

# Chapter 11

2003

## Our Golden Anniversary

The year's celebrations began with an official launch at the clubrooms on 19 January. Publicity for the day included a full-page article in *The Advertiser* of Saturday 11 January, featuring an interview with David Searles and Barry Frost and a photo of David's 1928 Austin 7, and radio interviews by Fran Williams.

Despite the temperature hovering around 40°C, it was an outstanding success, with 150 attending. Ralph Drage's *President's Preamble* in *Austin 7 Journals* 164, reported, in part:

What a magnificent start to our 50th birthday, which kicked off on Sunday 19 January at the Clubrooms. I felt very honoured to be involved with a club whose members are prepared to celebrate as we did that afternoon. I must admit that in the lead up to the event, I had real concerns about how the afternoon would go; these grew stronger as the day went on as only a few people presented themselves and their cars for registration.

However, these concerns were ill founded. Despite the high temperature, there were more people at the Clubrooms than ever before, with current and past members and families – even some general public came after seeing the articles in *The Advertiser*. The display of cars in the car park was excellent.

The following is edited from Ralph's welcoming speech.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome The Mayor of the City of Charles Sturt, Mr Harold Anderson OAM JP, life members, current members and previous members and visitors, to the launch of the Austin 7 Club of SA's 50th Birthday.

I for one am extremely proud to be associated with a club that became well known and respected very early in its existence and has been able to maintain those virtues for half a century. I feel very privileged to be the President of the Club in such a memorable year.

The Club was formed in 1953 by a group of A7 enthusiasts who wanted to get the most out of their famous little cars – hence the name of the club. With a real interest in motor sport, they set about

building A7 specials, based on A7 components and anything else that they could use, in competition events such as mud trials and gymkhanas as well as 9 chain and ¼ mile sprints. Circuit racing at Port Wakefield, the only racetrack in SA at that time, soon followed.

Whilst CAMS (the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports) was also formed 50 years ago, it wasn't until 1957 that our club became a member of that organisation and this has been retained since then.

With speed events, and eventually racing, being the main focus of the club from its beginning, a group were needed to record the individual times of all competitors in each event. They say, "Necessity is the mother of all inventions". Well these guys (and girls) had the need to find ways of timing several vehicles on the track at one time, and had to develop ways of doing so – which they did. One of the early tools was the big timing clock that was

built by Bruce Ide, one of our long serving past members.

This group of dedicated helpers, the *Austin 7 Club Timing Team*, have grown over the years to become very well known in the racing fraternity for their innovativeness and professionalism. Today they are called upon to work at all high-level motor sport events both within SA and Interstate. Some of the meetings they have officiated at are: the Australian Grand Prix, both in Adelaide and Melbourne, the Clipsal 500, the Asia-Pacific LeMans race, rallycross, the Australian motorcycle Grand Prix at Phillip Island and Eastern Creek and major races at the Calder Thunderdome. They also time Superkart and motorcycle circuit races. *Barry Frost*, who heads up this Timing Team, is a Life Member of our club and a Past President. He has also been the National Chief Timekeeper for CAMS since 1976 and, with his team, has officiated at over 500 race meetings.

**Motoring** [www.theadvertiser.com.au/motoring](http://www.theadvertiser.com.au/motoring)



**Austin power**

A group of motoring enthusiasts has spent the past 50 years looking after the baby of the British-built Austin family, writes **STUART INNES**.

**E**IGHTY years ago, the world embraced a new car that was a proper automobile, albeit scaled down, and very affordable – the baby Austin 7.

Fifty years ago in a Glenelg shed, Adelaide Austin 7 enthusiasts said it was time to formalise their backyard gatherings to create a club and so the Austin 7 Club of South Australia was born. This month, it celebrates its 50th anniversary.

"More and more people got involved, the club grew and meetings went from that shed to halls in Norwood, then the city," says club stalwart Barry Frost.

"In 1974, on our 21st birthday, we got our own clubhouse at Tapleys Hill Rd, Seaton.

"We have monthly meetings, social activities, we run a spare parts service for Austin 7s and we have drive days."

In England, Sir Herbert Austin (later Lord Austin) had the idea of building a small car that would attract people who otherwise could afford only a motorbike and sidecar. That was in 1922 and about 300,000 were built by 1928.

The cars were simple but, by standards of the time, not fluff. They had a four-cylinder, 700cc engine of about 100hp (7.5kW) at 2400rpm. They were small – a wheelbase of 190cm, a tapered footwell, spindly wheels, front beam axle and weighed only 300kg. And they proved useful in hotting up for motor sport.

The first Australian Grand Prix – at Phillip Island, Victoria, on March 26, 1928 – was won by an Austin 7 driven by Arthur Waite. He held off a field of race cars which included Bugatti, Aston Martin, Opel and Riley. The *Australian Grand Prix* history book, published in 1988 by R & T Publishing, says Waite had left Adelaide to serve in Gallipoli, won a Military Cross, married Sir Herbert's daughter and joined the Austin firm.

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TOP: David Searles (right) and Barry Frost with David's 1928 Austin 7.

ABOVE: A 1922 version of the English-built baby Austin 7.

He returned to Australia in 1927 to work at Austin's Melbourne distributor and on hearing of the Grand Prix asked for a car to be sent out. It was

a supercharged version and it won the day. It was motor sport's use of Austin 7s that gave the SA club its momentum. The late Garrie Cooper based his first special on an A7 when he started his Adelaide-based Elfin works. He went on to become the largest maker of racing and sports cars in Australia.

Mr Frost, 62, of Findon, has been an Austin 7 Club member since 1958 and president twice, one term lasting 15 years.

