

## *Petrolheads in Paradise*

NEWSLETTER NO.1 MARCH 2012



### FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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As I write this, Matilda the TD is in Ron Hollis' tender care, whilst undergoing surgery for her severe senile incontinence problem. My various attempts at installing geriatric nappies made from bread baking tins, etc., were scorned and dismissed by local specialists as like trying to fix gangrene with a Band-Aid, so the plunge had to be taken. Major private parts had to be dispatched to a specialist automotive gynaecologist in Johannesburg, who performed a delicate procedure, which involved the transplant of a foreign (USA Chevy) body part. Happily, I am assured that this new internal organ will not only be invisible to the prying eyes of local purists and those perverted Concours-Beauty-Contest-judge-types, but that her embarrassing condition - previously beneath her - will now be well and truly behind her.

I mention all this because over the past couple of months I have been spending the odd hour or two in Ron's Bodge Engineering (in what surely needs to be re-named Gasoline Alley, in the Knysna industrial sites), taking the opportunity to tart-up some of Matilda's body bits and pieces whilst

the motor is out. I have been surprised and delighted by the number of visitors that pop in to see the cars in his workshop and then cross the alley to Norman Frost's super classic car showroom. Knysna's own brewery is also conveniently close-by and there is talk of the possibility of even more car and motorcycle enterprises re-locating to the alley which, when added to the other pool of classic car expertise available in the 'sites, makes Knysna an increasingly important national hub for classic car enthusiasts. All of which augurs very well for the future of our club!

The other thing, which has been confirmed over the last wee while, is the great camaraderie in the community of our local car clubs. For example, Tony Lyons-Lewis, having just recently completed a 3+ year restoration of his magnificent TC (which included the same Jo'burg procedure), volunteered to help Ron and act as the go-between, as it were. We are fortunate and I am very grateful. Whilst on the subject of fellowship, the annual joint-club tour is almost upon us. Sadly, Matilda won't be ready in time, so we'll be going "plastic" (again). No matter. Good food, wine and friendship beckon!

Finally, please diarise, if you haven't already, the GRMC MOTOR SHOW on Sunday 13th May at the usual venue. Please bring your classic and if you have more than one, bring 'em all! Convener Peter Pretorius and his enthusiastic team are planning a bumper event - bigger and better than last year's. This is your Club's annual charity Show. Please do your bit to make it a huge success and by so doing, spread a little happiness amongst those less fortunate members of our community.

Safe and happy driving (and watch out for the new fixed cameras in Sedgefield!). Cheers,

*Bunny*

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

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I am starting our first "Big" Torque for 2012 with good news. Our congratulations go to **Dennis and Gillian Dunlop** on their Golden wedding anniversary, which they celebrated on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

A very big thank you to the Committee and Members of the GRMC for the fabulous Woolies food hamper I received for Christmas filled with the most delicious goodies. I presume that the GRMC is now going to pay for me to go to Weigh-Less?

While reading the technical tip on overheating I was reminded of my very first trip to Cape Town from Knysna in the late 60's in a car which, if I think about it now, should probably not have been on the road. But what the hell, when one is young one has no fear. I managed to get as far as the top of Houwhoek Pass when I looked down at the temperature gauge only to find that the dial was in the red. Pulled off, opened the bonnet and the radiator cap flew off and I stood there covered in very dirty water. Fortunately a traffic cop who had been sitting under a tree a little way away, saw all this happening and came to my rescue. After topping the radiator up with water he then escorted me the rest of the way into Cape Town.

A request to all members. – If you know of any member who is ill or has passed away please inform our Secretary Glenda Cleland at [glenda.cleland62@gmail.com](mailto:glenda.cleland62@gmail.com)

Till the next time...happy and safe motoring.

*Christine*





*Grandpa's new GPS system*

## PARKING GARAGES

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I grew tired of driving into a parking garage with a left-hand drive 280SL, releasing my seat belt so that I could reach the quick-off handbrake to put it on, easing out of a low seat when there wasn't room to open the door fully, trotting round the car to the parking garage ticket-dispenser, and flashing an apologetic smile at the guy behind ... and another smile as I reversed the whole process to get back into the driver's seat. This was acceptable when I was 30 but more difficult to pull off now that I'm ... well ... never mind. I discovered I had the answer: a pick-up arm, which I had bought from a medical distributor for my mother. It acts like a long pair of tongs, for picking up things, which drop on the floor or putting on stockings etc. without bending down. Squeeze the handle, and the two prongs at the end come together. If I'm careful to park relatively close to the dispenser, I can lean across the seat, lower the window and extract the ticket. Bit more tricky on the way out 'cos you need a firm push to get the ticket into the slot, and if it drops out of the tongs, you're chasing the wind-blown bit of paper across the garage while the guys behind ... well, as I said, you can get away with it much better when you're 30.

