

Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club



No 116

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TRANSMISSION

If you find you need more information about this club or just can't wait to join ring Peet Menzies on 0417855222.

GPO Box 911 Darwin 0801
In Katherine call 89710605 .
Newsletter enquiries to Ted
longtelescope@gmail.com

“AN UNUSUALLY LARGE AIR FORMATION BEARING DOWN ON US”



That was just a bit of the message transmitted from Bathurst Island mission station 75 years ago. The message from Father McGrath at the Bathurst Island Mission station actually read “I have Urgent Message, An unusually large air formation bearing down on us from the North West, Identity suspect, Visibility not clear, over.” The Japs then proceeded to shoot up the mission and wrecked a transport plane parked on the airstrip.

Bad luck the military in Darwin didn't take any notice of that warning. The Japanese arrived here shortly afterwards and bombed the shit out of the place as well as riddled the whole town with cannon fire. Some of those bullet holes are still evident in the old Qantas hangar and quite a few people took the opportunity of the 75th anniversary open day to come and check it out. And members of the Darwin Amateur Radio Club set

up a radio station in the hangar complete with a special commemorative call sign of VI8BOD and planned to make contact with operators in other states and around the world. The meaning of that string is VI= A commemorative call sign from Australia, 8= Northern Territory, BOD= bombing of Darwin. The radio club did a reenactment of that radio message warning Darwin of its impending fate. It had been assumed previously that the message had been transmitted in Morse code, but the radio club members researched the atmospheric conditions on that fateful date. Feb 19th 1942. They found that the conditions for the frequencies used were most favorable for voice transmission, not Morse. And the coastal radio station, VID, where that fateful message was received, was demolished a couple of years ago to make way for a housing estate, also at Parap. So it was fitting that the reenactment message be transmitted in voice, not Morse, from the location of VID and received at the temporary radio station at the hangar. It was transmitted and received at the precise time of 9.37am, same time as in 1942.

The radio club then spent the weekend in shifts, making contact with operators all over. They had about 350 contacts over the whole weekend covering all states of Australia, U.S.A., Russia, New Zealand, Thailand, Indonesia and would you believe, several contacts in Japan! You reckon the Japs might have been a little embarrassed but one of the radio ops reckoned they didn't really have any idea what the commemoration was about.

Sunday the 19th saw the carpark full all day as Darwinites came to check out the history and the commemoration and to watch the radio station in operation.

There are still a lot of Australians that are amazed to find that the very same Japanese aircraft carriers and their planes that attacked Pearl Harbour attacked Darwin and dropped a larger tonnage of bombs on us than they had at Pearl harbour. But our hangar is pretty tough, even with it's bullet holes it's still lookin good!

And the radio club have permission to use this special call sign for a whole month. As of 8th March they are up to 1400 contacts.



*The aerial was remote controlled from inside. They could point it to wherever they wanted to communicate.
Photos: Brian Bates*



The little box with the round dial controlled where the big aerial was pointed. They had a 2nd aerial for Morse.



Ken's magnificent Vincent on display at a business function

Ken Grace has been around Darwin since 1949 and has spent a considerable amount of those years on a motorbike. Darwin Motorcycle Club these days is associated with off road motorbikes but back in those days it was road racing that was big. There was a bit of scrambles as well. And you might wonder where you would go road racing in 1949 as they hadn't quite built Hidden Valley at the time. Well the RAAF quite conveniently had walked away from all these beautiful, quite new bitumen airfields, once WW2 was over. Sattler airfield at the 21 mile by itself would be a bit boring but add in all the roads around the dispersal areas and you have a ready made curvy road race track. And for scrambles they used the area that is now a lake between the Ski club and the Yacht club. Ken has a ripper collection of photos from around 1949 to 1951.

But a bit later in life, sometime in the 1960's, he heard news that an uncle living down south who was another bike enthusiast, was considering selling one of his steeds. Not the 1939 AJS V twin, but the HRD Vincent. Ken visited him to check it out and ended up buying it. Uncle had bought it new in 1947. Incredibly, Ken only ever registered it once, although he did ride it a bit on trade plates from work and as his job took him away from home for extended periods, he would always manage to pull it to bits for a bit of maintenance but never got it back together be-



Ken and the chookshed that protected the Vincent during cyclone Tracy. Below: A '53 AJS under covers in another shed. Nearby is a '54 Matchy and a Triumph twin in bits.



fore he left. That was his way of keeping his sons off it while he was away. As a matter of fact it was in bits when cyclone Tracy wrecked Darwin. Luckily Ken didn't store the bike under the house like most people. He was always concerned that being a wooden house there was a risk it could burn, so he stored the Vincent in the shed. The shed is not your average car shed or garage, it is actually an ex chook shed, literally. And it did survive cyclone Tracy, with its roof still intact. More than could be said for the house. A few bits off the bike blew away and were lost, but nothing significant, so the chook shed is a proven solid place to keep such a treasure. And Ken has conventional sheds too and they are all full of other neat stuff. More neat bikes, engines, stuff, just heaven!

