

No 167

# Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club

JUNE 2025

# TRANSMISSION



08 89424839

PO Box 994 Parap 0804

mveclub@bigpond.com

Newsletter enquiries to Ted

*longtelescope@gmail.com* or

08 89886049



## **1912 Overland.**

Built from new to win races and sell cars in Qld. This is not a replica, but the very car that set the time to beat from Brisbane to Sydney, back in it's heyday.

1912 Overland. Sally and Rob York

This car has quite a history, there are a few dates missing along the way but its early years are well known. It was brought into Qld by one Fred Eager, an American who had the distributorship for Overland in the Southern hemisphere. It was suggested to me that he had more money than sense but I looked the name up on the net and found the firm of Eagers still going strong. Maybe he did have sense. The idea back then was to win races on Sunday and sell more cars on Monday. With that in mind Fred imported the car and set it up for racing. He wanted it to stand out, and as most of the cars of the era were finished in dark colours, he painted it white. It did stand out, so much that it became well known as "Whitey."

It established records between Brisbane and Sydney, speed records on the beach at the Gold Coast and in time trials and hill climbs to Toowoomba. A few years back I wrote a story in these pages of a Studebaker that had a similar story and even looked similar, and not just because it was white. It turns out that Studebaker was this cars big rival. I was told the Studebaker performed better on the flat out straight line beach runs, but the Overland excelled if there were any hills involved. But cars are always superseded by newer models and Whitey faded from the scene for many years until in the early 1960's when a Brisbane panel beater discovered it rotting in the back of a garage, recognised it for what it was and bought it. He started to fix it up a bit but never completed the job when Sally's dad laid his eyes on it and once again the Overland had a new owner. This time Whitey did get the proper works and she was on the road again, perhaps not setting records now but she is definitely being driven as she was meant to be. I had the shit scared out of me when I was chugging along in our old Buick and Whitey fanged past at a great rate. It made me feel good!

And Whitey is still owned by Sally's Dad but is now maintained and driven by daughter Sally and hubby Rob.





*Full instrument cluster 1912 style*



*No nothing for the passenger/navigator/  
engineer, but the driver does get a wind deflec-  
tor. Large diameter steering wheel functions as  
power steering.*



*Two views of the gearbox mounted at the diff end of the torque tube which encloses the tailshaft, which spins at engine speed.*



*Heavy duty adjustable Shock absorbers*



*Acetylene head-lights with flexible gas pipe.  
(Just joking)*



Some years back I wrote a story in these pages of a Studebaker that had a similar story and even looked similar, and not just because it was white. It turns out that this Studebaker was the Overland's big rival. I am republishing that story here.

### Studebaker

This story starts a bit earlier with an American, Edward Egar, who made his money setting up Overland car agencies and once it was up and making money, he would sell it and move on to somewhere else and do it all again. But when he came to Melbourne and got the agency running he decided to stay. He had a 1912 M61 rebodied as a racer and sent his son to America to be tutored in the art of dirt racing by Barney Oldfield, the gun of the era. Egar realized that winning on the racetrack was a great way to market cars.

In Brisbane, Studebaker built a similar racing car. It had to have a standard chassis that the public could buy but had a special engine and radiator. They challenged the Overland to a time trial on the beach at the Gold Coast. The Studebaker won at 85 mph. It was geared for 100mph but wheelspin accounted for the difference. They reckoned the Studebaker probably won because of the extra weight over the rear end, as its gearbox is in the rear end, gave it more traction.

So they had the car signwritten as you see in the photo and placed it in their showroom for a month.. The car had a ducktail for the time trial. They then removed it and replaced it with 3 spare wheels, put the 3 big lights on the front and set off for a Brisbane to Sydney record. The car then went back in the showroom and if you looked like a potential customer they would take you for a burn in it.

After the war it was successfully used for hillclimbs at Mt Coot-tha in Brisbane but they hit a barrier and bent up one corner. That was it for the car as it was obsolete as a racing car by now. It just faded away.