"Although we had been built mainly on motor sport, about 25 years ago there was an upsurge of preserving Austin 7s," he says. The club now has 310 members with a register of 45 Austin 7s but also other cars, many of them Austin, such as A30.

But the club is still heavily involved in motor sport, occasionally running race meetings, but also having a time-keeping team that oversees all major motor sport in SA, including the Clipsal 500. Mr Frost has become national chief timekeeper for CAMS.

On Sunday, January 19, the public and former members are invited to a ceremony to mark the club's 50-year anniversary. Charles Sturt mayor Harold Anderson will launch the activities at the club's headquarters, 262 Tapleys Hill Rd, Seaton, from 2pm. A display of Austin 7s will help mark the occasion.

**Up to the challenge**

**D**AVID Searles says driving an Austin 7 is a challenge – and that's what's good about it.

"You have to keep your concentration levels right up and allow for braking distances, especially for traffic lights," he says of the brand's modest braking and acceleration powers.

"It makes you very aware of what's going on around you."

"Austin 7s are an interesting vehicle to drive. They are reasonably noisy. It makes you fully aware you are doing some motoring. It's seat-of-the-pants driving."

Mr Searles, 57, of Woodville, was persuaded to join the Austin 7 Club 29 years ago. He bought his first Austin, a 15, in 1965, and has added a second 10 and a 7 to his collection.

"My 7 is a 1928 model and I've had it about seven years," he says.

"It's a maroon tourer with black guards. It's pretty well preserved."

**Stuart Innes**

**more cars more motoring more mileage**

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The Advertiser [www.theadvertiser.com.au](http://www.theadvertiser.com.au) Saturday, January 11, 2003 3

Barry, along with *Tony* and *Glenda Grove*, *Tony Morgan*, *Fran Williams* and *Bruce Went* in 2000 received the Prime Minister's Australian Sports Medal. Prior to that, in 1995, Bruce Went had been awarded the first ever CAMS Service Star. We are extremely proud to have such a well-known, dedicated and professional group of people in our club.

*Glenda Grove* has not only been involved with the timing team. She, along with a few other women whose husbands raced, were concerned about crashes on the race track resulting in their husbands being seriously burnt. As a result, they formed a group called *Women for Wheels* and set about raising money to buy a vehicle that could be set up as a fire tender. This vehicle, which is manned mainly by experienced firemen and women, has been seen at every race meeting around the State for many years, thanks to the foresight of Glenda and a few others.

We are also lucky to have had well-known motorsport personalities as members, some of whom were;

*Garrie Cooper* who, after having built several A7 specials, designed and built Elfin sports and racing cars. He successfully raced them in Australia and overseas.

*John Walker* was a well-known and successful driver. He raced Elfin, Match and Lola racing cars, from 1.5 litres to Formula 5000, in Australia and overseas. He won the Australian Grand Prix and was the Gold Star winner, as Australia's Champion racing driver, in 1979.

*Malcolm Ramsay* was another successful driver of touring cars, and Elfin sports and racing cars. He was the co-founder of Birrana Racing Cars and won the Gold Star Championship with his team from 1994-2000.

*Tony Grove*, who has been actively involved in the club in many ways almost since its inception, raced his Ausford – a combination of an A7 and a Ford Prefect. He is a life member of our club as well as the current (2003) President of the Sporting Car Club. He has been a regular course commentator at Mallala, Adelaide International Raceway, Sandown and Winton race tracks.

Whilst motor sport was the prime driving force within the club for many years, it has waned in recent years for a number of reasons. However, we still have members who actively participate in speed events with their cars – although there is only one A7 still on the South Australian racing circuits. It is with us here today.

We also have an enthusiastic group who promote the racing scene very well and, with the assistance of other club members, run one race meeting a year. It is in September and has been an annual event for the past 43 years. It has become known by drivers and officials alike as the event of the year not to be missed. This accolade is a testament to those members who organise and run the meeting.

The majority of members in recent years are into the restoration and

preservation of historic vehicles, such as many of those seen in the car park outside today. Most of these members don't look upon preservation as meaning keeping their cars in concourse condition, it means keeping them in good working order so they can be used. Many of these cars are used on the touring events the club has each month, or on runs and rallies organised by other clubs and organisations. Our club also organises longer trips for these vehicles at times. For our 21st Birthday in 1974, three A7s drove to Ayers Rock and return in 21 days – quite a feat back in those days. It wasn't a trouble free run, with things like broken axles and crankshafts having to be replaced along the way.

In recent years we have taken our oldies to Tassie on three occasions – one would think that we really like it there – and to Bright in Victoria and along the Great Ocean Road, just to name a few.

There is one annual tradition that has been upheld for the last 49 years. It is what we know as the Border Run, where we arrange to meet members of our sister club in Victoria somewhere along the border on a long weekend. It is good to get together once a year with those who have similar interests.

Our club has had some very motivated people with great vision over the years. It is due to them that we have these clubrooms which were purchased in 1974, and have since become freehold and been updated. It provides a great place for the different sections of the club to meet and somewhere to permanently house our A7 spare parts.

The objective of our Club is to foster social, technical and sporting activities of people interested in A7s, Vintage and Post Vintage vehicles of any other marque, and motor sports in general.

