THE SUNBEAMER

A Newsletter for The Sunbeam Car Clubs Of South Africa

Volume 10 October 2026



The Sunbeam Car Clubs Of South Africa

Clubs For Owners And Enthusiasts Of All Rootes Group Vehicles

The Sunbeam Sports Car Club of South Africa, based in Johannesburg, Gauteng, is one of the oldest car clubs in South Africa and has evolved to its present format from the origins of the very first Sunbeam Club created in the 1960's in the Western Cape, and is a founder member of SAVVA. The Cape Sunbeam Car Club, based in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, followed the same evolution and was created a few years later.

Both clubs are for members who appreciate the products of The Rootes Group and are open to all Rootes vehicle owners and enthusiasts, and work toward promoting the ownership, preservation, maintenance, enjoyment and creation of general public awareness of these fine vehicles and both Clubs organise regular club events and meetings for members and participate in general automotive shows and exhibitions within their regional areas.

This monthly newsletter is a voluntary newsletter created by an ex member of both clubs for the combined members of the clubs, and is not an official newsletter of any of the two clubs.



Sunbeam Sports Car Club visits The New Heritage classics Venue

Readers of The Sunbeamer are advised to use caution in following any technical or other advice read in the newsletter as the newsletter and the Sunbeam clubs can accept no responsibility for its accuracy or reliability. The views expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the clubs

Editor's Rambling

Welcome to the October edition of The Sunbeamer

We start with some reports of club activities in September and early October.

To welcome Spring and to celebrate the amazing occurrence of the annual West Coast flowers found at this time of the year, the Cape Sunbeam Car Club made an adventurous long distant drive to the West Coast town of Darling, the home of the well known comedian, Pieter-Dirk Uys, to attend the flower show and also have a lunch there. An enjoyable event really enjoyed by the members who participated.

Pictures can be seen later in this edition.

On Saturday, October 3rd, the Gauteng based Sunbeam Sports Car Club accepted an invitation from the owners of a newly created venue called the Heritage Classics Venue, a venue the owners hope to be able to host some of the larger motor shows in the future. The venue is unique in that not only has it all the necessary amenities to host crowds, but also has a nice collection of classic cars on display for visitors to observe. So our Gauteng fiends duly went and had a BBQ at the new place and were very impressed by the site

Pictures later in this edition

Watching the Grand Prix in Sepang yesterday, I could not help being frustrated by the pedantic actions of the FIA and how many laps had gone missing before they decided to let slower cars pass the safety car during a safety car interruption, and make them go through the pit lane and just reinforces my opinion that FIA is now becoming so bound by laws and regulations that it is becoming a pain to watch and I sometimes think I should rather watch the Motor GP or the Australian Supercars where the drivers are still controlling a mighty engine and are racing to win without a bunch of officials, sitting at the their computers deciding how and when to give more power to contestants. And not to even mention the fiasco when their complicated regulations software crashed with the wet conditions, what a mess. More of this on my gripes later in the edition

Still on the subject of FIA regulations, when I read about the new 2026 regulations where the power of the internal combustion V6 engine was to be capped to provide only 50% of the total power of the power plant, I was wondering how on earth do you control the horsepower of an engine revving at 15,000 rpm. In my editor's tech talk section, I discuss this and apologise for my comments on my disdain and disgust for the way in which team innovation is being tightly controlled by the FIA organisation

Glancing through some old copies of Harry Boys' newsletters, I found an interesting article about two old "Tiger" racing cars that I would like to include. However, now that I only have one eye, I do not have the motivation and urge to extract the text and enlarge it for better readability as in the past, so simply ask you to Zoom in when reading that article.

The Sunbeam Car Club of Victoria (SCCV) has a great newsletter called The Sunbeam Torque and is to me often, a source of some great articles, as they seem to have more access to old motor magazines than what I am able to find, and in the September 2026 edition of the *Sunbeam Torque,* there is an article remembering the British debut of the Tiger in England in 1965 (Remember, the first batch of Tigers were

all destined for America) that I have copied and included in this edition. It basically repeats the story we all have read a million times, but it's always nice to see a different slant on it. As mentioned previously, you might also need to zoom in to be able to read the text as my days of spoiling my readers has now past

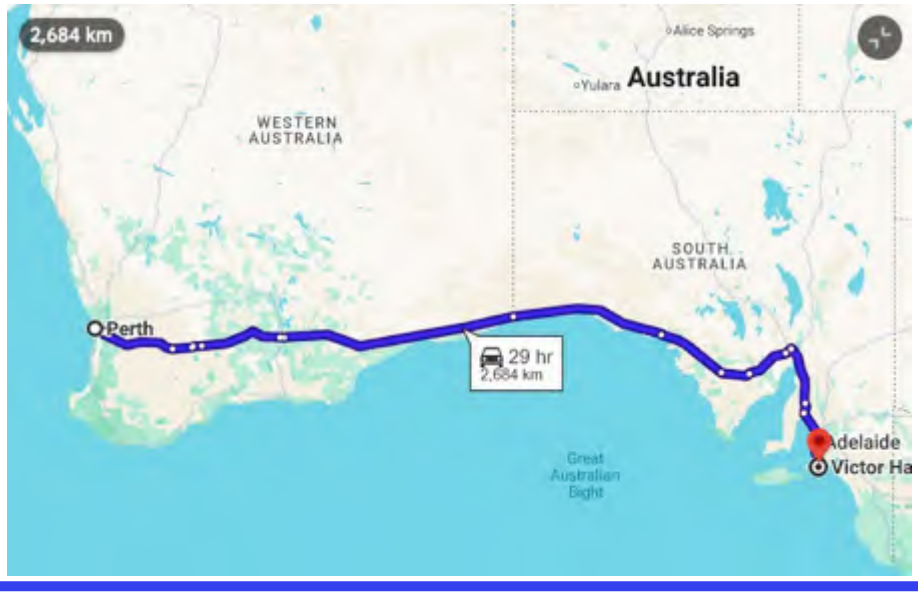
In the July 2026 edition of their newsletter, they had a report of a long trip done by two Australian Sunbeam enthusiasts, and when I mean long, *I really mean long,* a 5,386 km return trip, although not South African based, it is nevertheless worth reading and given some thought.

