

LOOSE FILLINGS

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LIONEL HART AND HIS TASSIE RACING CARS

by Rob Saward

One of the more interesting and significant cars in Tasmania's early racing history was the BMW Special, built in Hobart by Lionel Hart. At the time of its first race in November 1951, the BMW Special was only the fifth monoposto racing car in Tasmania, after the Atherton and Crawford Indian Specials, the Anderson Salmson Ford and the Petts Ford. Lionel Hart came

late to car racing, being 38 years old at the time the car was debuted. Lionel's background prior to building his first racing car was one we could not invent; he was the proverbial cat with nine lives.

Lionel and his twin brother Byron, born in December 1912, were clearly a bit daredevil in their approach to life. In 1928, aged 15, Byron suffered serious head injuries when he was thrown from the tray

of a truck which was turning a corner. The boys became motorcyclists as soon as they could and perhaps typical of motorcycle enthusiasts of that generation, always seeming to be in trouble with the law.

They were frequently mentioned in the Hobart court notes published in *The Below*: Lionel Hart's BMW Special in its early form, with long tail, taken at Valleyfield. The car in the background is the Petts Ford. Photo Noel Windsor.



Mercury, usually for minor offences like speeding, riding without a tail light etc. Byron had the dubious distinction of going before the bench in the same session as his father Tasman, both being fined for speeding.

Several years after this, in 1930, while the family were living in Charles St, Moonah, an inner northern Hobart suburb, Lionel, age 18, was admitted to hospital with lacerations to fingers. He was using a circular saw, docking axe handles, when one caught and threw him towards the saw. In the years 1932-35, Lionel was a part-time fire fighter at the Moonah station, during which time he continued the family tradition of regular offences whilst riding motorcycles. In 1935 he was appointed a full-time fire fighter at Moonah, but his employment was temporarily suspended in 1936. Having transferred to the Hobart fire station, he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident, after he skidded on tram lines on the intersection of Argyle and Elizabeth Streets, Newtown.

The inevitable appearance of Lionel Hart in motorcycle racing came in 1939 when he raced a Norton in southern Tasmanian beach racing events. By 1941 he had changed to an AJS and was also participating in daredevil motorcycle stunts at shows. Yet another of the Lionel Hart nine lives was cashed-in in 1944 when Lionel was working for fellow Tasmanian Les Moore's motorcycle stunt troupe. Lionel and his motorcycle collided with that of his partner in a stunt routine they were practicing for the Hobart Regatta. Lionel suffered a fractured knee and dislocated hip, while his partner, troupe owner Les Moore, was also seriously injured. Les had been one of the stars of speedway motorcycle racing, and later moved to New Zealand where (with his son Ronnie) he raced cars during the 1950s (see *Loose Fillings* #40).

The sideshow life continued after the war. The next of his nine lives was cashed in 1946, again while working with Les Moore's wall of death troupe, touring Australian shows. At Camperdown, Victoria, Lionel suffered severe head injuries when Les Moore's bike suffered a blowout and dropped to the bottom of the globe, hitting Lionel.

This appears to have been the catalyst to return to a more normal life, as after recovery he returned to Hobart and gained employment with Don Gorringer in his West Coast Freighting Service business, alongside Byron, who was already a lorry



Above: another early photo, the BMW Special being worked on at unknown location, with Snowy Hart at left.

Left: the original car (now being entered as the Hart BMW), pictured at Hobart's Domain hillclimb in about 1956. By this stage the car had front dampers and a higher/shorter tail panel. Looks like it has been painted a dark colour.

Photographers unknown, photos courtesy Mick Watt.

driver with the company. He also resumed racing the AJS, competing in several events in late 1946. Gorringer, four years younger than Lionel, was to become a close friend, and as probably Tasmania's foremost motor racing enthusiast and later special builder, a strong influence on Lionel Hart's future.

During 1946, Byron purchased a late pre-war BMW 500 OHV motorcycle. Over the next year Byron used the BMW in trials, acceleration tests and racing at most Southern Motor Cycle and Light Car Club (SMCLCC) events.

In August 1947, tragedy hit the Harts when on a trip from Hobart to Queens-town with two fully laden semi-trailers, Byron's vehicle hit a washed out culvert 10 feet deep on the Lyell Highway near Ouse. Lionel was following a short distance behind. Byron's cab was crushed by the shifting load and became submerged in the water, whilst the load caught fire (it included drums of petrol) and engulfed the whole vehicle. Byron and his passenger, a hitch-hiker he had picked up, were both killed. Don Gorringer later sued the Transport Commission for the value of the truck

and its load, alleging negligence in construction and maintenance of the culvert, but the court ruled that the TTC did not have a case to answer.

Two years later, in 1949, Lionel had a major accident on the same road, when the wooden bridge over the River Dee collapsed under his truck's weight and deposited the lot in the river. Lionel used another of his nine lives and escaped unhurt.