With this in mind, mid last year we were pleased to be able to assist in the formation of a new group of enthusiasts. They are a group of young people who own rotary-engined cars. These vehicles had not been catered for by any other club in the past. We were looking for a younger generation of motoring enthusiasts that we could help foster, and they were looking for someone to take them under their wing and help them with their interests. Their first meeting, which was advertised on the Internet only, was in August last year with

## 2003 COMMITTEE

**President** – Ralph Drage

**Vice President** – Barry Frost

**Treasurer** – Lyn Clerke

**Secretary** – Fran Williams

**Assist. Secretary** – Barry Frost

**Comp. Sec.** – Tony Morgan

**Touring Coordinator** –

Graham Buesnel

**Spares** - David Grear

**Registrar** – Geoff Stephens

**Property Officer** – Gerry Lang

then Trevor Clerke

**Committee** – David Searles,

David Winfield,

David Hall

**Delegates:**

CAMS – Tony Morgan

FHMC – David Searles

quite a few enthusiasts turning up. Now there are 30 members going under the SARotors banner who meet monthly and hold their own cruises. I am sure that the association between them and the older established part of this club will reap benefits for all in years to come.

Club focus has not only been on motor sport or restoration, it has also been on benefiting the community. In the past we were involved in the News-Castrol Safety Drives; today we actively raise funds for the Hanson Foundation, a Cancer Research organisation. We are also planning a defensive driving course for some of our members later this year.

Well that's a snippet of the things that have happened over the past 50 years. To celebrate the momentous occasion of our 50th Birthday, there are a number of planned events throughout this year and into next year. I would like to acknowledge the 50th Birthday group for the work they have put into planning the celebratory events that we are all going to have the opportunity to enjoy this year. The group comprises *Dave Hall* (Chairperson) *Geoff* and *Bev Carroll*, *Trevor* and *Lynn Clerke*, *Julia Johnson* and *Ashleigh* and *Robert Ford*.



President Ralph Drage and the Mayor of the City of Charles Sturt, Mr Harold Anderson OAM JP, outside the clubrooms with the presented plaques 19-1-03.



At this point, Ralph gave a brief rundown on the forthcoming events. On conclusion, he invited the Mayor of the City of Charles Sturt to officially launch our 50th year. The Mayor dispensed with his prepared speech and happily recounted anecdotes of his affairs with Austins and other older cars before officially launching 2003 as our celebratory year.

After thanking the Mayor, Ralph then presented him with a commemorative plaque: in return, his Worship responded with one from the City of Charles Sturt to the Club. The Mayor was then taken for a ride in Arthur Addyman's 1932 A7 saloon as lead car in a procession of Austins and other Club cars. Afternoon tea completed the day – *"the warmest and most successful launch of the year"*.



Cars on display at the Clubrooms 19-1-03

The next opportunity to showcase Club cars for our birthday celebrations was on 16 March at the Fisherman's Wharf area at Port Adelaide. A variety of cars (36 in all and including several SARotors cars), were displayed in front of a large banner proclaiming our 50 years. (This had also been prominent at the Clubrooms on launch day, no doubt helping to attract interest from the public).

On 15 June a "Back to the Club Day" drew 100 people and 20 cars were displayed. After early rain, the

weather cleared and a bbq lunch was held. Ralph Drage's report for *Austin 7 Journals 165* included:

The Clubrooms were opened from 11 am for many past and current members to enjoy some good Club hospitality. Inside there was a display of memorabilia on trestles around the perimeter of the room, with snacks on tables in the centre.

Whilst fewer than expected current members were in attendance, by lunchtime quite a respectable number of past members had arrived. It was great to see these people come in and start talking to others that they hadn't seen for years – it was as if they started up where they left off last time that they had seen each other.

After the bbq was over and most had done a lot of chin wagging, I formally welcomed everyone, reminding them that it was 50 years to the month that the inaugural meeting of the A7C was held, re-emphasising the remaining 50th birthday events that they could still participate in and

thanked them for attending today.

David Gear and restored by his late father Merv, it is believed to be the earliest A7 in going order in Australia. Prior to restoration it was a real basket case and had been converted into a utility.

*1927 A7 Brooklands Super Sports.* Owned and built by Malcolm Lake, it is a true 1920s racing car, albeit a road version of the one originally raced at Brooklands – it has mudguards. Although a reproduction, it has been built to the specifications of the original, including the Cozette supercharger. It is the only one of its kind in Australia.

*1931 A7 RN Saloon.* Owned by Dave Hall since 1992, it is an excellent example of a rare early model saloon. The restoration took ten years to complete: prior to that it was in an advanced state of disrepair.

The Mallala Masters SA Championship race meeting on 14/15 September was the next major birthday event. Invited Official Guests were: Mrs Margaret Gameau, President of the Mallala Council; Mr Bob Piper, Junior Vice President of CAMS and Mr Steve Lewis, President of SAMROA.

## **MALLALA** *Masters* **SA CHAMPIONSHIPS - 2003**

The *President's Preamble* in *Austin 7 Journals 166* included:

The race committee put together another great race meeting. Whilst the number of entrants was down on previous years, I am sure that those who did compete enjoyed it very much. During the lunch break on Sunday, it had been arranged for a Scottish pipe band and a group of cheer leaders to do a display on the track; this was to be followed by me making a speech acknowledging the many groups that have assisted our club to put on race meetings over the years and to congratulate SAMROA on their 25th birthday this year.

However no one told the weather man that we needed it fine during the lunch break, so just about halfway through the entertainment the heavens opened up, resulting in everyone scattering for cover. Unfortunately, due

The cutting of the fantastically decorated birthday cake followed; then like all good Club events, there was more eating and chatting. It was planned to conclude at 3 pm but since those who had arrived earlier were having such a good time with others who had come after lunch, it was not until 4 pm that packing up began.