As I enjoyed the article I actually contacted the author, Darryl Penley of Western Australia and we had a conversation regarding what spares he took with him as I had been wondering why he had not mentioned looking at things like petrol pump, distributor etc when preparing for the journey. As it turns out he had many spares with him and has relied in Japanese technology for his electronic ignition and in his own words ***"You can't beat Japanese electronics"*** Hmmm..,. Food for thought

I had initially decided to include his article that he had sent me in this edition, but when he told me that in 2023 he had actually attended the Nationals hosted by the Sunbeam Club of Victoria in the Yarra Valley, making it almost an 8,000 Km trip, I decided to rather include the longer trip.

I have often written about the passion found in the members of the various Sunbeam and Rootes clubs of Australia and their willingness to commit to many thousand kilometre trips to attend a years Nationals. Having attended one of these Nationals myself (2018), I can vouch for the fact that these Nationals are really superb events and very enjoyable.

So, as mentioned, for 2023, the Sunbeam Club of Victoria hosted that year's Nationals in the Yarra Valley and here is the first part of a write-up from Darryl of he and his friend, whom he called, Mr Smooth, who decided to travel from Perth to Victoria in Darryl's Series V Alpine, a return distance of roughly 8,000 Km, to attend the 2023 Nationals. What makes the trip more interesting is that it involved the prospect of driving through the Nullarbor, a vast absolutely featureless uninhabited area of Southern Australia. I have enjoyed a luxury train trip through the Nullarbor and can tell you that no money in the World would make me take on the Nullarbor in a 60 year old classic Sunbeam.



Cape Sunbeam Club Visit The Darling Flower Show. Sunday, September 20th













Cape Sunbeam Club Visit The Darling Flower Show. Sunday, September 20th











Sunbeam Sports Car Club Vists The New Heritage Classics Venue

















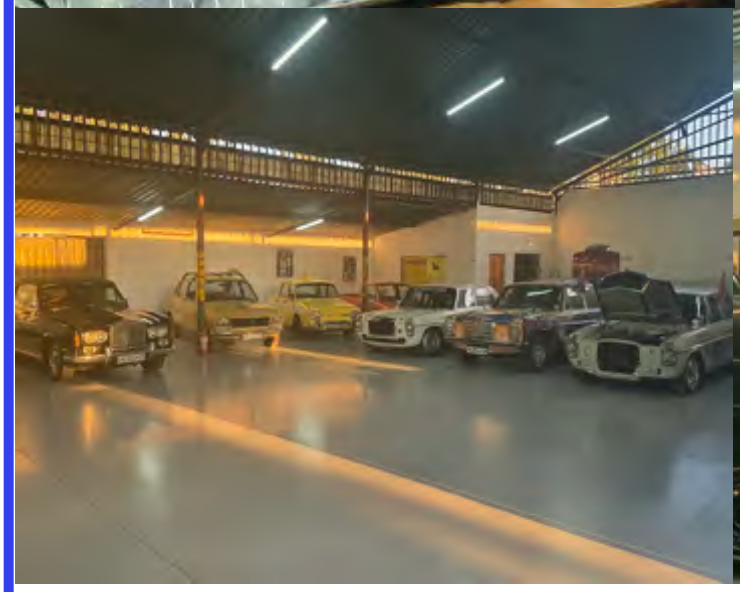
Sunbeam Sports Car Club Vists The New Heritage Classics Venue













Editor's Tech Talk…F1 Power Distribution

Call me old fashioned, or stupid, or whatever, but I really miss the days when Formula One celebrated drivers' skills and engineering innovation, by only limiting the engine size for both turbo and non turbo engines., configurations were decided on by the engine manufacturers and we found engines like the Repco-Brabham V8 based on the Oldsmobile 85, The 3 litre BRM P75 H16 , (Two flat-8 engines, geared together at the crankshafts), the famous Cosworth 3 litre DFV V8, that became almost the standard unit for a long time, and was unusual, in that the engine formed part of the car's structure. Renault, who introduced the first turbo engine, with their Gordini 1.5 litre V6 turbo engine, the extremely powerful BMW M12/13 inline four cylinder turbo, tilted almost horizontally in the Brabham BT55, Alfa with their Motori Moderni V6 and the list goes on, you could use your choice of tyre manufacturer, the size of your wheels etc

Then racing was seen to test manufacturer innovation, design decisions, driver skills, teams deciding on configuration etc.

Now, the size is dictated, the configurations is dictated, the angle of the V6 is dictated, the compression ratio is dictated, the location of the exhaust system is totally dictated, the amount of fuel the engine may use per hour is dictated, tyres and wheel sizes are dictated and soon, what the drivers will be allowed to eat will come into the quagmire of FIA rules. For 2026, the FiA decreed that they would control the output of the internal combustion part of the power unit to make it only produce 50% of the total power, as well as dictating how much electrical energy may be used per lap, forcing drivers to think about when and where they could use the electrical power instead of concentrating on going flat out to win the race. And now, because of the avalanche of rules, we find the FIA constantly having to insert more technology or rules to counter loop holes and tricks from the teams trying to bypass the FIA controls to gain some competitive advantage. How absolutely ridiculous

I see the FIA not a racing body anymore, but using man's love of the motor car to become a money generating, TV empire and mark my words, I foresee that in the future, the interest will slowly begin to fade as the decision to have auditors and officials control motoring technology and as a result races will more and more simply become processions going round and round on the track

However, as I mentioned, when I first read about the 50/50 power split between the ICE and the electrical components of the power unit, my first reaction was to wonder, how on earth can you control the horsepower of an ICE engine, and that will be the topic of this discussion.

So it would appear that the FIA controls the power output of the internal combustion engine (ICE) primarily by ***limiting how much energy can go into the engine,*** rather than capping the actual horsepower that comes out. If you restrict the fuel an engine can consume, you naturally cap its maximum power output.

The FIA enforces this through tight technical rules, **(*naturally*)** standardised hardware, and real-time tracking:

Editor's Tech Talk…F1 Power Distribution

1. The Energy Flow Limit (The Main Control)

Every F1 car is required to use the exact same "brain"—a standard Electronic Control Unit (ECU) supplied by McLaren Applied and approved by the FIA.