*Bernd*

## GRMC EVENTS 2012

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Date	Event and Venue	Details
<b>March</b>		
		<a href="#">Human Rights Day – 21<sup>st</sup> March</a>
Mar 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday	Tour workshop day at Knysna Motor Strippers 08h30 to 12h30	Opportunity to use the lift and inspect your car before the tour. Free boerewors rolls ( BYOB).Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and MGCC
Mar 5 <sup>th</sup> to 9th Mon – Fri	Annual Tour	Fully Booked Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>	Breakfast Run to Café Francois	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet



Sunday	(Sedgefield)	there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
<b>April</b>		
		Easter – 6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> April / Family Day – 9 <sup>th</sup> April Freedom Day – 27 <sup>th</sup> April Austin-Healey Nationals – 18 <sup>th</sup> to 23 <sup>rd</sup> April April Triumph C.C visit Knysna 26 <sup>th</sup> April to 1 <sup>st</sup> May
April 12 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Pensioners lunch run to Pomodoro restaurant (Wilderness)	Leave Knysna Quays at 11h00 or meet there. Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and <u>MGCC</u> .
Apr 29 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Old Nick's. (Plettenberg Bay)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
<b>May</b>		
		Workers Day – 1 <sup>st</sup> May Knysna Festival of Speed – 12 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> May Milligan Rally
May 13 <sup>th</sup> Sun	GRMC car show	Knysna High School grounds 09h00 Organised by <u>GRMC</u> assisted by MGCC Members to be parked by 09h00
May 19 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup> Sat/Sun	Overnight event to P.E. to see the Last Night of the Proms. (In classics if possible)	Drive to PE on Saturday afternoon, attend show, dinner and stay over (Victoria B&B). Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and <u>MGCC</u> .
May 27 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Café Francois (Sedgefield)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
<b>June</b>		
		Youth Day – 16 <sup>th</sup> June
June 12 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Quiz Night at Belvidere Manor	TBA Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
June 24 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Old Nick's (Plettenberg Bay)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
<b>July</b>		
		London Olympics – 27 <sup>th</sup> July to 12 <sup>th</sup> August Goodwood Festival of Speed - 29 June- 1 July
July 14 <sup>th</sup> Saturday	Christmas in July Dinner at Scirocco Restaurant Knysna	Arrive at 18h30. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
July 21 <sup>st</sup> Saturday	Pensioner's run to the Elephant Park for brunch	Leave Knysna Quays at 10h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC</u> .
<b>July</b>		
July 29 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Café Francois (Sedgefield)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and



		<u>MGCC.</u>
<b><u>August</u></b>		
		National Women's day - 9 <sup>th</sup> August
August 21 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday	GRMC "Groggin" (possibly in Sedgefield)	TBA Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and MGCC.
Aug 26 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Old Nick's (Plettenberg bay)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
<b><u>September</u></b>		
		Goodwood Revival – 14 <sup>th</sup> to 16 <sup>th</sup> September Whales & Wheels Hermanus MG National Indaba in Clarens 21 <sup>st</sup> to 23 <sup>rd</sup> Heritage day – 24 <sup>th</sup> September
Sept 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday	Open workshop day at Knysna Motor Strippers	
Sept 11 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Bingo evening	Meet at Brenton Hill guest house at 18h30 sharp. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
Sept 29 <sup>th</sup> Saturday	Run to Oudtshoorn for the National Model Airshow.	Leave Knysna Quays at 08h30 Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and MGCC.
Sept 30 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Café Francois (Sedgefield)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
<b><u>October</u></b>		
Oct 14 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Economy run/Time trial and Braai at Glentana caravan park.	Leave Knysna Quays at 11h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
Oct 21 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	GRMC – AGM at Lake Pleasant Resort (Sedgefield)	Leave Knysna Quays at 11h30 or meet there. <u>GRMC</u> members only
Oct 28 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Old Nick's (Plettenberg Bay)	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
<b><u>November</u></b>		
Nov 18 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Bonnets-Up at Knysna Quays	TBA Open to members of <u>GRMC</u> and MGCC.
Nov 25 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	Breakfast Run to Café Francois	Leave Knysna Quays at 09h00 or meet there. Open to members of GRMC and <u>MGCC.</u>
Nov 30 <sup>th</sup> Friday	GRMC Christmas Dinner	<u>GRMC</u> members only
<b><u>December</u></b>		
		Day of Reconciliation – 16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup> December



## PAST EVENTS

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### GEORGE OLD CAR SHOW – SATURDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2012

The day started with an overcast sky and some light rain that had us all rushing to put our hoods up before leaving the Knysna Quays to travel to George for the show. A good mix of GRMC and MGCC members turned up and by the time we reached George the weather had brightened and we had sunshine for the rest of the day.