Between 13 July and 5 October, as part of the 50th celebrations, three "typical examples" of the A7 marque were displayed in the newly- formed Club display area at the National Motor Museum at Birdwood. Arranged with the assistance of Bob Gell, the cars, with their descriptions, were:

*1925 A7 Roadster.* Owned by

to the limited time we had for these formalities, they had to be abandoned so racing could continue – so despite all our good intentions, the formal side of the meeting did not happen.

This report is edited from that issue of *Austin 7 Journals*.

If one word could sum up the feelings of all involved in the planning for the opening ceremonies at our 50th anniversary Trophy Race meeting on Sunday September 14, it would be "BUGGA!" Things were going so well: the lunchtime parade of vehicles had been concluded, the Clan Gordon pipe band had marched the officials onto the track and had presented several tunes; the Just for Fun dancing girls had begun their routine when down came the rain and sent everyone scurrying for shelter and the ceremony was abandoned – BUGGA.

The meeting had involved more than the usual planning which began soon after the 2002 meeting and included several innovations to mark our 50th year; a *Show and Shine* for SARotors; the parade featuring many SA and interstate A7s and other members' cars and SA title races for 5 categories of cars.

On schedule, the meeting began with practice and qualifying from 9 am and at 11.30 the first of the Modern Regularity trials got the competition under way. Two heats were held: the first was run on a wet track and consequently the drivers were unable to match their dry weather times, resulting in the winner John Eason, losing 223 points. Tanya Vanderkamp in her first outing was second. Although the track was still damp for the second trial, the drivers had come to grips with the situation and Yvonne Armstrong won, losing only 52 points, from Colin Zytveld and Geoff Stephens.

Each of the Championship racing categories had two qualifying heats on Saturday; the grid for the title races would be set on aggregate points scored over the four heats. Winners on Saturday were: Formula Vee - Tom Drewer and Mark Foster; Improved Production – Adam Allan (both); Racing cars – Graham Knuckey (both); Sports cars – Mark Buik and Graeme Cook and HQs – Peter Boehm and Wayne King. In Group N, Rob Vanderkamp won the first heat but on a very wet track for the second heat, the EH Holden of Bradley DeLuca romped to an easy win – how long since an EH won a race?

The weather at the start of Sunday's racing had not improved and the Regularity drivers had another wet track to contend with; however the leaders coped much better and John Eason lost 34 points to win the third trial from David Armstrong and Ian Brock.

The fourth trial winner was Steve Millard, a new competitor, who lost 14 points, winning from Laurie Cousin and Neil Oatway. By the fifth trial the track had dried out and the point scores tumbled; 12 to the winner Laurie Cousin from David Armstrong and John Eason. The Championship was decided by the aggregate of all points lost over the five trials and John Eason was again the Modern Regularity Champion, losing 507 points; second on 663 was Laurie Cousin and Bob Djordjevic came third with 764 points lost: not as close as previous years but indicative of the ever-changing track conditions they had to contend with.

Racing cars heat three was won by Graham Knuckey. In their feature race – the *Garrie Cooper memorial* – he led the race on a damp-but-slowly-drying track for the first 9 laps, only to be passed by Andrew Weber on the final lap. In their final race, Andrew and Sean took out first and second in another rain affected event.

Graeme Cook won the Sports cars first heat from Keith Williamson and Jim Doig. Their feature race of 10 laps was shortened to 5 when a sudden severe rain squall made the track almost undriveable: Keith Williamson was the very pleased and surprised winner from Jim Doig and Mark Buik when Graeme Cook, who was leading spun off when the rain hit. In their final race, on another wet track, Graeme won from Jim and Mark.

The two outstanding SA cars in Improved Production were those of Adam Allan and James Sutton, who when the track was dry, put on a great display of close racing, as proven by the close finish in heat 3 – won by Adam by 0.4 seconds. In the next heat, the tables were turned and James won by 0.22 seconds. The Championship race over 10 laps started with a very wet track and the Magna of Jim Myhill surged to the front and built up a healthy lead from James and Adam, but as the track began to dry out they were both able to reel him in and on lap 7 James passed him for the lead. On lap 9 Adam demoted him to third and they all held these spots to the end. Thus James Sutton is the Improved Production Champion.

The Group N historic touring cars enjoyed a dry track for heats 3 and 4; placings were Rob Vanderkamp from Ian Gear and Roger Oliver. Their Championship race over 10 laps saw a repeat performance from all three drivers: Rob Vanderkamp winning the Championship again.

The Formula Vees had two heats before their final. Tom Drewer won the first from John Hall and Mark Foster; Tom won the second from Mark and John. The Championship race over 10 laps saw a win to Mark Foster, from Tom Drewer and Robert Surman.

Wayne King won the HQs third heat from Peter Boehm and Neil Corey and the scene was set for the 12th running of the 25-lap Mallala Masters Championship race. By mid afternoon the weather and the track had improved and this race was one of the best HQ races for many years. At the start, the cars of Peter Boehm, Neil Corey, Wayne King and Graham Boulter continually scrapped for the lead. Graham sat a close fourth until lap 9, when he moved to second and then in a four-car lunge at the finish line on lap 11 he took the lead for half a glorious lap; on the next he had dropped to third and from then on he slowly faded, finishing sixth. Michael Wellington had forged his way to third on lap thirteen and to second on lap 24 (and set the fastest lap on lap 19) but he also fell away on the last lap to fifth. The leader throughout all this (bar laps 8 and 11) had been Peter Boehm and he became only the fifth driver to win this event. Wayne King had tailed him for the whole race and came second with Steve Laybourn third.

There were many members who helped support this meeting and without them it would not have run so smoothly. As usual, our excellent catering crew fed the many volunteer officials on both days and the Club's thanks goes to all those who assisted in any way.