The FIA caps the engine's intake at a maximum energy flow rate of ***3,000 Megajoules per hour (MJ/h)*** above 10,500 RPM. The rules restrict fuel *flow* rather than just fuel weight (mass). This ensures that even if one fuel company makes a fuel that weighs less, they cannot sneak more explosive energy into the engine than their rivals

To make sure teams do not bypass the energy cap, the FIA also mandates a specific piece of high-tech hardware. Every car must use an identical, high-precision Fuel Flow Meter manufactured by Allengra.

This sensor uses ultrasonic sound waves to measure exactly how much fuel passes through the fuel lines up to 6,000 times per second.

The data stream from this sensor is fully encrypted and sent directly to the FIA. Teams cannot tamper with the data, hack the signal, or hide spikes in fuel usage.

If a team tries to program their engine software to inject extra fuel for a sudden burst of power, the standard ECU catches it immediately and logs a rule violation.

Teams once realised that changing the temperature of the fuel or the meter could trick the sensor into reading a lower flow rate. The FIA strictly bans any system or device designed to change the temperature of the flow meter, *an extra rule to enforce a rule*

Teams are forbidden from creating hidden chambers or flexible fuel lines *after* the sensor to accumulate a small puddle of extra fuel for a sudden power boost. a*nother extra rule to enforce the rule that enforced the rule*

So then the FIA looked at what else they could control and decided to restrict the amount of electrical energy a driver could use *Per lap !*

For this rule, the FIA controls energy usage by using a mandatory Standard electrical control Unit (SECU) and high-tech physical power meters and limits the power in by using special sensors measuring the electrical voltage and current passing between the battery and the motor

By multiplying voltage by current, the SECU calculates the exact kilowatts of power being used every millisecond

For the 2026 regulations, the peak electric motor power is capped a 350KW (about 470 hp). If a team tries to draw 351 KW, the sensor flags it immediately.

But this is not enough for the FIA, they have decided to also control how the power must drop as the car goes faster and force a linear power decrease as it speeds up by forcing a steep drop in electrical power to stop the car from continuing to speed up on battery power alone. We saw the effect of this as cars suddenly started to slow down at the ned of the straight.

Now having screwed up the power, not happy, the FIA also decided to limit how much energy can be collected through braking per lap as well as how much energy can be pushed from the battery back into the motor in a single lap

So during a race all this is continuously monitored and any team found breaching these limits face severe penalties

The nett result what we eventually will see, would be a procession of cars following each other at the same speed with very little overtaking, with eventually all qualifying within one second between the top and the bottom qualifier and by that time, I will be looking at the Australian supercar races of the motor GP

Sunbeam's Classic Pair

Bill Boddy looks at those versatile racing cars, Tiger and Tigress



Above, Sir Henry Segrave in the 4.0-litre V12 Land Speed Record car at the Sunbeam works, Wolverhampton in 1926. A fore-runner of Tiger and Tigress, and somewhat unreliable, Segrave nevertheless achieved some notable results with this car.

LOUIS COATALEN, the celebrated Chief Engineer of the STD — Sunbeam, Talbot, Darracq — amalgamation, loved motor racing but sometimes had to take short cuts to appease those shareholders who disliked expensive competition cars. Coatalen became a master at the art of evolving inexpensive, but usually effective, high-speed vehicles which carried Sunbeam or Talbot-Darracq badges and radiators as was expedient.

Even before the First World War he had effectively put a new side-valve, V12 nine-litre aero engine into a more-or-less production Sunbeam chassis, endowed it with a slender single-seater body, and got good results. After the Armistice he followed the same formula by building a special chassis to take a 350hp V12 Sunbeam aviation engine, thereby thriftily making claim to Brooklands' fastest car and one with which, after a minimum of titivation, Malcolm Campbell became the first driver to exceed the magic 150mph.

Looking a few years beyond the advent of the cars featured here, the wily Coatalen did it again — the Land Speed Record was very much in the public eye, and excellent publicity, and to raise it above 200mph for the first time was therefore very much on the agenda. But Sunbeam's finances were at a low ebb. Who but Coatalen would have refused to pass over the idea, and have achieved for the indomitable de Hane Segrave this great honour, simply by putting two aged, ex-speed boat 22-litre war-time aero-engines of Sunbeam origin in a crude chassis, driving the back wheels by side chains, enveloping the whole wild machine in a simple body, thereby taking the coveted fastest-ever record with no fuss at all?

The cars we're concerned with here follow a similar pattern. We are back in 1925, and Louis Coatalen has seen his old monster, the 350hp Sunbeam, gain much fame as well as that 150mph record after he had sold it to Campbell — in not altogether good mechanical order, it could be added! To go one better would be sweet. At the time LSR cars were becoming ever bigger and more powerful. They needed long stretches of beach on which to build up their speed and then reduce it safely. They were almost useless for any other purpose.

Coatalen had a different approach. He figured out that if he spent some of his shareholders' finance on a much lighter LSR contender he would be able to go for the record, then standing at 150.76mph by Campbell in the older Sunbeam. His new car was constructed at Wolverhampton, using in effect two of the successful 2.0-litre GP cylinder blocks set at 75deg on a new crankcase. A modified Roots supercharger fed both banks of cylinders and this V12 4.0-litre engine developed a useful 296bhp at 5000rpm and poked out over 300bhp if taken to 5300rpm, which was 300rpm above the peak-speed for the 2.0-litre GP car, and represented an increase of 160bhp. This engine was put into what was virtually a Grand Prix chassis, complete with servo four-wheel-brakes, and was fitted with a two-seater racing body, again very like that of the GP Sunbeams, with some streamlining additions, such as a cowled radiator. Because of its light weight, Coatalen was able to spare the cost of taking the new Sunbeam to the South Wales beach at Pendine, where the other LSR contenders unleashed their powerful, back-braked monsters. He figured that the shorter run at nearby Southport Sands would suffice.

That is where the celebrated driver Segrave went in March 1926, to try to raise Campbell's record. It may have seemed little extra prestige for the Sunbeam Company, but perhaps Coatalen felt sorry he had ever sold the 1919 350hp Sunbeam and wanted retribution. He didn't get it all that easily. The supercharger kept cracking its casing and half-a-dozen blowers were used up. Captain Irving, in charge, thought that twin superchargers would be the solution, but time was against him. Eventually, after a fortnight's delay, Segrave tried again, after one nasty experience when the throttle stuck open and it took him two miles to switch off. To conserve the delicate blower, the car was then towed to the start of the measured distance with the radiator warm. Using only three-quarters throttle for the first run, Segrave opened right up on the return run but once again the supercharger split its casing. The World's mile-record was missed, but the World's flying-kilometre record was taken, at 152.308mph, a small improvement on Campbell's record.