During 1949, Snowy Hart, as blonde-haired Lionel was invariably described, had several starts in his boss Don Gorringer's supercharged Mercury V8 special and in 1950 became a regular riding passenger in Gorringer's first Skoda Special (a two-seater), which replaced the Mercury after it was sold. Tasmania was the last Australian state to stop the practice of riding mechanics in racing cars. Lionel also drove the Skoda Special on several occasions, including the Muddy Creek hill climb (near Launceston) in March 1951.

To be continued. This article was first published in CAMS Tasmania Historic Racing News.

THE LES TAYLOR STORY

by Graham
Howard

Queenslander Les Taylor, the Mk4 Cooper driver briefly mentioned in *Loose Fillings* #40 ("The Shock of the New"), merits this further mention because he had a slightly longer career with air-cooled cars than just his six months with the Cooper.

Jaguar historian Les Hughes wrote an article about him in 1990 for Australian Jaguar magazine. The article says Taylor, was born in Melbourne in 1916, married in Brisbane in late 1945, and established a successful motorcycle business in downtown Brisbane. He raced motorcycles, then started racing on four wheels.

As well as the almost inevitable MG TC, he also ran the very early Victorian-built Lowe-Lane 500, which had been brought to Queensland late in 1947 by local 500 pioneers Brian Chatterton and Clem Warburton.

Toowoomba historian John Holmes has records showing Taylor competing at White's Hill in early 1950, using a dual-exhaust Ariel 500. On one occasion, to set records in the International Class J and Class H, he also ran the car with both a 350 Excelsior Manxman and a 520cc BSA, changing engines between runs. Taylor was also mentioned as planning to run the car with an 8/80 JAP, but there is no record of

Below: Les Taylor with the 1100 JAP in his Mk4 Cooper at Leyburn.
Right: The Lowe-Lane, White's Hill, February 1951, photo courtesy John Holmes.



the car appearing with this engine.

During 1950 Taylor had been trying to obtain the Queensland Cooper agency from the then Australian agent Keith Martin, but without success, and early in 1951 he bought a Mk4 Cooper, brand new, from John Crouch. Taylor won an Under 1500cc race with it at Strathpine in March, had two DNFs at Bathurst at Easter, and won the Queensland hillclimb championship at White's Hill in June.

In August 1951 he was suddenly famous when he made the daily papers after driving a brand new Jaguar XK120 from Darwin to Alice Springs in 10h 32min, an average of 90.62mph for the 954 miles. He then raced the Jaguar (and the Cooper and a 500cc Manx Norton) at Leyburn in September. Hughes' story recounts how Taylor found a Sydney buyer for the Jaguar, and drove down to deliver it. It was not until his wife opened a letter some days later that she discovered Taylor was on his way to England.

Taylor must have been planning this trip for some time. The Hammill/Jenkins book *Cyril Kieft and His Racing Cars* says Taylor had acquired the Australian Kieft agency in association with Phil Irving, although Irving's biography makes no mention of this. As well, the book says he had actually bought a Kieft, the first of the production versions of the car Stirling Moss had been racing so successfully. *Autosport*, in its report of the 21 October Brands Hatch meeting, noted Taylor competing in "a handsome new white Kieft." Hammill/Jenkins provide the end to the story – after Brands Hatch, Taylor told Cyril Kieft that 500cc racing was too dangerous, and he was 'returning' the car.

Back home again, Taylor sold the Cooper without engine to the LPS partnership,

whose first run with it was with a pre-war HRD V-twin at a Strathpine sprint in December 1951. In May 1952 Taylor was setting more records, this time in a stock Fiat 1400 sedan at Leyburn. He intended to run for 24 hours but, with each tyre lasting only 200 miles, he ran out of rubber after 12 hours, despite extra supplies being brought from Brisbane.

At Taylor's 1951 court appearance in Alice Springs following the Jaguar record run, the *Centralian Advocate* described him as 'slight, saturnine, and obviously a serious-minded man,' and with his thick-rimmed glasses and tousled hair, Taylor hardly looked like a racer. But he must have been a useful driver. In its Brands Hatch report *Autosport* said he had lapped Bathurst in 3min. 01 sec, a figure which must have come from Taylor himself and has never been quoted elsewhere, although it was certainly possible. He had at least one knowledgeable believer, Queensland's Castrol sales manager Frank Reid (father of current Cooper Mk3 owner David Reid), who was right at the centre of Queensland motor sport and the man behind the Jaguar record run.

Les Hughes' story does not say why Taylor's motorsport activity stopped after the Leyburn records. Hughes describes a man who regularly made extravagant promises, who repeatedly abandoned his family, often for long periods, and who would set one part of the family against the other. While building a catamaran at Williamstown in Victoria in 1968, he suffered head injuries from which he subsequently died, aged 52.

