturday I started 3rd and finished 4th.

2nd race on Saturday I started 4th and finished 4th. 1st race on the Sunday I started 4th and finished 5th just pipped for 4<sup>th</sup>. In the 2nd race on Sunday which was the Trophy race of the weekend I started 5th and finished 4th. Out of 18 cars entered I was very consistent for the weekend and had a good and enjoyable meeting.

The car was a bit down on power coming out of corners. Time to take the car to the dyno to play with jets and timing.









## Lyn & Bryce's Tassie Trip

Hello Members, In October Bryce and I took our caravan across on the ship to Tasmania for a holiday. While we were based in Launceston we heard that the Historic Motor Races were being held at Baskerville Raceway at Old Beach which is near Hobart. So we jumped in the car early on the Sunday morning and 2 and half hours later we were parked up on the grassy hill with a great view of the race track. Most of the races were a maximum of 7 Laps. It was so great to see the Mini's racing around, some corners they were on 2 wheels looking like they were doing a thousand. John Bowe was this year's Event Patron, he did compete in some of the races. Over the past 10 years the Foundation of Baskerville Races has raised 1.6 million dollars. They have done many important upgrades to the track. They say the monies will continue being spent on making 'Australia's Best Little Track' even better.

















While on our travels we paid a visit to the National Automobile Museum of Tasmania in Invermay. This 1974 Holden Monaro HQ GTS was involved in the 1975 Tasman Bridge Disaster. The Manley Family were left hanging on the edge of the bridge. The family were saved by the Monaro's automatic transmission pan which got caught on the edge of the bridge. An Ore Carrier Ship collided with several pylons of the bridge. Twelve people lost their lives that day. Frank Manley never sold the car and it remains in original condition in the Museum.





This 1972 Honda CB 750 'Douglas' was built in Tasmania by a motor cyclist enthusiast. All the timber was Huon Pine and Tasmanian Blackwood. The bike is full of repurposed and recycled bits. Wine goblets as indicator housings and the oil tank ends are funeral urns. His grandfather was in the Airforce in WW2 and he even used Royal Airforce buttons in the motorbike seat. There was a 1938 Indian Sport Scout 750cc which was purchased from a farm in Southern Tassie. It was completely dismantled and in a very bad state. The Sport Scout won the first Daytona 200 event in 1937. Also many of these bikes were used in the Second World War. It was lovingly restored.

Lyn and Bryce Sutcliffe.