Years later another enthusiast while looking for parts for a different vehicle, came across a corn harvester that had been made out of an old Studebaker. Stories like that spread like wildfire and an enthusiast and his son came and stripped out the old corn harvester of all its Studebaker bits. They wanted the engine for a later model car. As time progressed the gent died and his car was sold and a couple of parties got their hands on the mountain of parts, of which one was a honeycomb radiator. Gavin Mutton, another Studebaker enthusiast did a swap for this radiator and after searching through dealers parts books found that it was a special. It was also 1" thicker than the standard. Research showed there was only one racing Studebaker prewar and Gavin put 2 and 2 together and decided he was onto something. An old motoring journal called "The Steering Wheel" documented it all in great detail and confirmed his thoughts. He was able to buy the rest of that pile of stuff and he found damage to the front axle and shocks which was consistent with the damage received at Mt Coot-tha. He also got the rear axle and gearbox and most of the mechanicals. The suspension was also worn in a way that would have been typical for the way it was raced. He had enough mechanical stuff and there were also high quality photos of the body work and with that he put together this vehicle in its livery just as it was when it was last raced.

And Gavin points out "its great to drive!"



*Not terrorists. That's Gavin Mutton in his record breaking Studebaker. Incidentally the Overland wasn't far behind at 84 mph.*

# TEMPUS FUGIT

by Bill Buys

*This article reproduced from VCCC WA's Early Auto.*

WHAT'S the time?

If you're driving, you'd glance at your wristwatch or at the digital clock on the dashboard — or a fancy and hideously expensive analogue one if you're at the wheel of a super classy car, like a modern Rolls Royce.

Vehicle clocks go back a long way, to 1798, in fact, when Breguet made a carriage clock for Napoleon. Then, in 1911, came Heuer with its 'Time of Trip' which was a chronograph that indicated the time of day on the main dial, while two hands measured out the length of journey on the other two dials.

It was later quite common for drivers to hang pocket watches in leather holders from the dash before, in the 1930s, some manufacturers started to offer electric clocks, and the mechanical watch was gradually replaced during the next 30 years and car clocks, which had previously been available as aftermarket items, were fitted as standard equipment.

However, in the 1950s things became more interesting with the arrival of the steering wheel clock. Oldsmobile, in 1951, was the first to offer them. The Swiss-made Maar clocks had a gyroscopic movement, and could be wound by hand — but they also wound themselves under acceleration, braking, or when the wheel was turned during cornering.



Chrysler responded with its own steering wheel clocks from 1953 to '58, and they were available as optional extras on all of its offshoots, so you could fit the corporate one, the Moparmatic, or the Chryslermatic, the Plymouthmatic, the Dodgematic, and the DeSotomatic.

Each clock, made by Benrus, another Swiss company, had a 15-jewel Gazda movement. Installation was simple. You just put pressure on the round button in the centre of the steering wheel, give it a quarter turn to remove it and then put the clock in its place.

They were either factory or dealer installed options, but, at US\$50, when new cars cost around US\$2000, they were pretty pricey. Although most were fitted to Oldsmobiles or one of the Chrysler family, some clocks also ended up in some Chevrolets, Nashes, and even Volkswagens.



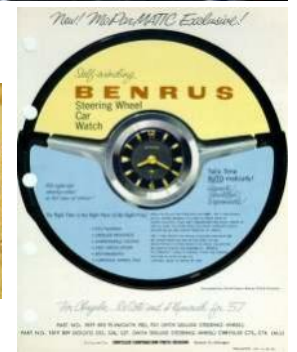
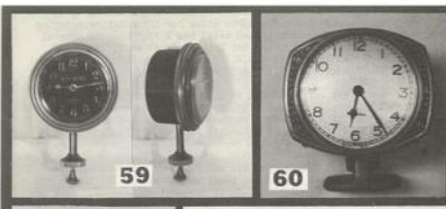
At the other end of the scale is a clock made especially for the four Rolls-Royce Coach built Boat Tail cars.

At US\$28 million, or \$42m in our cash, the Boat Tail is the world's most expensive production car. Only four have been built — and all sold and yes, each does have its own unique dashboard clock: they're made by Vacheron Constantin, and are said to cost around US\$175,000 (AU\$262,000.)