My thanks to Garry Simkin for providing a copy of Les Hughes' story, to John Holmes for details of Taylor's cars, and to Harry Mortlock for loan of the Kieft book.



MIEKLE(S)

Further to David Mckinney's story in *Loose Fillings #40* on Kiefts in New Zealand, and Ian Garmey's follow-up comments in #41, Queensland based expat NZer and *Loose Fillings* reader John Climo reports that there were in fact two Miekle brothers teaching in NZ in the early 1960s.

ALWAYS FIT A FUSE

Fuses are placed in circuits to protect them from excess current flow that could lead to overheating & cause a fire. In your road car each electrical component is fused individually e.g. ignition, radio, windscreen wipers etc. In your racecar just one fuse or preferably a circuit breaker is sufficient as whether your ignition system or fuel pump fails it really doesn't matter - you will simply roll to a stop. Back at your pit you can ascertain the fault & repair.

If no fuse is fitted then the electrical conductor (wire) from the battery to say the fuel pump will become your 'defacto' fuse. Let's assume this live wire, after several years of rubbing away over a chassis tube, finally rubs off its plastic insulation. It will take the shortest path possible back to the battery via that same chassis tube! The wire will glow red hot until it eventually burns through. Unfortunately this always comes with an enormous amount of smoke, heat & sparking. Compounding this scenario is the fact this wire is probably taped into a loom & the generated heat (along the entire length of that wire) will now now melt & burn all of the other wiring, often enough to burn your car to the ground should your fuel pump or fuel tank catch fire.

A 15 amp in-line fuse fitted at the battery will self destruct instantly a short circuit occurs with either a component failure or the scenario described above. Better to be towed in on the end of a rope with a blown fuse than have the charred remains of your pride & joy dropped off in the scrutineering bay! For most air-cooled cars with magneto ignition a fuse is of course superfluous but note that as well as a dash mounted switch, Garry Simkin has wisely fitted an additional earthing point for his magneto on his steering wheel. *Brian Simpson*

HEAR HEAR...

Noel Martin-Smith points out that further to his story in *Loose Fillings #30* his Mk5 Cooper was owned by Malcom Sime in Lower Hutt, NZ, who then onsold it to Jim Buckley from whom it went to Ted Atkins and Ed Millman in Seattle, USA.

Charlie Banyard-Smith wrote to say that

the Leston Special mentioned last time was mainly JBS and not a Keift which is what he first raced.

Our esteemed former editor Graham Howard is looking for pics of the DWS, and Jim Runciman is looking for rear view Holinger pics (see his news below). Please see our note on page 6 re scanning specification and kindly forward any originals or scans via Garry Simkin (see page 6). Originals will be kept safe and returned after scanning for our records and forwarding.

HOLINGER VINCENT

The Holinger Vincent is finally going together after a tremendous job by Ken Horner and his team on the engine (see photo below). I'm sure Peter would approve. He was so impressed with the work on the chassis that he made me a new steering rack at no charge and when he found the pattern for the casting which supports the brake master cylinders he sent it to me.

What a man!! I've made the new front wheels and am trying to work out many of the small details which don't seem to be significant until you try to assemble the kit. I am rebuilding the car as near as I can make out in its early supercharged form and working out the location of a few bits such as the fuel tank is proving problematic.

Jim Runciman

COOPER VIBRATIONS

Alf Barrett's description of a Mk4 Cooper's vibration as "...like driving a lawnmower - dreadful" (*Loose Fillings #40*) is apt. I had the later, 'you beaut' 1951 Mk. 5 model and the same description applied. Why? Because the single cylinder, long

stroke J.A.P. engine of 498 cc was bolted in solid to the chassis with no engine mounts, so what else could it do?

I have vivid memories of these vibes. The first was at Eddington Sprints, that wonderful laid-back one-day meeting in Central Victoria when I gave my son, Brendan a run in the ex-Bill Patterson, Stan Jones Cooper. Brendan missed the finish line and sailed on merrily in the general direction of Maryborough!

When he eventually found his way back he said he couldn't see the banner at the end of the quarter-mile because his eyeballs were shaking so badly.

Brian Reed.

CLASSIFIEDS

For sale: Waye 500, built in 1953, CAMS log book, JAP 500 dry-sump engine, roll bar fitted, new upholstery, eligible to run overhead cam Norton, ready to run, \$15,000 ono, Andrew Halliday 02 9888 6175

For sale: 12 volt roller starting system to get your air-cooled car fired up. New and unused. Garry, 02 9958 3935, or gjsimkin@iprimus.com.au

For sale: Norton lay-down gearboxes. Graham Howard, 02 4787 8772

For sale: Ralt1 re-creation project. The original ES2 engine, unassembled, and the original front wheel centres (the rest of the car was scrapped in 1961) plus replacements for the various Morris and Model T parts used, and a large archive of period photographs to guide rebuild to 1953-57 form when raced by Ron Tauranac and Merv Ward. A big project, but a very significant car. Graham Howard, 02 4787 8772.