And Ken has kept his photos from back in those early days not long after the war and they are fascinating stuff. Check a few of em out!

Some extracts from Ken's photo album



Above: His Dad's 1927 AJS takes up space in another of several sheds.

Right: A Zundapp Scooter Bella is forced to live outside under a carport due to all the sheds being chockers with neat stuff.



To give an idea what Darwin was like around 1950 These two photos were taken from the Parap water tower. Its still there.

Left: Lower left in the photo is the Stuart Hwy Parap Rd intersection. The road running up is Stokes St.

Above: Looking towards Stuart Park. The road in the far distance is Stuart Hwy.



Ken's AJS on Bagot Rd



*Left: The scramble track was where the lake is these days between the Ski Club and the Yacht club.
Below: That's Ken ready to race on the Matchless.*



Darwin motorcycle Club Championship at the 21 mile airstrip





As well as the scrambles at Fannie Bay they had hill climbs at Adelaide river. The hills there are still a challenge but there was the added obstacle then of running over live cannon shells and 303 bullets.

The photos of piles of motorbike barrels and frames and assorted stuff was war stuff laying around in the bush about 2 miles S of Mataranka.



1914 Metz

Noel Holbrook wasn't actually looking for a Metz. He was looking for bits for an IH motorbike with a mate when they came across it. The mate bought it. Actually he bought them, there were two of these cars imported into Australia and this sale was for most of one of them and some of the other, most of what you would need to build one car.

The mate never actually did anything with it (them) and eventually sold it on. The new owner conscientiously pulled everything completely to bits, and then did nothing (sound familiar). But this bloke was a Kiwi and decided to move back home. He took all those dismantled bits back with him, but still didn't progress with the job until, eventually he sold the lot at auction. Noel just happened to be over there and because the vehicle appeared to be just a pile of junk, he was able to buy it ridiculously cheap, and took it back to Australia about ten years ago.

The restored product has used as many original parts as possible. The mudguards are the originals but because they were getting a bit thin they have been reinforced so they don't fall to bits. The seat buckets have been reproduced and were meant to be padded all over but at this stage are just sheet metal on the backrest. Still comfortable though so I am assured.

Most of these cars had a body and wooden wheels but they released the speedster with its speedy image with a bigger fuel tank and larger diameter wire wheels. There was only one colour scheme, orange with black guards, so this car is exactly as it came new except for a bit of nickel plating missing from the steering column and the pedals.

It has a nifty drive train with no gears and an unusual clutch. A company called the Gearless Transmission Co. produced this direct drive friction transmission which they claimed could be fitted to any car.



The Metz speedster is as close as you could get to original. Below: The friction drive transmission is incredibly simple and doesn't slip. There are 5 forward positions on that shift lever. It's probably the worlds 1st 5 speed transmission.



Final drive ratio is easy to change with sprockets



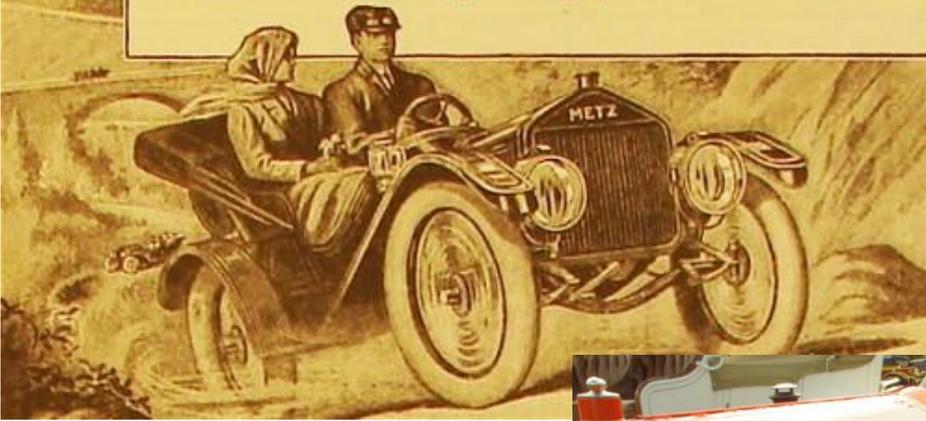
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It is really great to see the original guards on this car even if they are not totally perfect. Gives the car a more original feel. Note the heavy duty weatherproofing for both the driver and the passenger. You have to be tough to drive a car such as this in Tasmania, where these photos were taken. Slipping it into 5th really ramps up the chill factor.



Volunteer Rob de Burgh has provided this account of one of the problems he encountered while recently restoring his Ford Prefect Utility

DON'T BE A DIPSTICK

There are many pitfalls when buying an old vehicle in bits and then starting the restoration process. They would probably fill the Ford manual and more, but one in particular is worth noting which cranked me up or fired me up the most.

The motor, which had been completely reconditioned, was sitting around waiting to go into action with the odd turning over by crank to avoid seizing before it was finally installed into the Ute and started. It ran exceptionally well for 15 minutes or so on two occasions and we were all excited.