So the era of the steering wheel clock didn't last too long, and even shorter life spans were those of a bumper-mounted pressure cooker in the 1930's that ran off exhaust gas, Chrysler featured its Highway Hi-Fi,

a 1950's under-dash record player and Chevrolet had a 12volt Remington Auto-

Home Roll electric razor, so men could shave while cruising the highway.



*This article reproduced from WA's Early Auto*

## **THE BUICK BALLET** sent in by Rick Beazley and others

A small copy of an interesting photo showing a new 1929 Buick Holden bodied tourer covered with pretty girls wearing what appears to be bathing costumes turned up recently on the website [www.29Buick.ca](http://www.29Buick.ca) run by Bill McLaughlin. Obviously a promotional event for the new "Silver Anniversary" models there was some discussion regarding the whereabouts of the event that was being staged. This original photograph was supplied by Vickie Dibble who is the granddaughter of George Tannerhill who is believed to have been employed by the Stewart Body Company of Flint, Michigan but was working for Holden Motor Body Builders from 1928 to 1931 (information from John Gerdtz). From this it was believed to have been a major function in either the National Re-lease conference in Adelaide or at Fisherman's Bend in Melbourne.

When I saw the photo I knew that I had seen it before. After some research I found out the details surrounding it.

The photo was taken on Saturday 17 November 1928 on the stage at West's Theatre at 91 Hindley Street, Adelaide. Vivian Lewis Ltd had been the South Australian distributors of Buick cars since September 1926 following the General Motors Australia re-structure.

They started selling the new Silver Anniversary Buick in Adelaide the day before (16 November 1928) and arranged for a new Buick tourer to be displayed on the stage of the theatre. An article in The Advertiser (Adelaide) on 17 November 1928 reported that the display with the dancers was to happen later that same day.

The photograph was then published in the same newspaper on the 24 November 1928 with the title "The Buick Ballet" and states that "the clever ballet at West's Pictures has scored a success this week with a novel specialty in honour of the Buick Silver Anniversary". The same photo used again in the Sunday Times (Sydney) edition on the 23 December 1928. For this article the photo was modified to remove all evidence of it being taken indoors. With the eight dancers in bathing costumes it was made to look like they were at the beach with the comment "a bunch of beach girls giving the new Buick Silver Anniversary the necessary summer atmosphere. The girls gave the Buick a good kick-over, after its announcement in Adelaide, and used the car in their turn on West's circuits".

Thomas James West was an English theatre entrepreneur who had toured the USA, New Zealand and Australia before opening Adelaide's first permanent theatre in 1908. He formed a partnership with three other companies in 1912 to form "The Combine" that eventually became a major part of Greater Union Theatres (now Event Cinema). West's Olympia Theatre in Hindley Street was very popular and had its own "in-house" entertainment along with the shows. This included what was known as a Pony Ballet. This style of entertainment had been around since the 1890's in the USA and the UK but only introduced to Australia in 1908. It involved a group of eight petite ballet

3/4/2021

Sunday Times (Sydney, NSW : 1895 - 1930), Sunday 23 December 1928, page 14

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### Demonstrating Fine Points of Buick



A bunch of beach girls giving a new Buick Silver Anniversary the necessary Summer atmosphere. The girls gave the Buick a good kick-over, after its announcement in Adelaide, and used the car in their "turn" on West's circuit.

National Library of Australia

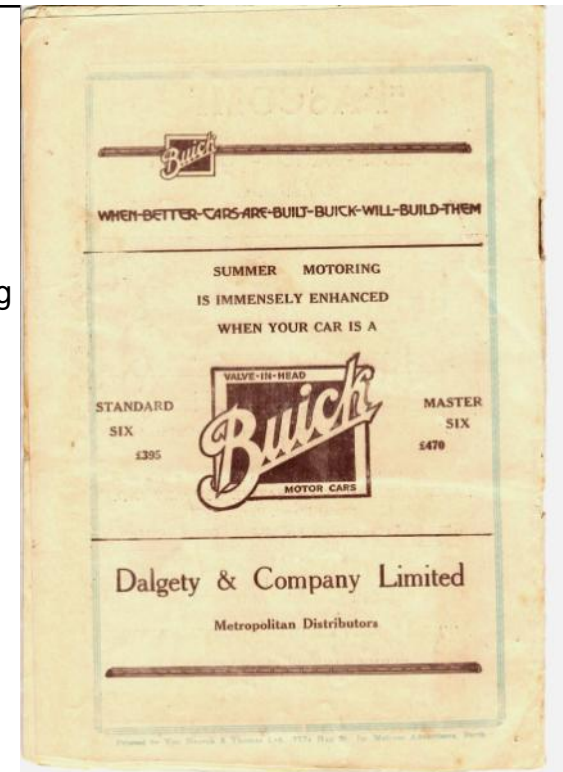
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article122803957>