I left early to get to the show in time to help organise parking, but suffered a breakdown on the way. My thanks go to Ricky and Mark Cooper, Lionel Hewitt and Barry Giggins who kindly stopped and tried to rectify the problem. However it was to no avail and we had to call Gavin at KMS to come with the tow truck.

On arrival at the show (as a passenger in Barry's MGB) I discovered that although the organisers had allocated a space to us, they then allowed other individual entrants to park there. This was after many emails and phone calls to confirm that they would reserve our space for GRMC. So once again, I find myself offering apologies to the GRMC members who were promised parking with the club.

Other than this problem the show seemed to be a success and there were many interesting cars to be seen. Ron Hollis's magnificent Aston Martin (pictured below) was one of them.

*Jim Cleland*



### GYMKHANA - SUNDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2012

The decision to hold the Gymkhana at the Country Crescent Hotel in Plettenberg Bay proved to be the right one. The weather was excellent and the show jumping arena provided an excellent spot to set up the driving tests. Thirty-eight people arrived at the venue and there were eighteen entries to the Gymkhana. Some of the cars were used twice to cater for all those who wanted to compete. There were three tests, namely a "height and width drive through", "blindfold drive and



stop before the wall”, and a “blindfold figure of eight drive guided by the passenger”. I think the “wall test” was set too long, because none of the contestants came within two meters of the wall before stopping; other than the crafty ones who just kept on driving until they hit it and took the two metre penalty. (The wall was made of cardboard and polystyrene!)

After everyone had had a lot of fun, Graham Yendall who had toiled all day as a marshal, was the last contestant and won the event. I would like to record my thanks to Graham and Sylvia, Geoff Mangan, Peter Pretorius and Roger Fisher for their help in marshalling and scoring the event.

Lunch was an excellent three course meal and at R85 a head was really good value!

*Jim Cleland*



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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### CAR INSPECTIONS AT KNYSNA MOTOR STRIPPERS – SATURDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH

Those members attending the annual tour are invited to use the lift facility at KMS to inspect their vehicles before the event. We are grateful to Ricky, Gavin and Mark Cooper for their generous offer to let us use their facilities. Inspections will take place between 08h30 and 12h30.

### ANNUAL TOUR – 5<sup>TH</sup> TO 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH

The annual tour will take place between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

### SAVVA TECHNICAL TIP 57 – OVERHEATING PROBLEMS

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We are heading into a hot time of the year and the enemy of old cars will again be raising its ugly head – overheating.

Recently I was reminded of this when a friend purchased a comparatively modern car, a lovely 1967 MGB GT. All went well except it was getting a tad warm. Against better advice and judgment he went the usual route of fitting a new thermostat, back flushing, adding copious amounts of expensive additives etc. etc., all to no avail. After trying everything possible he reverted to what he should have done in the first place and that was to have the radiator professionally cleaned or the core replaced. He eventually replaced the core and his problem was solved.



We have to keep in mind that although cars like this MGB are 45 years old - how many liters of suspect water has been added to the radiator over these years. How clean was this water or the containers used?

I recall as a youngster when the family went on out of town trips it was common to see relatively modern cars (of the day) on the side of the road “cooking”. I think the problem in those days was that vehicles were made for countries with cooler climates and shipped to places like the RSA without much thought for our hotter weather.

So where are we today? Some 40 to 80 years later we expect these same cars, which were often marginal when new to handle our hot weather - well it’s not going to happen. Our suggestion is to start with the radiator. Don’t waste money feeding additives to it – rather give it to a specialist radiator company, let them look at the number of cores and the general condition of them and if necessary replace or increase them.

If the car was manufactured before pressurised systems became standard consider pressurising it to say 3 to 4 pounds. It’s comparatively easy for a modern water cap and receptacle to be fitted to an early radiator whilst they are recoring or refurbishing it. In many cars an overflow bottle can be fitted which upgrades the system to a “closed” one as fitted to modern cars. An ideal overflow bottle/tank is the brass one originally fitted to early Minis and 1100’s.

## SAVVA TECHNICAL TIP 58 – DIRTY FUEL TANKS

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It’s not our policy to promote individual suppliers however every now and then our attention is drawn to someone who is able to offer an unusual and/or specialized service that could benefit the restorer.

A problem many of us have had, are having, or will have, is the rejuvenating of sick fuel tanks, especially those that have been standing around for some years gathering rust and scale. Even relatively new tanks can develop a rust build- up, which can be bothersome. Most modern manufacturers have solved this problem by using a plastic/polyurethane material for tanks.