Wanted: Norton upright gearbox. Graham Howard, 02 4787 8772



COOPER MYSTERIES 1&2

Detailed research put together many moons ago by David Rapley, John Blanden (in his books) and Graham Howard came to me some time ago with chassis numbers for mark 3, 4 and 5 Coopers including racing history and the importers thereof. The identity of two cars has been of special interest to me.

The 'Wylie' car, first owned and raced by Ken Wylie went through many hands and places to land virtually intact with Rod Hoffman in Sydney. The car was long recorded as 13(?)/31/49 but was more likely to have been 10/31/49. However, a recent inspection with Garry Simkin showed the car has a chassis plate showing 10/32/49!

'Warm rod' (Reg Smith's name for it), first owned by Lex Davison and first raced by Reg had previously been listed as chassis 10/32/49. The car went through many hands and Australian states and the majority of the parts are now safely with Ivan Glasby in Sydney. Ivan has no chassis plate with his new toy though there are holes where a chassis plate was affixed and forcibly removed some moons ago.

The late Rob Kirkby owned 'Warm rod' in the 1980s and also restored and raced the Wylie car in the early 1980's thus there is a possibility chassis plates have been switched from one car to the other, perhaps to give some authenticity to a car that didn't have a plate.

However there is no evidence of that and I can only assume that the 10-32-49 plate is correct. Therefore Ivan Glasby's 'Warm rod' Cooper would be chassis 10/31/49 and the 'Wylie' Cooper 10/32/49. If you agree you can set the record straight and pencil in your own upgrade of the Blanden book.

Kerry Smith.

COOPER MYSTERIES 2&3

One of the best known Coopers in Australia is 10-13-49, now owned by David Reid and before that Rob Gunnell, John Mann and Ian Boughton who brought it back from Malaya about 1977. I know all that because I tried to buy it when it had just gone to John Mann and took the trailer as compensation.

Continuing the chain of ownership to Malaya and Singapore, *Loose Fillings* has long understood this to have started with Ken Watkins in the UK then Alan Rippon, Bill Ferguson, Chad Davis, BS Arnold, and Stan Dundas before Ian Boughton.

Recently I have been tracking the



Above: Dick Crawford and the JMW prepare to battle the handicapper at Baskerville.

Photo courtesy Lindsay Ross, Oldracephotos.

fortunes of a number of twin Coopers in Malaya and Singapore and have discovered a lot more by way of owners of this car in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. The Bill Ferguson and previous bit is correct but although actual ownership is not certain it is clear that after Ferguson the car was shared by Bill Davies/BV Hassan/BS Arnold, then there was Jan Bussell, Peter Cowling and maybe others.

The car had many FTDs and a win in the 1951 Johore Grand Prix to its credit. These (probable) additional owners do not conflict with the ownership understood to date but are additions that add just a little more to the car's distinguished history.

It just goes to show - you can never be quite sure the story is complete.

Well, that's what I wrote (without the emphasis), but didn't have enough room for in the last *Loose Fillings*. No sooner was that published with its article on Arthur McKenzie in South Africa than we had an email from Charlie Banyard-Smith in the UK. Some years ago Charlie bought from Jack Mayes in Chicago the other Cooper which had been beach racing in South West Africa, a mystery Mk7 with the improbable chassis plate Mk8.L1.53. Mk8s were 1954 and did not have L(ong) numbers. Charlie believes his car is Arthur McKenzie's and it seems as if McKenzie may have had two Coopers one being a Mk5 and the other a Mk7. That may - or may not be so - which just goes to show - you can never be quite sure the story is complete. Indeed Doug Nye recently told me he didn't believe Cooper chassis numbers any more!

Terry Wright

DICK CRAWFORD

Tasmanian Dick Crawford, who died in September, achieved remarkable results during the 1960s with his JMW, one of three brought to Tasmania by Don Gorringe. Dick initially used a 150cc CZ as supplied by constructor John Wynne, and later replaced this with a Yamaha 250. Despite the car's limited top speed, he ran remarkably competitive lap times at Symmons Plains and Baskerville, reflecting his considerable skill as a tuner. He built his first racing car in 1933, when he was 17, and over the next 60 years raced more than 30 cars, ranging from small-capacity touring cars to a Formula Vee, and also raced a variety of speedboats. A founder member of Hobart Sporting Car Club, he competed at the first Baskerville meeting in 1958, and continued racing into the 1990s. He was made a member of the Tasmanian Motorsport Hall of Fame in 1996.

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