*The above is the Sydney newspaper advert - via the National Library of Australia—Trove website*

dancers who performed during the interludes. During November 1928 this troupe of dancers were promoted as the "Famous Eight Buick Ballet" and had the popular singer Miss Doreen May accompanying them. The original West's Theatre was demolished at the end of 1938 and rebuilt in Art Deco fashion. It was re-opened on the 1 December 1939. This building is now operated by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Vivian Lewis started a bicycle manufacturing company at Adelaide in 1893. He is acknowledged as the builder of South Australia's first motorcycle (1899) and first car (1900) and went on to market his Lewis motorcycles and a few Lewis motor cars before becoming the sole agent for Talbot cars in 1906. Vivian Lewis Ltd was formed in 1907 and went on to market a number of different motor car and motor cycle brands. Around 1919 Vivian Lewis Ltd became the SA agent for Oldsmobile and continued this agency until April 1929 when it went to Freeman Motors Ltd. The Buick agency was only held from September 1926 until November 1929 when it went to City Motors Ltd.

*This advert is from a 1926 WA theatre program in the editor's collection—obviously in Western Australia Dalgety's were not as adventurous with their advertising.*



### **THINK YOU'RE HAVING A BAD DAY....**

The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000.

At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were being released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later, in full view, a killer whale ate them both.

WHEN IT COMES TO BUYING A CAR-WASHING DETERGENT

It's cheaper from your Grocer\*!



\*When you buy Trix from your grocer it costs you roughly **HALF AS MUCH** as when you buy a "special" car detergent elsewhere.

Trix . . . the "Miracle" Detergent . . .  
*Cleans Cars like Magic!*

You simply put a tablespoon of Trix in a bucket of warm water. Then wash down the car and, while still wet, follow with a light hosing. (For preference, always wash cars in the shade.)

**Grease and Dirt "Dissolve" Off.** Trix makes ordinary water into "magic" water that *absorbs* grease and dirt. The oily traffic film and greasy blobs and smudges disappear without rubbing or scrubbing.





## Sideways in the rain

Sue and I were in the Czech Republic ostensibly on holiday but I often used those “holidays” as an excuse to do some research for a motoring article. This was one of those holidays. We’d flown to Munich, picked up a 3 Series Compact from BMW and driven to Vienna where we parked it while we journeyed into the Czech Republic. The year was 1998 and the rules from BMW were that we were definitely not allowed to take the car north into the Czech Republic because it would undoubtedly be stolen.

We trained it north from Vienna to Brno, booked into a cheap hotel and hired a Skoda Favorit hatchback to drive around the country. From Brno we drove north to Kopřivnice, home of the famous Tatra company. I had made arrangements to meet the CEO to interview him but on the day, he had an urgent meeting with the bank in Ostrava.

So, I was introduced to a group of four engineers, one of whom spoke a little English which was handy! After more than an hour learning about the design and engineering of the Tatra T613 saloon we were taken on a guided tour of the company’s Technical Museum which I found absolutely fascinating; not sure about Sue!

After lunch it was suggested that we should drive to Pribor, some 20kms away, and observe the building of the 613 cars on the assembly line. We were chauffeured there in a company limousine, in the rain. The Pribor factory would fail every Occupational Health and Safety regulation known to Man—it was like stepping into a time warp. As I said, it was raining and the roof leaked so the line workers were busily shifting cars and components out of the way to keep them dry.... By the way, the assembly line was long enough to accommodate just three cars! Each car was virtually hand-made.