This problem is also very common with motorcycle fuel tanks, which for some unknown reason seem to be even more vulnerable to corrosion than their counter parts are in cars. Some years ago I had this very problem with a motorcycle tank and the solution was to line it with a product manufactured by 3M. I believe this product was originally designed for the coating of aircraft petrol tanks. There are however two problems with this, firstly, the price of this goo was prohibitive and only available in 5 liter containers. The other was that the preparation was messy as one had to use acetone or something like that to clean the old gunk off.

As a simple solution, I was recently contacted by a gentleman whose business is the cleaning coating and rebuilding of petrol tanks. If they are too far-gone he repairs or builds replacements. His claim to fame is that in thirty years he has never had a comeback.

Should you need assistance or further information about this service he is based in Pinetown and his contact details are:

Dean van Doorn, Telephone 031 7011868, Email [rads2go@telkomsa.net](mailto:rads2go@telkomsa.net)



P.s. you may recall Tip 48 in which we were singing the praises of DIY electronic ignition units called Accuspark that fit most popular English cars. We have been advised that Steve Woodward from the Crankhandle club is now importing them and keeping a goodly stock at R495.00 each. Steve can be found at 021 – 6834960 or [woodward@icon.co.za](mailto:woodward@icon.co.za). This saves the problem of importing them yourself.

## RON HICKMAN

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SOUTH AFRICAN-BORN RON HICKMAN IS A NATURALLY GIFTED DESIGNER AND MUSICIAN WHO -- DESPITE HAVING HAD NO FORMAL TRAINING IN ART, DESIGN OR ENGINEERING -- WENT ON TO DESIGN THE LOTUS ELAN AND THE BLACK & DECKER WORKMATE. SALES OF THE LATTER NOW TOTAL ABOUT 95 MILLION. ANDRÉ LOUBSER TELLS THE STORY . . .

When Helena Neethling's father's farm, Bruinklip, (Brown Stone) in the Riviersonderend district, about 100 miles from Cape Town in South Africa, went bankrupt in 1927 the young woman had no intention of remaining in the area. Nor, when she decided to take up a teaching post in Greytown, Natal, about 1000 miles away, did she imagine that she would one day produce a son who would design a famous sports car, as well as an innovative workbench that would sell by the millions world wide. Nor did she imagine that her son would one day be awarded an OBE and in so doing would come face to face with the Queen of England. Such thoughts must have been the furthest from the mind of a young woman intent of establishing a new career far from home.

In Greytown the plucky Afrikaans-speaking (derived from Dutch) farm girl met and married bookkeeper, Cyril Hickman. They produced five children and second son, Ronald Price, was born on October 21, 1932.

At Greytown junior and senior schools the young Hickman displayed a natural musical talent and became a competent pianist and violinist. At age 13 he became organist in the local Methodist Church and by the time he turned 17 he was an Associate of the Trinity College of Music, London, with a Pianoforte Performer's Diploma

The entrepreneurial young Hickman was also passionate about cars, carving models from pieces of wood and drawing and painting cars, which he sold to the owners to earn extra pocket money.

After leaving school he joined the Department of Justice in Natal to train as a magistrate. For the next six years he studied law, attended cases in various Magistrates Courts and carried out civil administration of all kinds.

However, Ron soon decided that he was more interested in cars than a law career and like many young South Africans headed for the Northern Hemisphere to gain experience in a wider world. Consequently, at the end of 1954, aged 22, he borrowed £100 from his father and set sail for England aboard the Winchester Castle. Like all good South Africans he headed for Earls Court.

Thanks to his musical background, Ron knew but one name in London -- Boosey & Hawkes in Regent Street, the world's foremost manufacturer of brass instruments and drums and classical music publisher. As funds had dwindled to a mere £34, Ron needed a job and they seemed the first logical port of call. As luck would have there was a vacancy in the accounts department and the young colonial was asked to report to the appropriately named Miss B Sharp.



After six months, he heard that Briggs Motor Bodies in Dagenham had placed an advert calling for clay modellers. Since the location of the company indicated a connection with Ford, Ron applied. Fortunately he had made two novel scale model cars in his spare time and took them along for the interview. One was Ron's idea of what the next Morris Oxford should look like and the other a stylish Bentley. After an initial turning down, Briggs contacted him again and offered him the job.

Shortly after joining Briggs, Ron found himself in hot water. He had already contracted to cover the Earls Court Motor Show for the South African 'Outspan' magazine and Colin Neale, Ford's chief stylist, seconded to Briggs, became concerned that Hickman was a Fleet St spy and that all Ford's secret new designs would be leaked. Fortunately the young South African was able to convince his boss that this was not the case.