With the LSR, if only temporarily, under his belt (Parry Thomas took it to over 171mph at Pendine a month later) Coatalen could now improve the reliability of his 4-litre engine and use this Sunbeam for road racing. It was entered for the 1926 Spanish Grand Prix five months after the Southport appearance, again entrusted to Segrave. This time it wasn't the blower which gave out but the tubular front axle which broke after six laps, due, it was rumoured, to machining errors like those that had caused the same trouble on the 1.5-litre GP Talbot. This could have been more serious at Southport!

Repaired, the 4.0-litre Sunbeam was sent to Boulogne for the Speed Week. Here Segrave frightened himself in a car for the first time in his life, he said, by holding full speed along the narrow undulating course where the six-kilometre speed trials were held. He clocked a sensational 140.6mph, exceeding 148mph for the third kilometre, the fastest road-speed ever apart from Ernest Eldridge's LSR at Arpajon in 1924 with the 300hp Fiat, at 146.01mph for his two-way run over the kilometre. The fatal accident to Howey in the Ballot caused the Boulogne hill-climb to be abandoned, just as the courageous Segrave was preparing to start in the V12 Sunbeam.

Coatalen was determined to prove the versatility of this, his last pure racing car, and to get his money's worth. So the compact Sunbeam was



Above, Kaye Don, the genial Speed King, with his riding mechanic aboard the Tiger at Brooklands. Below, this twin-blower layout made the V12 Sunbeams more reliable.



loaded into a railway truck and despatched to Milan in readiness for the Italian Grand Prix at Monza in September. After the truck, which got lost, had been located by Segrave, he was able to lead the race to almost half-distance, before all the oil cascaded from the gearbox. Bugattis took over, but before its withdrawal the Sunbeam had broken the lap record.

One of the cars then went to the Gaillon hillclimb, in October 1926, entered as a Talbot to please the French. Driven by Albert Divo it set a new course record of 28.6 seconds, equal to 78mph over the standing kilometre, vanquishing René Thomas' former record with the giant Delage by a clear second. The cars may have used low axle ratios for such tasks; as run at Southport the top speed was a theoretical 160mph with a 3.5:1 back axle.

By 1927 the finances of the old Sunbeam Company of Wolverhampton were in a sorry state and motor racing, to Coatalen's intense regret, was abandoned. He did manage, however, to construct the expensive and sadly-unsuccessful twin-engined Silver Bullet for Kaye Don's attack on the LSR in 1929/30 at Daytona, and in 1927 had the firm satisfaction of seeing Segrave, first British contender to use the American beach at Florida, achieve a speed of more than 200mph for the first time ever, with very little preliminary bother, with the twin-engined 1000hp Sunbeam.

After that arrangements were made for Kaye Don, the immaculately-dressed Speed King so popular at Brooklands (where he had graduated from light cars to the 11-litre aero-engined Wolseley Viper and lapped in it faster than its creator, Alastair Miller) to drive the 4.0-litre Sunbeams. Don had also proved masterly with the famous 2.0-litre supercharged Grand Prix Sunbeam, The Cub, so the 4.0-litre V12 Sunbeam and a sister car which Louise Coatalen had wisely laid down, were now made available to Don.

Painted red, these two two-seater racing Sunbeams looked exactly alike, so forgive me if I lump their Brooklands performances together. What Kaye Don found himself in charge of, aided by Bill Perkins up at Wolverhampton, who would drive the cars from there to Brooklands, was an exciting pair of cars, the 67 × 94mm (3976cc) engine with its welded-on water jackets and twin overhead-camshafts, roller main and big-ends, dry-sump lubrication, a Solex carburetter and a compression ratio of 5.9:1, installed in a chassis with a wheelbase of 8ft 10in, a front track of 4ft 3in, a rear track of 5ft 11in, and a four-speed gearbox in unit with the engine. The drive went through a multi-plate clutch and torque tube, to the bevel-drive back axle, and the springing was half-elliptic throughout. The gearbox, with central lever, was in unit with Coatalen's ingenious engine and the four-wheel braking, with Perrot linkage and a gearbox-disc-type mechanical brake servo were retained. The cars, in fact, were virtually unchanged from Louis Coatalen's clever concept of three or four years earlier, but the radiator cowling was removed. The troubles experienced at Southport with the single Roots blower trying to feed both sides of the engine had been solved by using two smaller-size superchargers, of the same type, designed by Captain J L Irving and Mr George Ward. They produced a boost of about 8lb/sq in and were located side by side at the front of the engine, driven from the gear train. Although the problem was not quite the same, it is interesting that it was the use of a single supercharger for the two power units of the 'Silver Bullet' Sunbeam that probably thwarted Kaye Don of the LSR in 1930.

The 4.0-litre V12 Sunbeam was docile enough to be driven on the road on pump petrol, apparently in spite of a far lower octane-rating than pump-fuel today, but for racing petrol benzole in a 60/40 mix, or 'E2' fuel, was used. At Southport in 1926 the Sunbeam had been referred to as 'Ladybird' but the first of the pair, registered UK 2063, was named 'Tiger'. The sister car, which was built early in 1927, was naturally called 'Tigress'. The first appearance of both cars seems to have been at Montlhéry in July 1972, when the 'still youthful veteran' driver Wagner, and the mysterious British driver Williams, ran them in the Formula Libre race that preceded the French Grand Prix. It was left to Albert Divo to win for the STD organisation, taking the lead from Williams on lap two of a wet race. Wagner with low 'sprint' gearing never featured in the race, the gearbox failing almost immediately. Williams' 'box broke second gear on the third lap and that was his race run, both drivers of the big Sunbeams probably being somewhat relieved as the monster cars were more than a handful in these treacherous conditions, which claimed the life of de Courcelles when his Indianapolis Guyot Special crashed into the trees at over 100mph and exploded like a shell.

