

LOOSE FILLINGS

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‘NEW’ MK5 COOPER FROM SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa in summer had been a playground for some of the big names of motor racing in the 1930s, but the 1950s were different. The white population was just 2 million and there was growing political and social unrest. There were tight controls and massive duties on the import of racing cars which made new cars almost impossible to obtain.

Nonetheless there was plenty of motorsport activity with many locally built specials, a full calendar of street races in or around the major towns and cities and a few hillclimbs. There was close contact with Europe naturally—it was just two weeks away by Union Castle liner.

Arthur Mackenzie was a Durban garage owner with a mixture of 2 and 4 wheeled

Maybe a dozen or more Coopers went to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia during the 1950s and a few have followed émigrés to Australia. One of the finest of the few that remained in Africa—a 1951 Mk5—has now come to Australia courtesy of Derry Greeneklee who has bought it from Richard Baker of Johannesburg. Terry Wright has a look at the car's history with thanks to Robert Young and Frank Maritz for information and photographs.

prewar racing experience and a reputation for excellent preparation. His first post-war success was in his Austin Seven special, winning the 1949 junior handicap on the Durban Snell Parade beach-front meeting which was held each year in honour of local hero Pat Fairfield who had been

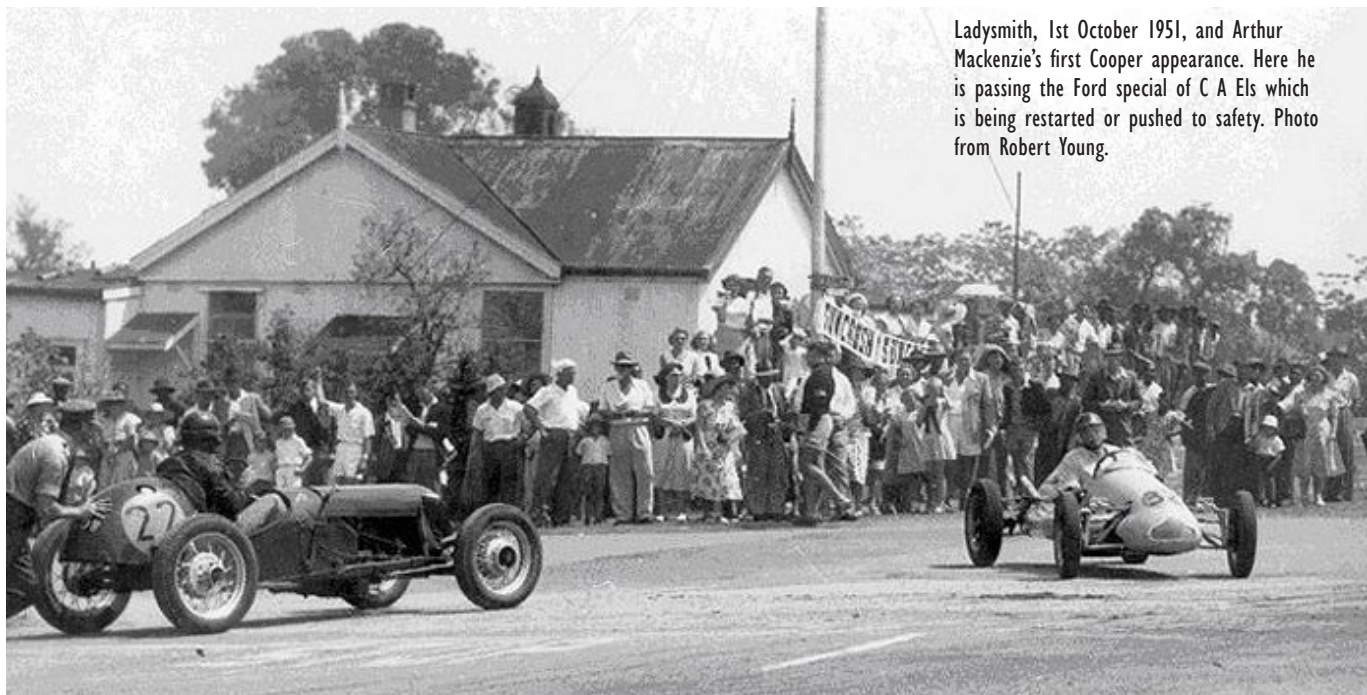
killed at Le Mans in 1937. He did well too with the Austin in 1950 and for 1951 he was one of the first two drivers to have a Cooper lined up.

Mackenzie entered a 500 Cooper for races at East London (16.6.51) and Snell Parade (6.8.51) and recorded “dns” at both. Maybe his car hadn’t turned up or it just took that long to obtain an import permit as it can even today in Australia?

Be that as it may, in the races around the streets of Ladysmith on 1st October 1951 Arthur was winner on scratch and 5th in the handicap in the Cooper JAP 500. Next, he ran second at Durban’s Burman Drive hillclimb (17.12.51),

Iota magazine (February 1952) then reported: “Mackenzie (Cooper MkV)

Ladysmith, 1st October 1951, and Arthur Mackenzie's first Cooper appearance. Here he is passing the Ford special of C A Els which is being restarted or pushed to safety. Photo from Robert Young.



won the 100 mile Fairfield Handicap at Snell Parade, Durban 20 January 1952' and that, 'Mackenzie only recently took delivery of the Cooper'. Mackenzie competed regularly with a 350 and/or 500 JAP through 1952-4 appearing first with an 1100 at the Roy Hesketh circuit (Pietermaritzburg, Natal) on 31.5.54 winning the Union Day Handicap. The programme for the Grand Central circuit near Johannesburg for 21.8.54 states:

'Arthur Mackenzie specializes in swapping engines in his Cooper and may be using a 500cc JAP or an 1100cc of the same make. Mackenzie is a Natal man who turns in some wonderful performances when things go right, and Transvaal enthusiasts will expect much of him today, especially if he races the bigger motor'.