Then he had a lucky break when Standard-Triumph headhunted several members of Ford's design team. Convinced that Hickman, who had shown promise, would also go, Neale offered him a job as stylist and a three months in house training course under the guidance of Eric Archer ensued. This was quite an achievement for a young man without any formal qualifications.

Just as Ron was being trained as a stylist, the Austin-Healey Sprite was being developed and this prompted Neale to think in terms of an Anglia 105E-based sports car primarily for the American market. Hickman was asked to work on the project 'on the quiet' since Neale doubted that the funding of the project would be approved by the Product Planning Committee, headed by Terry Beckett, later to become Sir Terrence for services to the motor industry.

Styling was radical with 'mid-ship' fins forming the b-posts and which supported the 'Targa' top (nearly 10 years before Porsche). Plastic moulded bumpers were to be incorporated as well as a reverse slope rear screen with wind down glass. When the product planners were eventually shown the project it was canned.

The feeling was, possibly correctly, that an English Ford sports car wouldn't sell in the US and that well-known British cars, like Austin-Healey, MG and Triumph, already had a foothold on the other side of the Atlantic -- particularly in the lucrative Californian market.

One evening in December 1956 at the Overseas Visitors Club in Earls Court Ron was introduced to two hopeful fellow South African car builders, Willie Meissner and Bob van Niekerk. After a few beers they invited him to their nearby flat where they were working on a quarter scale model of their dream car the GSM Dart. Ron liked the styling and gave it a thumbs up.

During his three years at Briggs, which during that time had become a wholly owned subsidiary of Ford, Ron worked on the Anglia 105E, the Consul Classic, the Classic-Capri and the Zephyr/ Zodiac Mk111 range. After meeting Colin Chapman at the 1956 Earls Court Motor Show, he was asked to submit ideas on the proposed Elite, to be based on and influenced by the Lotus 11. Designer Peter Kirwan-Taylor had already submitted his design but Chapman was not quite convinced. He felt he needed further input and when he asked Ron to visit him at Lotus HQ he took along two colleagues from Ford -- New Zealander John Frayling and Peter Cambridge. Frayling, who in Ron's opinion was the world's best sculptor/ modeller, agreed to build a model on a part-time basis. Ron offered his own ideas and from this team effort the Elite was born.



Ron eventually joined Lotus some two years later in 1958 and his first task was to get the delayed Elite into production. Many customers had already paid deposits and if cars weren't built and delivered Lotus would have been in a spot of bother. Under Ron's guidance Elite production got going and it wasn't long before he was appointed director and general manager of Lotus Developments.

On April 4, 1959, he married fellow Natalian, Helen Godbold who was nursing at a London hospital and John Frayling was best man. Three children Karen, Marcus and Janeen followed.

Ron's next project for Lotus was to design and develop a two seater, the S2 (Sport 2) as a replacement of the non-profitable Seven and Colin Chapman had proposed an open-topped car with monocoque in GRP.

The rather basic Austin-Healey Sprite rival soon progressed into a more sophisticated car. Chapman had suggested a flat windscreen and side screens but Ron gave it a curved windscreen and wind-up windows with counter balance mechanism from the Austin London taxi. Ron then brought into the picture the moulded bumpers intended for his original Ford sports car and retractable headlamps were also added. Suspension was to be fully independent and disc brakes were to be fitted all round. The fibreglass body was a unique one-piece 'Unimould' creation which was fitted on to the chassis by 16 bolt fixings, using special Hickman designed bobbins to distribute the load evenly into the fibreglass. The backbone chassis was constructed from pressed sheet steel to form an elongated X and the substantial centre spine gave the unit massive strength. A standard Anglia 105E, 997cc unit was intended but was soon replaced by the 1500cc Classic engine.

As a pushrod engine wasn't an option for a car of this nature, Colin Chapman asked Harry Mundy, technical editor of *Autocar* to design a twin-overhead camshaft head to fit the standard Ford block. With Weber carburettors an output of 100 bhp was claimed from a capacity of 1498 cc. Only 22 Elans were built in this form and then capacity was increased to 1558 cc, with an increase of 5 bhp, to comply with the new 1600 cc sports car racing regulations. Ron named the car the Elan, which followed Eleven and Elite and triggered subsequent Lotus names beginning with the letter 'E'.

Colin Chapman had discussions with Ford to market the Elan through its dealer network (shades of GSM Darts and Flamingos sold through Ford dealers in SA) but when some heavyweights from the Blue Oval heard about the pending deal they stopped it. It was Ford only from Ford dealers and intruders were unwelcome, particularly those with fibreglass bodies! Understandably Chapman was devastated.

Two issues then dovetailed to the advantage of the innovative Chapman and Hickman duo. Ford appointed the lateral thinking Walter Hayes as its PR director with the express instruction to liven up Ford's conservative mass-produced family car image.