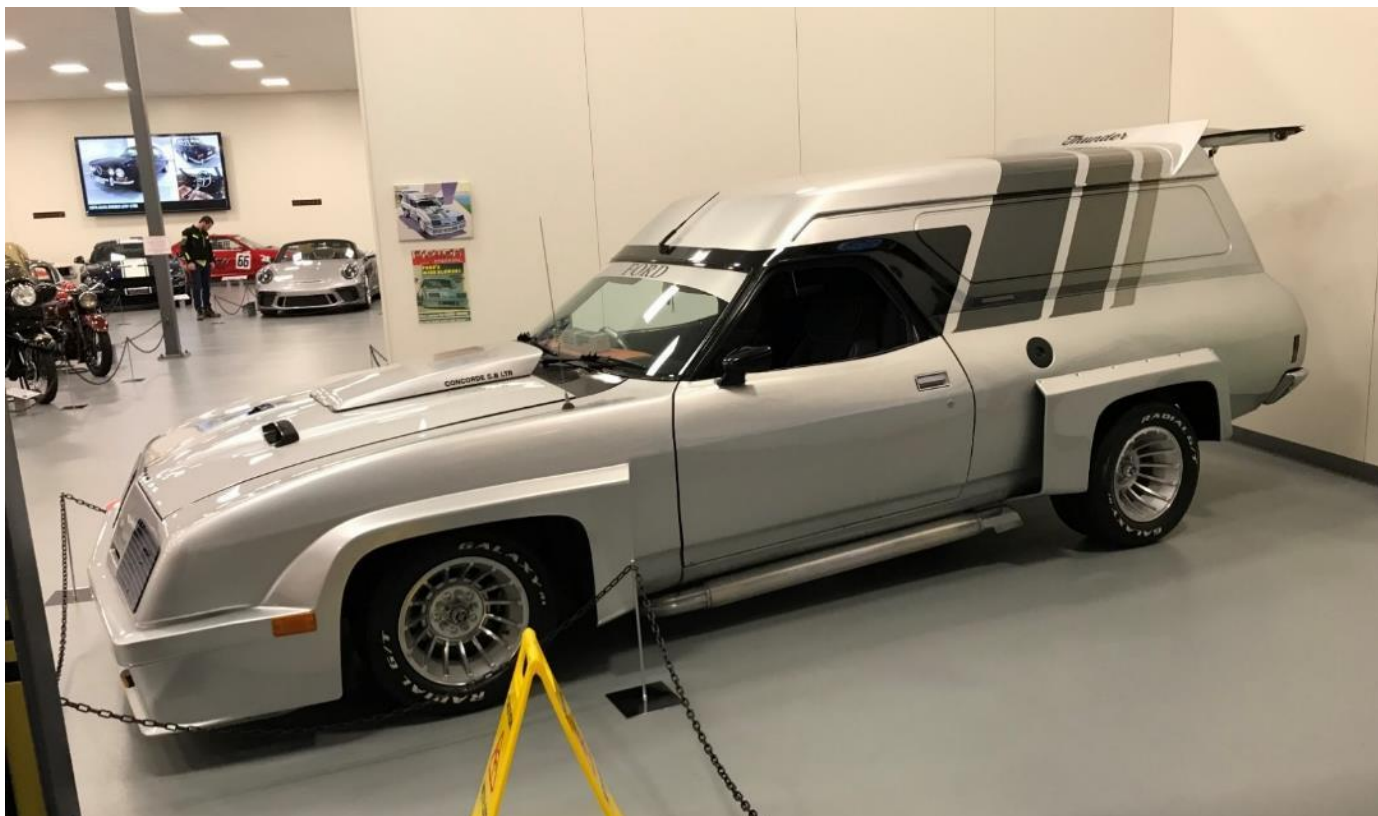










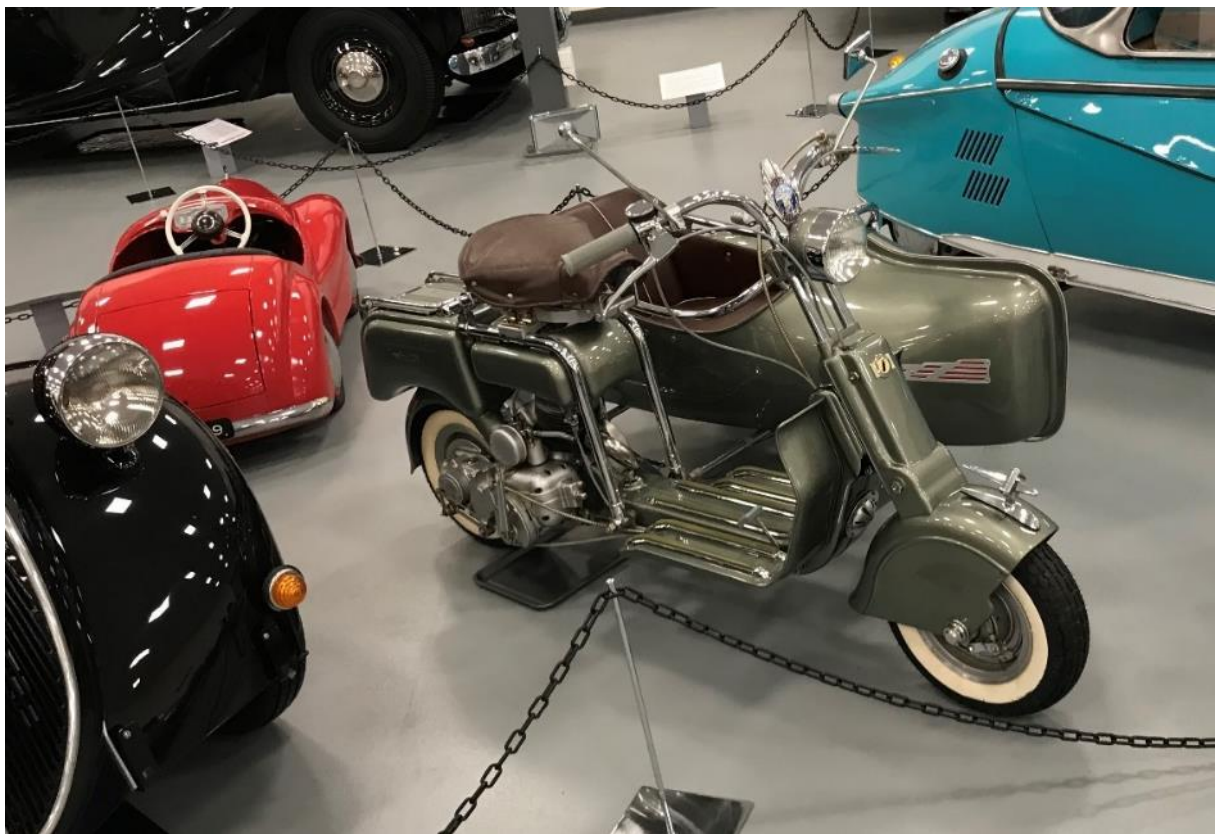














## Blackheath Rhododendron Festival, Saturday November 4th 2023

It was foggy and it was rainy. In short, perfect Blackheath weather for the annual Rhododendron Festival this year. It certainly didn't stop the crowds lining the street for the parade!











## Catalina Park History Talk, Blue Mountains Historical Society Wentworth Falls, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023

John Lanser gave an interesting talk on the history of Catalina Park in Katoomba, from it's indigenous history to it's development as a tourist attraction, then racing circuit, and it's current gentle return to nature. It was very well attended, with a good turn up from our club and the cars attracting plenty of interest from the regular Historical Society members. Seems like a lot of people have a story about a Morris or Peugeot that they want to share when they see these cars still running!













## Shannons CMC Classic, Eastern Creek NSW Sunday August 20<sup>th</sup> 2023

I did intend to add these photos from the recent Shannons CMC day at Eastern Creek in the September mag, but got carried away with the photos I took in France, so here they are now!













## **REMEMBER**

- **If you are not financial your vehicle is unregistered by the RMS and if stopped by the Police your vehicle is deemed to be unregistered and uninsured and hefty fines will apply.**
- **It is the members responsibility to advise the club of any modifications made to vehicles on A.H.M.C—B.M. Historic Vehicle number plates, including disposal.**

The Australian Historic Motor Club, Blue Mountains is owned and operated by A.H.M.C. – B.M. Incorporated

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