Despite the weather affecting the ceremonial side of the programme, all who attended enjoyed the racing and in a tribute to our trackside officials it ran to time – not always an easy achievement when it rains.

Part of the abandoned ceremony was to recognise with a *Certificate of Appreciation* presentation to Steve Lewis, President of SAMROA, for their 25 years of support for motor racing in general, and the A7C in particular, since 1978 – this will take place in the near future.



*Secretary Fran Williams presenting Steve Lewis with the Certificate of Appreciation at SAMROA's 25th Year dinner.*



Officials representing Pit Lane, Paddock and Form up, Scrutineering, Timekeeping, Ambulance officers and tow truck drivers formed part of the opening ceremony group.

The SARotors Show and Shine winners were:

- Best Engine Bay – Daniel Kavanagh, Mazda RX3
- Best Exterior – Jay Robinson, Mazda RX2
- Best Undercarriage – Dave Winfield, Mazda RX7
- Best Paint - Daniel Kavanagh, Mazda RX3
- Best Interior – Adam Brown, Nissan Skyline

The long-awaited Flinders Odyssey was next and a “get together night” was held at the Clubrooms on Saturday night, 13 September for enthusiasts from Canberra, NSW, Tasmania and Victoria to meet the A7CSA members.

Departing from Bolivar (next to the site of the club’s very first 9 chain sprints in 1956) at 8.45 on Monday morning, 15 September, 140 intrepid adventurers in 76 vehicles (43 A7s) began their 5-day journey after Dave Hall had welcomed everyone to the Odyssey and issued his usual explicit and detailed instructions. Each of the cars sported a window strip, identifying it as from the A7C.

A leisurely 74 km drive took everyone to Port Broughton, for a seaside lunch stop. Just a short drive then to Port Pirie where there was time for a look around the town before enjoying the hospitality of the Pirie and Districts Automotive Restorers Club in their clubrooms for a three course dinner. Their hospitality extended to a cooked breakfast served from 7.15 a.m. next morning (Tuesday) before departure. Then, after a steady drive through the beautiful Port Germein Gorge, there they were again; this time at the Melrose Showgrounds with a delicious morning tea.

Dave Hall was eager for everyone not to be late leaving as lunch was waiting at the historic Quorn Railway Station before a ride

on the Pichi Richi Railway to Woolshed Flat and return.

What a great job the Pichi Richi volunteers do in keeping this railway running. Not an easy job to maintain those large machines and they have the worry of being able to continue due to the worry and cost of Public Liability Insurance not being available in the future. (In fact there was considerable anguish amongst the organising committees of the A7CSA when it appeared that the railway would not be able to operate when we were there. However, in July the club received the good news that last minute assistance from the State Government had removed this worry). There were good photo opportunities with all the old cars parked in front of the historic Quorn Railway Station and the Pichi Richi Explorer train (T class 1909 steam engine) in the background. Many photos were taken on the way to the

Pass, particularly at the special stopping point on the return journey; the scenery was beautiful and everyone enjoyed the ride.

The drive to Hawker was just 65 km and the Odyssey had taken up all the accommodation in the town. Wednesday was free, with time to see around the town and for a visit to Wilpena Pound or for three A7s to go further north to Blinman and Parachilna.

It was a very pretty drive to Wilpena with Salvation Jane prevalent and other wild flowers in bloom. The weather was superb and the scenery absolutely spectacular. It was just great to see the panoramic views and the variety of birds about, along with lizards and the odd snake or two snoozing by the road in the warm sunshine.

Thursday (after a breakfast at the Hawker Community Sports Centre) saw the tour travel through Orroroo and take a detour to drive



A friendly wave as Stuart Cain's A7 passes the A30s of Kaye Butler and Doreen Bicknell in the Port Germein Gorge



Arthur and Nadia Addyman's A7 and Kaye Butler's A30 with the Flinders Ranges as a backdrop.

on Magnetic Hill and experience its illusion. Lunch was at Jamestown and then on to Burra. The drive to Burra was through vastly different countryside to that seen so far.

Burra is "Australia's Oldest Mining Town" and was very pretty. Friday was a free day, but everyone had a *Discover Historic Burra* booklet and the tour was divided into small groups of 7 vehicles to follow the National Trust Burra Heritage Trail, a of 47 sites.

Most of the Odyssey party were lodged in the historic Paxton Cottages - a square built in 1849 (each wall at least 18" thick). A nice place to rest with soft beds, little kitchen, shower toilet etc. and separate lounge room with open fireplace, together with a big box of firewood. Following dinner at the Town Hall, everyone congregated around a big bonfire for yet another birthday cake with plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits in the Paxton Cottages Square.

On Saturday, the group had a leisurely drive back to Adelaide, travelling via Mintaro where morning tea was served in the grounds of Martindale Hall, a 19th century Georgian mansion in the Clare Valley, famous from the film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Everyone was able to inspect and admire the historic home. *En route* from

Mintaro, they were met at Auburn by Club members who had driven from Adelaide.

Despite problems with several cars on the road (two of the A7s suffered terminal engine damage and had to be trailered home) everyone enjoyed the great week, with ideal weather after a rainy beginning at Port Pirie on Monday morning.

The birthday dinner on Sunday 21 September at the Donato Reception Centre was the finale to our 50th celebrations. A feature of the night was the screening of a continuous slide show of Club cars and activities over the years, put together by Dave Winfield and David Searles. Invited guests included Glen Dix; from CAMS, Vice President Bob Piper and State Manager Phil Hoffman and from FHMC, President Arthur Clisby.