Tour over, Sue was put into the limo and taken back to Kopřivnice. Me, I was given a crash helmet, introduced to one of the factory test drivers—let’s call him Josef—and told he would take me back to HQ in the 613-prototype standing nearby. OK, let’s go!

Not a word was spoken between me and Josef—he only spoke Czech. The door was closed, engine started, first gear selected.....and then we rocketed out of the factory gate sideways in the rain under full power! Bloody hell, I was not expecting this!

Between gearshifts and hand wiping the mist off the inside of the windscreen—air-cooled engines have very poor heating and demisting capabilities—my driver proceeded to display a level of car control that I found truly amazing and awe inspiring. The attitude of the car viz-a-viz the narrow country roads was controlled by a combination of the accelerator and steering wheel. At no stage was the big car ever parallel to the middle of the road and at no stage did he use the brakes!

And over all of this frenetic activity by Josef the big DOHC V8 engine at the rear was bellowing through barely silenced exhaust stubs—I can still hear it now—as I watched the tacho needle hover between 5000 and 6000rpm the whole way.

After initial misgivings I quickly settled down to admire Josef at work. All too quickly the drive was over; we were back in the yard next to the engineering workshop at HQ, I jumped out of the car, took off the helmet and walked around in the rain to shake Josef’s hand, all the while laughing to myself. This puzzled the Czechs because they’d done this trick on several European journalists who’d climbed out of the car after such a “ride” and perked up their lunch. Must be something wrong with this Aussie!

I did, however, decline a ride in a T813 Tatra Dakar truck with their chief driver. I had been warned by friends that when he climbed up into the cab he took leave of his brain—one hairy experience a day was enough for me. Later that afternoon, in the quiet comfort of our hotel in the quaint village of Starnberg up in the hills above Koprivnice I remember thinking how silly I was—I would probably never be back that way again and the opportunity would probably never be offered. Oh well, you have to accept what you did and forget about what you didn't do no matter how appealing it might have been in retrospect.

I had no opportunity to take any photos of this event but below you can view a couple of images of a Tatra T613, one of the great unknowns of the motoring world.

Gavin Farmer



### **Jim Henderson has shared some memories...**

The article on the Chevy Impala took me back to the late 1980's when I bought a Chevy Impala original RHD convertible... The car was built by (I think, and not too sure of the spelling) Fischer Motor body works in Canada.

The car was going (just) so I drove it from Sydney to Adelaide in a terrible state as it had been in a fire with a lot of the interior and the soft top burnt and paint blistered... The motor was also knocking.

Back in Adelaide, my mate on Port Rd did a wicked job on the new red and white upholstery and new white hood, we painted the car red and white in my parents shed. installed all the bright stuff , original wheel trims and did a motor rebuild on the front Porch and finally assembled the car.... After spending a total of \$24,000, she was beautiful and driving her was simply the best (she was an elegant car now with whitewalls) and she looked the part. My milage was calculated by the following equation....

I was running on a girl for every tank of Gas.... That's the best mileage I have ever got from any of my cars up until this day.

However....The company I worked for closed its doors, I decided to take 8 weeks off which turned out to be 35 years and drove around Australia settling in Darwin, leaving my car at my brothers' house.....

... Well, he sold his house and when moving, didn't know where I was.... so sold it to a guy that offered him \$6000.00.... And I can't remember whether he paid me, as I didn't see him for another three years... And that is when he told me.

I loved that car!

Thanks again Ted ..All the memories are flooding back, think I will find a quiet spot out the back and have a cup of tea.

Fuck the tea, I'm gonna have a whisky.

“After being married for 50 years, I took a careful look at my wife one day and said, ‘Fifty years ago we had a cheap house, a junk car, slept on a sofa bed and watched a 10-inch black and white TV, but I got to sleep with a hot 23-year-old girl every night.

‘Now, I have a \$500,000 home, a \$45,000 car, a nice big bed and a large screen TV, but I'm sleeping with a 69-year-old woman. It seems to me that you're not holding up your side of things.’

‘My wife is a very reasonable woman. She told me to go out and find a hot 23-year-old girl and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap house, driving a junk car, sleeping on a sofa bed and watching a 10-inch black and white TV.