Hayes realised that the Mundy designed twin-overhead cam had great potential and saw Lotus as a joint venture partner to assist Ford in driving its new marketing programme forward. Chapman felt that the engine should be fitted the Anglia but Hayes told him of the forthcoming, bigger Charles Thompson-designed Cortina and felt that the engine would be better suited to the new Ford model.



There was much excitement at Lotus when a Cortina was delivered under wraps before it had been announced to the world at large. Ron vividly recalls an excited Chapman running up the stairs to ask him to come and have a look at the new Ford. Work on the Lotus version started immediately and first improvement of several was a new dashboard with instruments taken from the Elan dash and front quarter bumpers from the Thames van.

A few months later the new engine had a great début when Jim Clark's Lotus 23 literally ran circles round the opposition at the Nurburgring. This successful beginning led to a deal for Lotus to build the Lotus-Cortina which went on to become a legend thanks largely to the sideways, three-wheeled antics of Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart, Sir John Whitmore, Bob Olthoff and some other well-known drivers. Lotus had OE parts supply status from Ford and the two companies, one Goliath and other David, enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. It also laid the foundation for Ford's major involvement for the next many years in motor sport including the GT40 and the highly successful DFV Grand Prix engine.

Following the successful launch of the Elan, Ron started work on the stretched Plus 2 version with rear seats. At that time, in 1963, to coincide with Ford's future plans, Ron had produced a concept drawing of a mid-engined Ford V-8 powered Lotus. Ford, as part of its intended, new 'sporting image' wanted to build a racing sports car capable of winning the prestigious Le Mans 24 Hour. Rather than re-invent the wheel, Henry Ford offered to purchase the Ferrari company but the 'Old Man' couldn't stomach the thought of a Ford-Ferrari as the cars would be known. Nor did he welcome hordes of Ford investigative bean counters invading his territory. In the end the offer was turned down and in a huff Henry had to go back to the drawing board. Ford management accepted the fact that their own people in the US had neither the ability, experience nor knowledge to build sports racing cars and that the Brits were ahead in the race. British companies Cooper, Lola and Lotus were short-listed as likely partners in view of their collective successes. As Cooper had neither the facilities nor resources they were eliminated. Ford felt that Colin Chapman was a maverick with his own agendas and he too was dropped. That left Eric Broadley, who had already built a Ford powered, mid-engined car dubbed the Lola MK6, styled by John Frayling. The car which was raced for the first time in mid-1963 at Silverstone by Tony Maggs and two weeks later in the Nurburgring 1000 Km race (the writer was there) by Tony and the late Bob Olthoff, was basically what Ford had in mind.

History will tell us that Broadley entered into a deal with Ford and sold them his two MK6s, which were to become the forerunner to the GT40. Due to a clash of wills, mainly with regard to Broadley wanting to build a monocoque out of aluminium and Ford insisting on steel, there was parting of ways and Broadley went on to develop the Lola T70 just down the road from Ford Advanced Vehicles in Slough. Naturally Chapman had hoped that Ford would choose his Hickman styled car but when he lost the contract he suggested that they build the car anyway. The mid-engined car, as can be seen in the photo, is clearly the forerunner of the Europa, the design of which was fine tuned by the ever-present John Frayling.

Ron then played a major role in having rules for the smaller car manufacturers simplified by forthcoming US Federal regulations, in particular those pertaining to open cars. As his job at Lotus had by then become largely administrative he resigned in 1967 to set up his own freelance design company. It was a bold move particularly as Ford had asked Ron to return to head up the



development of the Capri. As Ron had virtual free rein at Lotus he didn't cherish the thought of returning to a large organisation and commuting on a regular basis to Ford of Germany.

#### BREAKTHROUGH WAITING IN THE WINGS

Unbeknown to Ron a breakthrough was waiting in the wings. In 1961 he and Helen had started furnishing their house in Nazeing, Essex and had bought some Swedish whitewood chairs. He used one on which to saw a sheet of plywood and to his dismay cut into their expensive new purchase. The next day he made up a steel framed wooden bench with a huge vice so that a piece of timber could be held in a fixed position and in so doing laid the foundation of what was to become the Black & Decker Workmate.