Our grandson, who had recently completed his auto electrician apprenticeship, finished wiring the vehicle and we were ready to give the motor a good work out. About twenty minutes into the test run smoke started to billow from the exhaust to such an extent that I am still surprised the fire brigade did not turnout.

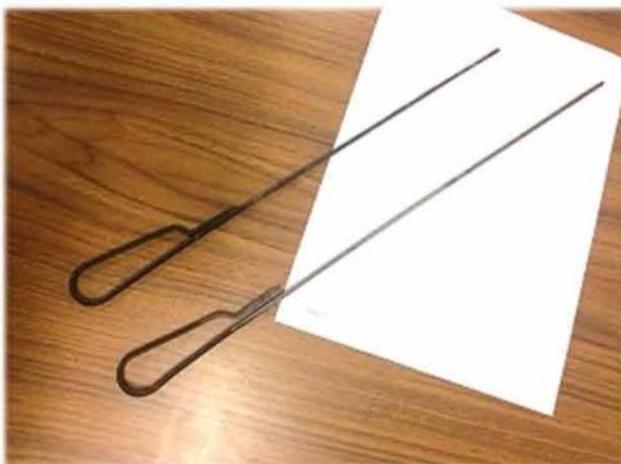
Alas, what was the problem, after seeking advice from the small Ford network we were of the opinion that because the engine had been laid up for so long that it could only be the rings stuck in the pistons therefore pressurising the engine block throwing oil out wherever it was possible.

Even the trick of poring diesel down the bores did nothing other than make it worse and add to the smoke pollution. So while contemplating removal of the sump and head to examine the problem, I remembered a comment passed by an experienced motor mechanic who said "look for something simple Rob" so I again went back to the manual and decided to drop the engine oil seeking answers.

To my astonishment out flowed 10 pints of oil. I then carefully measured the required amount of oil (4 pints plus 1 for the filter) into the motor and to my surprise, it did not even measure on the dipstick. Back to the Anglia Tourer (another of my small fords) and pulled out the dipstick and, lo and behold, it was about 65 mm longer. The penny dropped, I think we have found the problem. Way too much oil!!

I started the motor up again, and after the smoke finally cleared from the added diesel, the problem was solved. No more smoke and I can get back to sleeping peacefully after learning from the experience.

The moral of the story is: 'do not take for granted that a part from one car (that looks the same at first glance) will necessary fit another'



Left: Rob's picture of the two Ford dipsticks in question showing the different lengths

A couple were enjoying a glass of wine at the Club Christmas party
The wife says "I love you so much, I don't know how I could ever live without you."
Her husband asks "Is that you, or the wine talking?"
She replies "It's me, talking to the wine".

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Wanted Ariel Square 4 info

I am after a chance to run my eyes over an Ariel Square 4. I have just acquired one but its missing a few bits and I would like to see what is meant to be where. So if you have one and would let me have a look, it would be appreciated.

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Deadline.... The end of the month.

Previous editions

All previous editions of Transmission are now available at mvec.weebly.com

MVEC has a new air compressor

Financed by an NT government grant we now have a modern high volume compressor costing over \$8000

The Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club

**extends it's thanks to
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WOTS ON THIS YEAR

Come along and enjoy!

On the 2nd Wed of every month there is a members meeting at the hangar 7.30 pm plus bbq about 7pm. Also there is a working bee at the hangar the following Sunday.

The working bee this Sunday from about 8.30 am has some interesting jobs on the list including making the brakes work on the fire engine.

Stuff on the net

As the old saying goes, "if you can't beat em...copy em, then beat em," so Harley-Davidson incorporated the engine, forks, and shaft drive design exactly from the BMW design, resulting in the XA - a superior machine to any American motorcycles manufactured at the time.

Astonishingly similar looking to the BMW R71, its sealed shaft drive and telescoping forks were well-suited to condition in the North African theater, where the Army demanded a bike that could withstand the dust and grit that constantly invaded vehicle components. The only problem was that, by the time of their release, the Jeep had become the quick transport vehicle of choice by the military, and the XAas were never even deployed.

This is wartime stuff. Fascinating stuff from an American point of view. Check out:

<http://www.bikebandit.com/blog/post/history-of-military-motorcycles>

If you watched the video on Mexico's weather last month, you might understand it might be a nice place to live. The next video might be from the same place. The one after is same thing from a different angle. Neat!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCo5uX8a1hs&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRndS7XAfgy>

Father O'Flaherty is playing golf with Liam Murphy, one of his parishioners.

Murphy's one metre putt lips out and he mutters, "Shit! I missed the bastard"

The priest chastises him saying, "If God hears you using that sort of language Murphy, he's going to strike you dead me boy, I suggest you try and control your emotions a little better"

"I'm sorry father, I'll try to watch my language in future" says Murphy.

Eventually, they find themselves on the eighteenth green. Murphy has to hole yet another one metre putt, he misses and grumbles, "Shit! I missed the bastard"

At that very moment, the sky darkens, there's a clap of thunder and a bolt of lightning strikes the priest. As Murphy stares dumbfounded at the pile of ashes that used to be Father O'Flaherty, a voice from the heavens booms, "Shit! I missed the bastard"