For the 1927 Brooklands season Kaye Don drove an old 4.9-litre Sunbeam and the 2.0-litre

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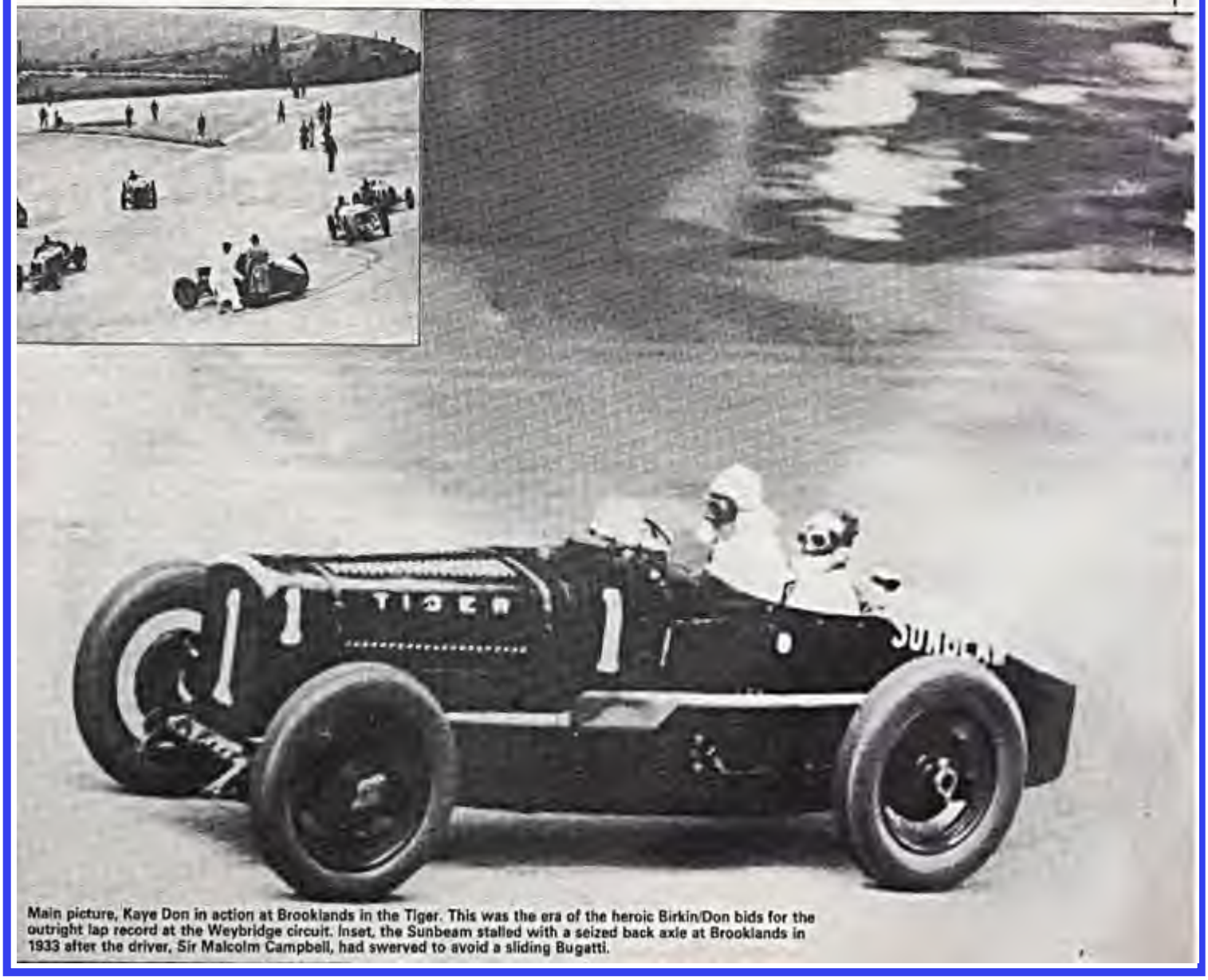


Main picture, Kaye Don in action at Brooklands in the Tiger. This was the era of the heroic Birkin/Don bids for the outright lap record at the Weybridge circuit. Inset, the Sunbeam stalled with a seized back axle at Brooklands in 1933 after the driver, Sir Malcolm Campbell, had swerved to avoid a sliding Bugatti.

Sunbeam's Classic Pair

'Cub' and it wasn't until the following season that he commenced racing the 4.0-litre 'Tiger'. At Shelsley Walsh hill-climb in September 1927 Bill Perkins, Sunbeam's ever-faithful mechanic drove both a 2.0-litre GP Sunbeam and one of the 4.0-litre cars. As a foretaste of better to come, he clocked 55 seconds with the bigger car, which was third fastest time of the day, the 2.0-litre being 2.2 seconds slower. Don opened his 1928 innings as before, but by May of that year he had put the 'Tiger' Sunbeam to good use, using it to break nine Class C International records at Brooklands, of from one km from a standing-start, to 50km, speeds ranging from 136.39mph for the flying km to 78.32mph for the standing km. On the third day of this record-smashing spree, Don added the 50-mile and 100km class records to the 'Tiger's' bag, both at over 120mph. Considering that the car was no longer fully-streamlined and that the gear ratios suited fast acceleration rather more than top speed, the demonstration of this Sunbeam, which dated back to the French Grand Prix-winning Sunbeams laid down in 1923 (doubled up to twice the number of cylinders and supercharged, of course) as 140mph car in Brooklands trim, was indeed impressive.

After he had made some very successful appearances in the 2.0-litre 'Cub' and within a few days of the 'Tiger's' record-breaking onslaught, the Brooklands public had the pleasure of seeing Don race this bigger Sunbeam at the Whit Monday races. Entered for the 41st Lightning Short Handicap (what a splendid title for a contest between the fastest cars!), the red Sunbeam had little difficulty in disposing of the other three runners, lapping at 115.82mph on its flying circuit, to win from scratch. The Track handicapper, Mr Ebblewhite, duly took note, and the victorious car and driver were docked an extra nine seconds in the subsequent 25-mile 'Gold Star' Handicap. With no less than a full minute to make up on E L Bouts' aged 4.9-litre Sunbeam in the hands of Jack Dunfee, Don pulled out the stops and won again, averaging 126.36mph. This was the quickest win to date, and Don set a new lap-record of 131.76mph.