After a few formal speeches the birthday cake was cut. Then, John Gonion on behalf of the Tasmanian tourers, made a presentation to the Club of a Huon Pine plaque. Maureen Boatwright of NSW also thanked the SA club for inviting all the interstate members to the Odyssey and presented a plaque. *"A truly fitting finale to our 50th anniversary celebrations with everyone present thoroughly enjoying themselves"*.

The enjoyment of those on the Odyssey had been dampened at Hawker. Victorian member Mrs Betty Trull collapsed during Tuesday afternoon and was taken by the Flying Doctor service to Adelaide later that night. Sadly she passed away on the Friday morning.

The Hawker airstrip, although sealed, did not have any lights and so when a night-time evacuation was necessary, the local CFS and others had to light the runway with their car headlights.

As a consequence of this, all those on the Odyssey generously contributed to The Hawker Airstrip Lighting Fund and in November, the club received a letter of thanks, advising that the lighting had been completed.

At the October general meeting, proceeds from a raffle conducted during the Odyssey (\$700+) were donated to the charity chosen by Wendy Seidel (who supplied the first prize, as well as conducting the challenging "name the faces competitions" during the Odyssey) - Ronald MacDonald House.

Club members had already been saddened by the sudden death of Amelia Rix on 8 February and *Austin 7 Journals 164* carried tributes to her personality and joy of living.

But before the Odyssey took off, the regular Club runs continued. The 19th All British Day on 9 February drew 15 club members to the Uraidla oval. Following this, Adam Pipe represented the Club on the organising committee and secured us as one of the two featured clubs for 2004.

A run to McLarens on the Lake on Easter Sunday 20 April had 12 A7s, 2 A16s, 3 A30s, and 1 each of Morris Minor, MG, Terraplane and Chev Hot Rod plus two moderns. Even though the lake was dry and the ducks had departed it was *"a great day, with fine weather, good food, good company and only one car with a small problem"*.

At the same time (Easter) *Austins Over Australia 2003* was held in Ballarat. Hosted by the Austin A40 Club of Australia, it



attracted 231 Austin vehicles of all types and models: only two A7CSA members made the trip.

In contrast, the Border Run on 7-9 June to Bordertown (!) had 57 attending from SA and Vic. The main run was on Sunday, to a wild life park and then to Frances for lunch at the hotel. An early start on Monday saw arrival in Adelaide by 4 pm. Doug and Barbara Hogg reported for *Austin 7 Journals 165*, concluding with *"Our little 1930 Austin ran beautifully at 30-35 mph and never missed a beat – I was really proud of her. This Border Run was well organised, the food excellent, the accommodation good and comfortable and at a price that was hard to understand. The organisers David Grear and David Searles, did a magnificent job and it is further satisfying that the old idea of bunk-house accommodation had been dropped"*.

The 2003 Bay to Birdwood Classic run was held on 27 September, with a record of 1970 entries. The weather was perfect for an early run through the hills. Organisers had been concerned for the event, following a week of extensive rain but the sun shone for most of the day. 33 A7CSA members took part and 1 A16, 6 A30s, 1 A40, 1 A55 and 1 A70 were among the cars.

The Barossa Valley was the destination for the 16 cars on the 26 October run. After lunch, a visit to the Greenock Aviation Museum was the highlight of the day.

The Port Parade this year changed to a late evening event. Seven cars were in the parade and all returned to Trevor Clerke's for a bbq tea with entertainment from the Clan Gordon pipe band.

During the year, members visited the Traffic Control Centre at Norwood and Parliament House: one was to see how our road traffic is governed, the other to see how we are governed. Both were very interesting. Other continuing events were the Leisure runs each month, the quarterly lunches and the Hills luncheon – all promoting friendship while satisfying the inner man.

During 2002, an application for Government funds, under the Active Club Program from the Department of Recreation and Sport, towards driver training for our under-25 members, was approved. On 10 August 2003, 25 members were at Mallala for theoretical sessions from driving instructor Bob Piper, followed by practical driving tests on the track.

On 14-15 June, the SARotors mounted a display at the 2003 Ford/ Holden Expo at Wayville, as part of the CAMS area. Included were two RX7s, as used in Modern Regularity events, and high-action videos, which drew much crowd interest, and a cut-away rotary engine.

CAMS also designed a new logo to go with its 50th year activities and fittingly, it received another accolade.



FIA President Max Mosley said, in part: *"As the world governing body for motor sport, we are delighted with CAMS' performance. It is recognised as one of the top five performing national governing bodies in the world. CAMS' strength lies in its inclusive nature, its across the board professional approach and its enviable record in staging events – from small club meets right through to the AGP, which has been voted the best F1 World Championship event no fewer than five times."*

*The FIA formally acknowledged the role of CAMS' 7500 accredited officials. Please convey my congratulations and best wishes to those officials, who contribute to making Australian motor sport a world leader. These hard working enthusiasts are able to carry out their duties by way of training and qualifications provided by CAMS."*

Changes occurred in CAMS operations. In June, Tony Morgan resigned from the Motor Race

Advisory Panel; Dave Winfield joined Fran Williams as Club representatives on this panel. State manager Phil Hoffman had returned to work in January after a period of ill health but in November, as things had not improved, he had to retire: Adam Willis took on these duties and was formally appointed in January 2004.

Honour Boards for the Racing Driver of the Year and the Peter Wright Memorial were needed for the CAMS office and the Club contributed to their purchase, echoing our supply to CAMS of the original Rally honour board in 1961.