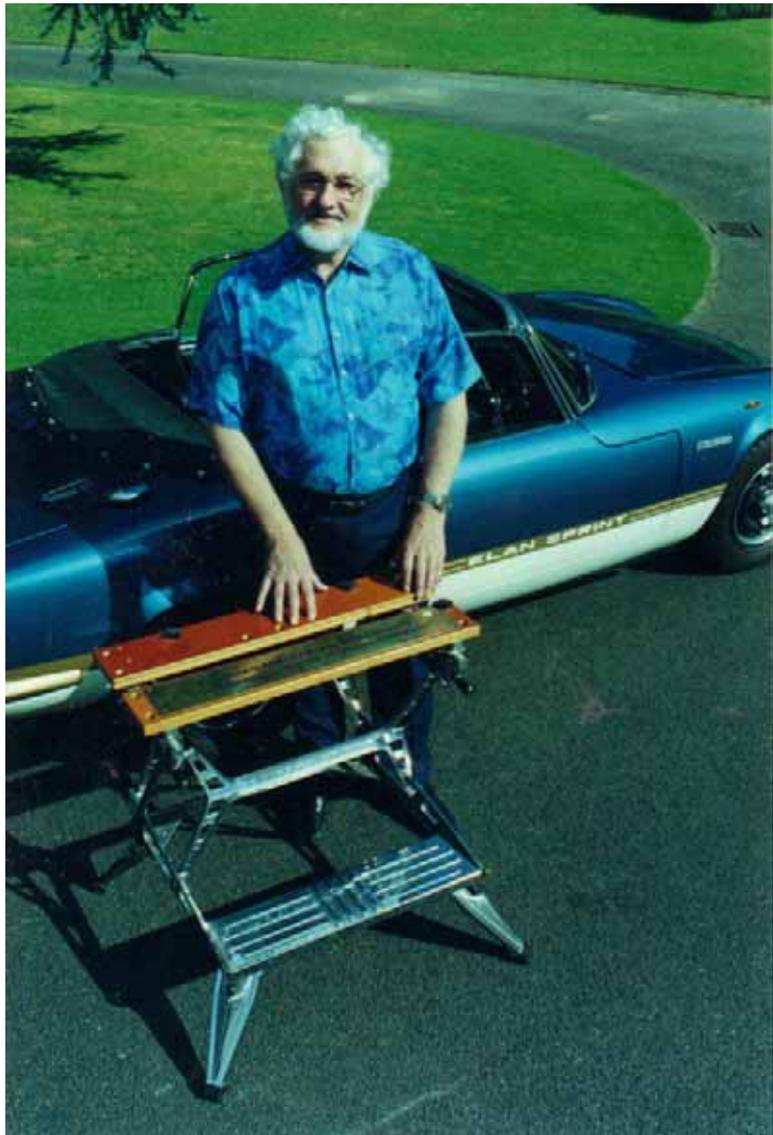
As is the case with many designs and patents they evolve over a period of time. Ron's new device was developed gradually over a seven-year period (1961 to 1968) and the third prototype was fitted with folding frames, which resembled wishbones from the Elan.

Finally, when satisfied with his design, Ron hawked it around and called on eight British workshop equipment and tool manufacturers who all rejected it in turn.

Stanley Works (Great Britain) Ltd of Sheffield wrote as follows: 'Our investigations in Europe produced a very luke-warm reaction. In general, it was felt that the potential could be measured in dozens rather than hundreds.' The letter was appropriately dated April 1, 1968!

As Ron says that decision by the Stanley management was the engineering equivalent of refusing to sign up the Beatles!

Believing in the Afrikaans saying, *Aanhouer wen* (those who persevere win), Ron battled on by selling his workbench by mail order and at exhibitions for the next four years. Only then did Black & Decker sign up for the European rights and yet later their American parent company turned it down twice.



C30/2A

**STANLEY**

# STANLEY WORKS (Great Britain) LTD

WOODSIDE SHEFFIELD 3 ENGLAND

Directors: G. D. TANNETT (Chairman & Managing) F. W. BALDREY W. M. DINGLEY A. G. JONES W. R. MILLS R. C. FRASE (U.S.A.) J. L. SKIDMORE (Secretary)

CABLES: STANLYWORX SHEFFIELD 3  
TELEX: 54150. TELEPHONE: SHEFFIELD 78678

Your Ref. RH/EC  
Our Ref. NLW/CD

1st April, 1968  
*a very appropriate date!*

R. P. Hickman, Esq.,  
Director,  
Hickman Designs Limited,  
Badgers,  
Middle Street,  
Nazeing,  
Essex.

Dear Mr. Hickman,

Following our telephone message to your wife on Friday, 29th March, this is to confirm that we have completed our investigation and have reluctantly decided that we do not wish to manufacture and market your patented Multiwork-unit.