August Bank Holiday usually produced some good racing down at Weybridge, but in 1928 Kaye Don produced only the 'Cub', substituting this for the bigger Sunbeam in a Match Race against Jack Dunfee's 3.0-litre straight-eight Ballot, which the 2.0-litre Sunbeam won; for comparison with what the 'Tiger' had already achieved, its best lap was done at 121.47mph. The 1928 absence of the 4.0-litre V12 was compensated for early in 1929, when Don brought out the 'Tigress' and established five International Class-C records at the Track, of from 5km up to 50km, all at over 130mph, apart from the last-named. Rather as before, a few days later he was competing at the Brooklands Easter Meeting, at which he also drove the 2.0-litre Wolverhampton car. Unplaced in the Founder's Gold Cup event, after a poor take-off, although later lapping at better than 127mph, and failing by 2.40mph to better his own lap record on a solo run, he wound things up more effectively in the 44th Lightning Long Handicap, with a lap at 130.04mph, which, from his customary scratch starting point, availed him nothing. Incidentally, that year Don's Sunbeams were painted blue, with cream wheels, instead of being in their red and black livery.

This era of Brooklands' history belongs to the epic period of the Birkin/Don bids for the absolute lap record. I can well recall the excitement of seeing Birkin's slim blower-4½ Bentley, described in *T&CC* for March, and the smaller V12 Sunbeam, flying round the steep, battle-scarred bankings in the sunshine, blowers howling, on these very fast runs, both cars jumping from the concrete as they plunged off the Home banking into the Railway straight. Don described it as: "The finishing line seems to be getting very close and then you swoop down the banking to the straight, to discover yourself on the tail of your rival. The 'Tiger' has roared its way to the front again and you have won. But sometimes you have had to beat the record for the Track in order to win . . ." Stirring times! What Don didn't say was that, for these very fast cars, overtaking was becoming both very difficult and distinctly dangerous. Which is why the lone attacks on the lap-record were more credible.

At the 1929 Whitsun races Don drove both sizes of Sunbeam and with the 4.0-litre won the Lightning Short race at 113.62mph, from Froy's 6.0-litre Delage, took the Gold Vase race with the 'Cub', and, rehandicapped to 'owes 10 secs', did a quite remarkable standing-lap at 115.29mph with V12 breaking the old record held by Thomas' big Leyland Thomas by over five mph. The handicap and the baulking made it impossible for the flying blue Sunbeam to get to grips with Cobb's 10.5-litre Delage which had started 14sec earlier but some reports say Don equalled his own absolute lap-record. At the August races Don caught all but the 'limit' OM in the Gold Star race, ignoring a broken oil-pipe to set a new lap-record of 134.24mph and he was second in a preceding handicap. Meanwhile, the big Sunbeam had netted the coveted World's Standing Start mile record, putting it to over the ton (100.77mph) for the first time. It also put the ss km to 65.71mph and the Class-C flying mile record to 140.95mph, Brooklands' fastest speed to that date.

At the end of 1929 the 'Tigress' participated in a successful bid for eight records, running for 200 miles, and putting the World's 200km record to 120.91mph and averaging slightly less for an hour in spite of petrol fumes from a leaking tank sickening one riding mechanic. More versatility was displayed by these old 4.0-litre cars, when they tackled the 1929 BRDC 500 Mile Race. Cobb and Cyril Paul drove 'Tiger', Don pairing with Froy in 'Tigress'. Both cars fell out with broken springs — age and the rough Track surface taking their toll. In 1930 Birkin wrested Kaye Don's ap-record from him. Don replied at Whitsun, using 'Tigress', with a new high of 135.33mph. He then finished 2nd to a venerable 21.5-litre Benz, in a later 'Lightning' contest, putting the lap-record up again, to a rousing 137.58mph. This beat the Birkin Bentley record by 2.24mph and it took two years of development to get the more streamlined Bentley to go 0.38mph quicker . . .

Although several old cars continued to compete at Brooklands in 1931, including the 'Cub', the 4.0-litre pair of Sunbeams were absent, being refurbished by T&Ts for Sir Malcolm Campbell, with Lockheed hydraulic brakes, Wilson preselector gearboxes, revised chassis frames, etc. This increased their weight by two cwt, over the 18.3cwt of the LSR 1926 car, but Campbell saw them as still highly competitive. Certainly he had some successes with these revamped vintage Sunbeams, which now looked quite different in appearance. In 1932 Sir Malcolm won the Brooklands Mountain-circuit Championship race, on which he had set his sights, at 68.6mph, from such opposition as Mays' lightweight Invicta, Brian Lewis' Talbot 105, Shuttleworth's Bugatti, etc.

The race was from scratch, over 15 laps of the course with two corners a lap, and Campbell put the Class C circuit lap-record to 71.39mph. A week later he made ftd over the 0.5-mile Brighton Speed Trial course, clocking 76.27mph from a standing start to beat the accelerative 10.5-litre V12 Delage by 0.4sec. The following year success in the Mountain Championship eluded Sir Malcolm who, swerving to avoid Rose-Richards' skidding Bugatti at the banking turn, suffered a 'coming together'; the Sunbeam stopped with a seized back-axle. If you want proof of further versatility, Campbell ran the Sunbeam in the ingenious 1933 JCC International Trophy Race with its handicap chicanes, but it retired when a blower-gear tooth broke up after it had equalled the record for this unusual course, driven very fast by both Campbell and co-driver Chris Staniland. It all came to an end in 1934, with Campbell taking second place from a scratch start in the Second Merrow Mountain Handicap, to Harker's little Harker Special. The Sunbeam just held off Raymond May's famous White Riley, lifting the Class C lap-record for this circuit, which it had lost to Eyston's Bugatti, to 76.31mph, which will now stand to eternity . . . It was used as the pace-car for a 1937 rolling start, driven by John Cobb, and that year Brackenbury and Powys-Lybbe took it to 4th place at 120.2mph (after a lap at 132.8mph — it hadn't lost much of its old pace) in the BRDC 500km grind.

After the war one of these 4.0-litre Sunbeams lay dismantled but the other was purchased by Sir Ralph Millais, resuscitated, and raced in vintage events for him by J M James. It then changed hands again and for some years has been one of the prized exhibits in the Midland Motor Museum at Bridgnorth.