The 2003 winners of these awards were: *Racing Driver of the Year*; Adam Allan (Improved Production) and *Peter Wright Memorial* Tom Drewer (FV). At the 2003 Awards night (on 6 February 2004) Fran Williams received the CAMS Service Award, joining Max Bowden, John Edyvean, Barry Frost, Tony and Glenda Grove and Bruce Went as Club recipients.

One consequence of the public liability insurance dramas reported in Chapter 10 was the need for anyone acting in any official capacity to be licensed to carry out those duties. For Club officials not accredited under the CAMS scheme, there was another solution. As far as the Club was concerned, this would apply for example when members were marshalling cars at rallies or the Club race meeting. Sgt Harry McCallum of the SA Police gave a special briefing/training session at the August 2002 general meeting. 36 members who attended were thus licensed to perform traffic marshalling duties: in September 2003, they were presented with their Certificates.

2003 was the year of Certificates! All Club members received a *Certificate of Congratulations* as a memento of our 50th year. 2003 was also the *International Year of the Volunteer* and the Premier's Office presented *Certificates of Appreciation* in recognition of outstanding volunteer service. As Friday 5 December was

designated South Australian Volunteers Day, the Office of Volunteers was delighted when the club approached them earlier in the year with the idea of presenting these Certificates at the 8 December general meeting. This was done, and as the 50th celebrations had needed the help of many people, 61 members were recognised for their support during the year.

Work continued on the Federation's Code of Practice. Following a meeting with the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, a seminar on 12 April drew 400 club delegates to discuss among other things, variations allowed under the scheme.

At the 14 April Club general meeting, the President reported on the seminar, which he had attended with Geoff Stephens, Graham Buesnel and Trevor Clerke. One of the issues was the need for all marshals/officials to be licensed: the Club had already addressed this (see above).

The operating date for the Code would be 1 August. A lengthy and heated discussion ensued from the floor with many views expressed, generally in support of concerns with the wording and how the code will affect eligibility for members' cars to be accepted into it. *The President, in summation, acknowledged that there was not much that members/clubs could do at the current time as the code was "set in concrete" to use the words of the Assistant Registrar. The club would be seeking variations allowed under the Code.*

A sub committee comprising Ralph Drage, Geoff Stephens, Trevor Clerke, David Searles and Graham Buesnel was set up at the May committee meeting, to review the situation and manage problems associated with the new Code. Their work established that of the 260 cars on the club register, only two would not comply with the new Code.

The 2003 breakdown of cars on the scheme was: A7/Big 7-69; A8-11, A10-16, A16-5, A30/35-28, A40-12, Austins Other-21 and

Others-98. This was an increase from the previous year of 22, reflecting a similar rise in Club membership, from 314 in 2002 to 348 at the end of November 2003.

By September, a Federation-organised public liability scheme had been implemented, with our club being one of the first to join; this became operational in November. As a consequence of this, a run sheet was devised to record all those attending Club runs. The Federation had run a 10-day West Coast tour in May with 78 cars attending.

*Austin 7 Journals* was given a face-lift for 2003. For each issue, numbers 163-166, the cover was printed in colour and consisted of photos depicting Club events over the years; several issues ran to 32 and 36 pages, such was the information available. The mailing address slip was used as an advertising medium with support from 18 businesses or Clubs that we are involved with.

The Enthusiast's nights, conducted by Dave Hall, continued to be well supported: the one on 22 September, immediately following the return of the Odyssey, drew 85, including several of our interstate visitors. The year's activities concluded with the 24 November evening run and meal; this was Dave's swansong as he had decided to hand over to David Gear.

By contrast, the Flying A nights were not successful, and with Ian Jones being unable to organise them beyond the end of the year, the last night was 15 October. In future they would be incorporated into the Enthusiast's nights.

The SARotors had generated publicity with interviews on *Fresh FM* radio and a two-page photo spread in the April issue of *Fast Fours* magazine. A go-kart challenge day in March attracted 40 people, as did their first anniversary cruise, to Murray Bridge on 21 July.

The rules for practice/qualifying for the AGP were new for 2003. There was now an hour-long qualifying session on Friday, as there had been until 1995, but this

was one flying lap only for each car and the times from this set the order for Saturday's running (in reverse order) for the race grid. The cars also had to start the race with the fuel in the tanks from qualifying and no work could be done on them after qualifying – this introduced new strategies and made qualifying less predictable. The points system was now 10, 8, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 – the first change since 1991 – and the tyres could now be of two different compounds.

The Minardi team exploited a loophole in the new rules by not completing a qualifying lap and started the race from pit lane but with full tanks of fuel. A shower of rain at the start compounded the drama, but by the end of the race, pit stops, speeding penalties and two safety car periods saw an easy win to David Coulthard, McLaren Mercedes. Only 13 of the 22 starters finished.

Ian Alexander and Barry and Rae Frost were part of a unique (and diminishing) group of 78 officials who had worked at the 19 World Championship AGPs. (This group were acknowledged for their contributions at the 20th AGP in 2004, when they were each presented with a Certificate, a 20-year plaque and a watch).

The new rules achieved the aim of bringing entertainment and uncertainty back to GP racing, as the Championship was not decided until the final race – the Japanese GP – when Michael Schumacher collected one point to ensure his (record) sixth title.

The year had been another busy one for the timing team with 27 race meetings attended: to keep ahead of the game, in April the timing system was upgraded with new computers. The Clipsal 500 won the award for best V8 meeting (again) and a new event was added to the team's credentials – the 7th World Solar Challenge 2003, Darwin to Adelaide.