Our reasons are as follows:

1. We have found your estimates and costings to be realistic, but we calculate that, with overheads and distribution costs, plus the trade discounts applicable to the ironmongery trade, the retail price of the unit would need to be at least £15. As you know, this price will bring your unit very much closer to the price of full size work benches than originally anticipated, and this will restrict demand.
2. Our investigations in Europe produced a very lukewarm reaction. In general, it was felt that the potential could be measured in dozens rather than in hundreds.
3. We believe the marketing suggestions in your letter, dated 26th March, are an essential to achieve success. However, we feel that we would be unable to divert sufficient sales effort from hand tools to devote the necessary time and energy which your project deserves. In essence, we believe that your Multiwork-unit could be best sold by an organisation which could give your project one hundred per cent of its attention.

!!



To date some 95 million Workmates have been sold worldwide and it's no secret than Ron Hickman has made a great deal of money from his invention. Paradoxically he's often had to defend his patent rights from the very people who turned it down in the first place.

In 1977, the Hickmans moved to Jersey in the Channel Islands and Ron spent three years building their magnificent mansion. Although he did a great deal of the design work and scale model building work himself he eventually commissioned an architect to turn his concept into reality. Named Villa Devereux, it enjoys a breathtaking view over St Brelade's Bay. Three storeys high, and covering some 1 886m<sup>2</sup>, set on four acres of land, it's now a local landmark and in 1987 featured on a Jersey postage stamp.

Ron owns an Elan and an Elite (naturally!) as well as a huge green and silver 1931 Cadillac V-16 tourer that belonged to the Maharaja of Tikari.

In 1994, Ron was awarded an OBE to 'Services for Industrial Innovation', the first time this citation had been used. So off it was to Buckingham Palace in top hat and tails! Not bad for a Banana boy who went north in 1954 with £100 borrowed from his dad.

*Submitted by Roger Davis*

## LETTERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

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There is a Man by the name of Barry Ashmole. He is a star at forming metal into car panels and is one of the few that are prepared to pass on this knowledge, at a price of course! He holds courses for students in Stellenbosch (3 days) however I have seduced him into coming to George and holding a course/s here at my home as I have the space and equipment.

Certain members of our club/s have expressed interest in attending, for example Ron, Dennis and Ricky and others.

I thought that others might well be interested in learning and perhaps the next news letter might "advertise the idea" to the members.

He only takes on 4 students at a time so as to ensure a hands on situation and the cost for the 3 days is R4500.00. A lot of money but a lot of skill in a dying art to pass on.

I am more than happy to let members come to my home to learn, the more the merrier. If any need further info they can call me on 0823319477.

Cheers

Lew

## INTERESTING WEBSITES

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For buying and selling classic cars and spares.

[www.classiccars.co.za](http://www.classiccars.co.za)

[www.savva.org.za](http://www.savva.org.za)

[www.readmanual.com/cars/](http://www.readmanual.com/cars/)



## EMAILS TO THE EDITOR

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Hi Christine, for those of us who love Morgans, I have been sent great pictures of a very recent factory visit by Bill Noble. Please put the link in Small Torque at the end of the month. (Of note are the new +8 and 3-Wheeler).

<http://www.pbase.com/wnoble/mmcvist>

Many thanks,

Cheers,

Bunny

## CONDOLENCES

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Our condolences to Ricky and Colleen on the passing away of Colleen's father Colin Underwood at the beginning of February. Our thoughts are with you both.

## NEW MEMBERS

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The Garden Route Motor Club welcomes Rick Zerwick, George Brown and Cedric Parker and their wives to the club. We hope you will enjoy many outings with us.

## SICK BAY

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Wishing Peter Pretorius a speedy recovery after undergoing back surgery.



## BIRTHDAYS

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*The following members celebrate their birthdays during March. We wish you all a very happy birthday.*

Jill Bourlay, Jose Davidson, Nita Davis and John McCallum.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2012

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Bunny Mentz	Chairman	084 300 0990	zambezi.collection@gmail.com
Lionel Hewitt	Deputy-Chairman	044 3821986	lionel.rose@telkomsa.net.
Glenda Cleland	Membership Secretary	083 258 4344	jcleland@icon.co.za
Jim Cleland	Events	083 283 8141	jcleland@icon.co.za
Stuart Jones	Treasurer	044 3826298	stuartjones1@telkomsa.net
Neville Mayhew	Dating	044 5333158	jenevill@iafrica.com
Christine Finlay	Newsletter	044 3821368	finlayc@telkomsa.net
Alister Gibb	Assistant to Events	044 384 1723	gibbae@mweb.co.za
Mike Griffiths	Database / SAVVA	044 381 0031	griffith@iafrica.com
Geoff Mangan	Assistant to Events	044 343 2704	mangang@telkomsa.net
Duncan Miller	Assistant to Treasurer	044 382 6332	dunclare@telkomsa.net
Peter Pretorius	Car Show Organiser	044 533 5114	peterp@epweb.co.za

**The deadline for submissions for the May newsletter is the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