Above, Sir Malcolm Campbell enjoyed better luck at Brooklands in 1932. He is shown here winning the Mountain Championship race in that year with the V12 Sunbeam. Left, J M James in the Millais Sunbeam after the war, at Brighton Speed Trials.

Acknowledgement: Sunbeam Torque Sep[tember 2026
Newsletter for the Sunbeam Car Club of Victoria

March: Sunbeam Tiger, British debut, 1965

This month 30 years ago, the Sunbeam Tiger was unveiled to the British public – nearly a year after its official New York launch on April 3rd, 1964.

In essence, the Tiger was a factory-approved hot rod, based on the pretty Sunbeam Alpine convertible, itself the handiwork of English stylist Kenneth Howes.

Despite the Alpine's dashing good looks the rather pedestrian Hillman mechanicals just couldn't keep pace, and North American buyers began turning to the E-type, the Austin-Healey, and the locally produced Chevrolet Corvette. Despite their higher price, these cars had the power buyers wanted.

In October '62 race car driver Jack Brabham and Ian Garrad (West Coast sales manager) discussed the possibility of slipping a V8 into the Alpine. Armed with a piece of stick, marked to the dimensions of the Alpine engine bay, Garrad and an associate did the rounds of various US dealerships, and by day's end the Ford Fairlane's 260 cubic inch Ford V8, with its revolutionary thin wall casting, and distributor up front, was deemed the most suitable choice.

At the time Carroll Shelby was involved in a similar exercise, shoe-horning Ford V8s into Cobras which made him the logical choice for the Alpine V8 conversion, despite a possible conflict of interests. Shelby agreed, and Brian Rootes syphoned the US$10,000 budget from the advertising account, so as to keep the project hidden from his father – chief director at Rootes.

The objective was not simply the fitting of a motor, but to carry out all necessary modifications of suspension, steering, braking, and chassis – to make it a suitable prototype on which to base a costing analysis.

Meantime, race driver Ken Miles was given the job of building a second 'quickie' prototype. After picking up a '62 Alpine MkII demonstrator, Miles had the Sunbeam engine out and a 260 V8 and two speed automatic installed, and running, in less than a week – for a total cost of just $1,200.



The Tiger – basically a factory-approved hot rod

The Miles car had whetted the appetite, but it was soon discarded in favour of the far superior Shelby unit which included near perfect weight distribution, but necessitated modification of the front cross member, a redesigned gearbox tunnel and bellhousing, fitting of rack and pinion steering, and modification of the firewall.

After considerable secretive testing and evaluation in the US, in July '63 the white Shelby-built Alpine V8 was covertly shipped to England. Brian Rootes still had not informed his father of the car's existence.

After warming Rootes engineers to the V8 Alpine, an arrangement was made for Lord Rootes, an ex motorcycle racer, to view it. He arrived in a chauffeur- driven Humber limousine, and to the surprise of all present, climbed behind the wheel with his son Brian in the passenger seat. After an





Stylish swinging sixties design and, with its US-sourced Ford 260 cu-in V8, the power to match its aspirations


ROOTES GROUP
SUNBEAM
SUNBEAM
TIGER Ø



The Sunbeam Alpine wasn't selling well in the US so the Tiger was introduced to compete with Healeys etc

historic dash around the streets, apparently with the handbrake on the whole time, he turned to his white-knuckled son, and gave the go-ahead for its production.

Along with previously mentioned modifications, a Salisbury rear end was fitted – complete with panhard rod to minimise twist.

Front springs were uprated, and the battery was moved to the boot from under the right rear seat – where, if it was left, it would have interfered with the second exhaust pipe. A hole was punched in the firewall allowing access to number 8 spark plug, and a number of other modifications were carried out.

On April 3 1964, the Sunbeam Tiger premiered at the New York Auto Show, although the newly decided title was too late for the literature. It was listed as a Sunbeam Alpine 260. The price was US$3,499.

When success of the Tiger was assured, Rootes shifted production to Jensen Motors Limited, who were better set up for volume production.

Early cars were left hookers destined for the US. It wasn't until March 1965 that the car could be purchased on the home market.

In the meantime the little Sunbeam had chalked up a string of race wins in Europe and the States.

Visually there was little to differentiate the Tiger from the Alpine – some discreet badging, a narrow chrome spear down the side, twin exhaust pipes, and a reverse gear lockout clasp on the gear lever were about all there was to it – making the Sunbeam Tiger a real 'Q' car.

By all accounts it handled well, the main gripe was axle tramp from the rear end when taking off briskly.

It would corner well; the near equal weight distribution meant high speed corners could be taken at speed in a controlled drift – often done well in excess of 100mph!

Like the Alpine, trim levels were better than average, seating was comfortable and the ride good. But most importantly the fitting of the Ford V8 had transformed the cute little Alpine into a brawny little muscle car.

The 4.2 litre Ford V8 put out nearly twice as much horsepower – 164bhp, compared to the Alpine's 88, but the really significant increase was the torque – nearly three times the Alpine's.

By most yardsticks, the Tiger was a success story. In its short life – just over three years – over 7000 Tigers were built, the tragedy being the MkII 289 Tiger, axed just 30 days after it had been availed to the public, due to pressure from Chrysler management, who had taken over the running of Rootes.

The MkII Tiger was a natural progression – the same beautiful body with an even more powerful 289 Mustang engine, and quite a few other (mostly cosmetic) changes.

It now represented the ultimate Tiger; more powerful and with handling better than ever, the Mk II commanded a significant premium over the 260 version, assisted in part by its rarity factor – only 633 Mk IIs built, with just 17 in RHD form. ◩







Acknowledgement: Thanks to Mr Darryl Penley from Western Australia, the author of this article

Sunbeam Register of WA

October Newsletter from WA

Good day Sunbeam Owners,

Gingin May 2023: 5 Sunbeam ventured to our usual site next to the Rootes Group Car Club ie: Humber Hillman etc. The usual stalwarts: Mike Boreham, Alpine Series 2, Johnathan Majer, Rapier Series 4, Terry Duke, Rapier Conv Series 3, Darryl Penley, Alpine Series 5, Jo Recardo, Sunbeam 1927, just arrived ex East. Mention Anthony Robinson, Hillman Series 5, parked with the Rootes Club, but spent most of his time with us, being an Alpine/Tiger owner. Good attendance with all clubs, would guess in the vicinity of 800 cars spread through Gingin. Good entertainment, plenty of food an attractions to suit everybody. Definitely a family day out for all the family.