From *Austin 7 Journals* 167:

The Club assisted this world-class event for the first time, which was held from 19-28 October. It was organised by



the SA Government's Australian Major Events division of Tourism SA, who hold the title to the event, and is run in conjunction with similar events in the USA, using virtually the same technical regulations. The cars ran on battery power – either the familiar lead/acid type or one of six other exotic material combinations, which are powered solely by solar panels, the dimensions of which are the constraints on the designs of the vehicles.

The field of 22 cars came from Australia (8) [although one crashed on the way to Darwin and was withdrawn], Taiwan, USA, Germany, Malaysia, Japan, Netherlands, Canada, France and Puerto Rico. They were tested for roadworthiness at Darwin's Hidden Valley raceway and timed over a flying lap of the circuit to establish the starting order - this was Chief Timekeeper Barry Frost's responsibility – before leaving at 8 am on Sunday morning, 19 October. The cars were only allowed to drive between 8 am and 5 pm each day and there were 7 control points on the route.

The leading car exceeded all expectations, crossing the finish timing line near the St Kilda turnoff on Port Wakefield Road, at 3.24 pm on Wednesday afternoon, where Barry and Ian Alexander were on duty. Ian and wife Sue and Bill Gower manned this spot from 8 am to 5 pm on Thursday October 23 to record the cars that finished that day. Others filtered in at long intervals after that.

The winning car, *Nuna II* from the Netherlands, had been tested at speeds up to 170 kph and covered the 2997.8 km in 30 hours 54 minutes, averaging 97.02 kph. The second car, *Aurora* from Australia, broke the 2001 winning time by 2 minutes, taking 32 hours and 37 minutes, averaging 92 kph. By way of contrast, the last to arrive took ten days to complete the journey and averaged 36 kph. This car had been in every challenge since 1985 and had never got beyond Adelaide River in the NT. Only 13 cars completed the event under power.

Of interest are the tyres that they all use: *specially made for solar vehicles* they run at very high pressure and are designed to give the least rolling resistance. Ride comfort is not a consideration!

The Modern Regularity series had been keenly contested over 5 rounds, concluding with a joint meeting with the Ford Owners Car Club. Geoff Stephens had been leading on points until the very last event, when a spin handed the series win to Bob Djordjevic,

President of the Ford Owners Club. This extract from the report on the 6 April meeting, from *Austin 7 Journals 165* by Dave Winfield, highlights the drama that can be experienced.

With a clear track now in front of me and only a couple of laps of practice left, I decided to push harder and see what the car could do. It all felt really great and was working remarkably well – until I got to turn 7 – the end of the second longest straight. At the 200m braking marker, doing roughly 140-150 kph, I changed down to 4th, dabbed the brakes – and my brake pedal went straight to the floor!!

Two more rapid downshifts and I was flying off the track at about 80-90 kph! Remembering what I had been told about unexpected excursions, I didn't try to turn but steered straight ahead and into the sand trap, which pulled me up in about a car and a half!

Once the dust settled a little, a marshal was with me to make sure that I got out of the car and to a safe spot behind the concrete wall at the side of the track. Rather embarrassed, I had to wait for the tow vehicle to pull me out so that I could limp back to the pits – still with no brakes. Once safely parked, we checked the car – no major damage, just boiled the brake fluid, which was admittedly well overdue for replacement.

It took over an hour for the brakes to cool down enough so that I had a pedal again. I nominated a suitably slower lap time and managed to complete all three heats with no further adventures.

The Clubrooms continued to be managed by Gerry Lang until ill health in July forced him to relinquish the position, which was subsequently taken on by Trevor Clerke. The kitchen louver windows were replaced with security mesh glass in September, after a break-in, when food and gardening equipment was stolen.

The year had had the usual social events, including two games nights, the Hills luncheon, the Feast of the Orient dinner and concluded with the annual Christmas dinner.

## Summary

The Club's 50th year was notable for the response from many ex-members who returned to the Club at the opening day and the "Back to the Club" day. The response from members was also notable for the enthusiasm that accompanied all 50th year events. The Flinders Odyssey was a culmination of all that had been learnt by the Organisers over many other Club trips. It was lauded for the excellence of the organisation and the camaraderie of all who attended.

50 years ago the Club was founded on the challenge of building and competing in A7 specials. Over the ensuing years, this evolved into the challenge of restoring and driving A7s for pleasure in touring runs.

The calendar for the first years of the Club's life consisted of one event and one meeting per month. 50 years later, the Club has a busy calendar with many events each month and enjoys its own Clubrooms (which very few other Clubs can boast). It has seen an increase in the ownership and use of the A7 as the flagship of the Club but at the same time, (as it has done from the very early years), it has welcomed and embraced a diverse range of other vehicles into Club life.

Club membership has waxed and waned in cycles as interests have changed over time, but it is significant that at the close of our 50th year, both membership and car ownership are at their highest ever.

The Austin 7 Club of South Australia Incorporated can look forward to a very healthy future and the next 50 years with confidence.



**Life members.**

Standing, from left: Dave Hall, Murray Lewis, Merv Perry, Bruce Went and Barry Frost  
Sitting, from left: Jean Gilbert, Ruth Perry and Ian Motley  
(Absent David Searles)

**Presidents.**

Standing from left: Barry Frost and Ralph Drage.  
Sitting from left: Tony Grove, Bruce Went and Ian Motley  
(Absent Trevor Clerke)



**Back to the Club day, 15 June 2003**



Cars assembled in front of Martindale Hall, Mintaro, 20-9-03

As part of pre-event publicity for the Mallala Masters race meeting, Merv and David Perry posed with their respective cars which were to appear there. Merv's A7 "Bubbles" and David's Improved Production Holden Gemini.



Cars at the Quorn railway station, 16-9-03