My Journey to Yarra Valley National Sunbeam Meet, 8-11 Sept 2023:

Car preparation for the road trip to Melbourne and beyond: I started pre trip prep in Feb 2023, I wanted to be able to cruise at 110kph instead of the usual 100kph, as on previous Adelaide & Geelong trips pre Covid. Unable to source 3.7:1 ratio diff, the second option was to increase wheel size from 13 to 14". Having Wire Wheels, and a spare set of 4 stud front and rear hubs, my options were well covered. Through my friendly local tyre dealer (Kosteras) super light rims were my preferred choice. Hick up no1, no 14" super lights available, out of stock and did not know when another batch would be made. Down the guggler with that one! 2nd option: mini lights spline wheels, ex the H... in the East! Approximately $1000 per rim. Small hemorrhage and heart attack, out of the question.

The 3rd option Minitor wheels from Moss Europe, my newest best friend in England, assured me they would fit a Sunbeam Apline. 5 1/2 X 14" okay. Paid the money, less than half the price of the mini lights. 10 days later they arrived, delivered to the door, early May, couldn't help myself, new tyres purchased (Hankook) and fitted for Gingin. Rears fitted no problems, fronts a bit of grinding on whishbone, but not happy minimum clearance. But with a bit of (creative engineering) clearance now 5-6 mm.

Travelling to Gingin at 108—110 kph, the next problem surfaced, the Diff howled like a Dingo on Heat! No way was I going to drive to Melb and return with a noise that bad. A visit to Paul Auguston was required for another second hand unit. I played it a bit smarter this time and took cleaning fluid and bearing blue to check tooth reading. The 2nd attempt found a Diff with good markings. Back home stripped, new bearings, seals, replaced pinion shims with home made shims. A same time replaced rear wheels brake cylinders with new units purchased from UK. (not available Aus—being Series 5 with self adjusting brakes) Road tested Diff, slight whine at 80kph no problems, 100—110 kph lovely, away we go!

Normal Service Maintenance: Clean and repack front wheel bearings, New dics and dics pads, oil change, coolant change, check belts, minor tune etc. Road Test. It was July by this time as all of June was renovations at home. Oops—what's that coolant leak? The heater tap. Ring around Aus, UK—that tap is obsolete. But we can supply a conversion kit for 190 pounds ex UK. On the Net, had to settle on a Flacon heater tap to suit my installation. Road test time again, not happy with the speedo, out with the speedo visit ASAIT for speedo repair. Cable waiting on parts as I have a Celica alloy gearbox, one end Toyota. Top end Smiths. Parts did not arrive until after trip to Melb, so fit old cable for trip. 10 days before departure, final drive to check everything, reverse out of garage, brakes not releasing for 10—15 sec. can only be booster, as Master Cyl recently overhauled. Off with brake booster, down to Perth Brakes with strick instructions, it has to be repairs by following Wednesday. Wed, no phone call, Thursday I'm told it will be next week, Sunday was departure day, gurrr! Went to Perth brakes to purchase something that would do the job. The saving grace, I could borrow a recon VH 40J booster, to use and return when back in Perth. After spending the best part of Thursday making new mounting brackets, and Hydraulic pipes, we were mobile and ready to go—phew!!!!

Co Driver: In the Gingin newsletter early May, I offered to anybody if they were interested in a one way journey back from Melb., as my daughter had booked to go Co-driver to Melb. Within 2 days of notice, Anthony Robinson rang to say he would love to drive back to Perth. As it happened, due to work commitments, my daughter had to reverse co-driving duties, Anthony was okay with the swap. Ready to go 9am Sunday 3rd Sept we were on the road to Norseman, 700 kms away. I had planned approx. 700 kms legs, Norseman, Boarder Village, Wunddina, Murray Bridge, Baccus Marsh with easy Friday to Yarra Valley. Anthony queried BM, said he would organize the last overnight, the weather gods were on our side for 4 days sunny, with the breeze up our Coit, which made for excellent fuel econ-

90 Mile Straight stretch, Balladonia to Ciguna, Nullarbor Plain



Border Village



Driving towards Port Augusta SA





Madura Pass



Crossing the Nullarbor!

My Co-driver from Perth to Melbourne was outstanding, being from different ages and ed ucations, we talked and discussed every topic you could think of, Anthony, at fuel stops was the PR per-excellence! While I was refueling the car, Anthony was answering ques-tions from every Tom Dick and Harry. Thank you Anthony for your company for the 6 days

Yarra Valley National Meeting: Registration and check-in is from 3—4.30pm on the 8th Sept, followed by drinks at 6pm, sit down meal at 7pm. The seating arrangement were suit yourselves., and on this occasion it was one long table. Kath, Anthony and I were sitting with Vic, NSW members owing Talbots, Tigers and Alpines. As I have mentioned previously, WA Sunbeam members you need to seriously get off your butts and attend a National Meeting, its well worth it, even if you fly there and back. All National Meetings there is always undercover parking and wash facilities. After the last two days of rain, I made the time on Friday to wash the car, and shake the last week of dirt from the carpets ready for the big parade on Saturday morning on the forequarter of the Resort.

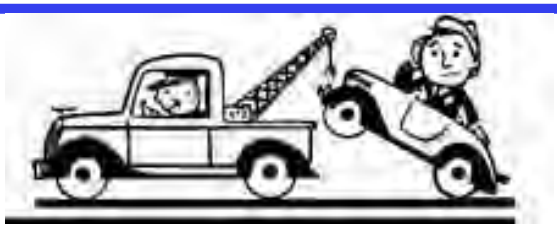




Saturday afternoon is free time, social ready for Saturday night dinner at a winery ap-prox. 30 kms away. Coaches were provided for transport to the Fergusson Winery, seating where you like rules apply. 10pm coaches take you back to the Resort, where we indulged in a nightcap with a few people to end the night.

To Be Continued..

The End



By Rick Harrison (Sunbeam Owners Club New South Wales)