However, Mackenzie did not start at that meeting, nor did he race in 1955 and only ran the 500 once in 1956. At Roy Hesketh 20.1.57 he is listed as 1st with the 1100 in the Fairfield Trophy. He then appeared with the 1100 at Roy Hesketh with dnf's on 22.4.57 and 7.4.58. He crashed with serious injuries there on 18.1.59 and did not race again.

The car was next run by Frank Maritz with the programme for the 1/3.4.61 Roy Hesketh meeting stating:

'Although we haven't seen Frank for some time now he is an old hand at the game and becomes even more formidable driving the ex-Mackenzie 1097 Cooper JAP which at one stage held the lap record at the Hesketh circuit. Here is a real dark horse and will prove particularly worrying to those 4th to 6th places'.

Maritz is recorded as entered at Grand Central in March 1960, Grand Central 18.3.61 and Zwartkop (Pretoria) 12.5.62. He died in 1973. Frank's son Frank jnr, who now lives near Auckland, has provided the following information about his father's ownership of the car:

'The family lived in Krugersdorp near J'burg; my father had a garage business and he had been racing since about 1953/4 when he started with an MG Special. In the early 'sixties, probably April/May 1963 when I was at teacher training college my father and two others made the trek across the Kalihari Desert to a race meeting in South West Africa at Windhoek. A spectator from Port Walvis on the west coast of SWA, either at the meeting or later, arranged to buy the car from father, and subsequently came down to Krugersdorp to collect it.'

The car is believed to have been used for sand or beach racing on the Atlantic

coast where, in 1977, the Mk5, a Mk7 and a number of twin engines were sold at an auction of collectable cars. After passing through several hands Richard Baker restored both cars and the Mk5 ran again in February 2006.

The possible origins of this car are of considerable interest. The wheelbase is 88", three inches longer than the advertised 85" for the standard Mk5 chassis although this may actually have been 86" in production. It has a factory -type optional ZF differential which is rare. All this suggests the car was one of the 'L'—so called 'long chassis'—models of which we know definitely of L1 to L9 with all but L1, 2 and 3 accounted for.

Robin Montgomery-Charrington's car, Mk5-L1-51, was advertised for sale by him in *The Autocar* on 5 October 1951 so

Frank Maritz snr and the Cooper at Krugersdorp hillclimb in the early 'sixties. Photos from Frank Maritz jnr.

Mackenzie probably couldn't have had that one as he raced at Ladysmith on 1 October that year. L2 was supplied (also according to Doug Nye) to a Mr Norton but no Mr Norton raced a Cooper single or twin before the late 'fifties, and nothing more is known of this car. It could be that Mr Norton was an agent for Mckenzie but this car was black according to Nye and Mckenzie's clearly wasn't (see photo previous page).

Amongst several more likely candidate is Harry Schell's L3; it probably last raced in Europe in June 1951 but nothing more is known of it. Also unaccounted for, and therefore a possibility, is the twin-engined car that John Cooper raced at Goodwood Easter 1951—his last race in a twin. Cooper could have continued to race that car as a 500 until it was too late for Mackenzie or it could have been sold to Mackenzie without a serial number when Cooper no longer had a need for it.



KIEFTS IN NZ

I am writing about the sidenote in David McKinney's very interesting and well researched article 'Kieft Mysteries in New Zealand', *Loose Fillings* 40, concerning the late Max Fisher's belief that a Mk2 Kieft came to New Zealand from Ireland.

I have recently had a long conversation with Michael Draper. Michael was a life-long friend of Jim Mickle as well as his business partner in the Irish Tapestry Company, Newtownards (Belfast) and Pukekohe (Auckland). He was a sometime driver of the Mickle Jet Car creation. Together they drove overland to New Zealand from Northern Ireland in a Ford 100E Esquire.

Michael is adamant that Jim Mickle didn't have a brother and he knows nothing of an Irish Kieft coming to New Zealand.

Part of the Mickle myth maintained "the brother" - whose christian name no-one seemed to know - was the headmaster at Papakura High School in South Auckland. Inquiries at the school drew another blank, there is no record of a Mickle on the past teachers' register.

I hope none of this denegrates the late Max's tremendous efforts to research and record much of New Zealand's 500 history.

Michael Draper is writing a book detailing his life around cars and the Irish linen trade and borrowed the Jet Car's scrapbook for reference. He was a regular competitor in the Wills Six-Hour and Benson and Hedges saloon car endurance races at Pukekohe in the 1960-70s, usually partnering Roger Hood, a local tractor dealer. There is no record of Jim Mickle ever racing in New Zealand though previously he competed regularly at Kirkistown in Northern Ireland.

Ian Garmey

I think you've nailed it, Ian. If Michael Draper says it didn't happen, it didn't happen. There remains the possibility, I suppose, than Max's story is right, but he got the wrong name. Perhaps the car will turn up one day and surprise us all I think Jim Meikle did race in NZ, by the way. He entered a 3.4-litre Armstrong-Siddeley in the saloon race at the 1959 GP meeting. He may have been a non-starter, but I've got the official results somewhere, and am fairly sure his name's listed. He also entered a Triumph Herald at Mount Maunganui in December 1962 but that time was definitely a nonstarter.

David McKinney



BILL STONE

Arthur George (Bill) Stone, who died in April at the age of 72, made his name as a driver in the NZ National Formula (1500) in the mid '60s, first with a pushrod-engined Cooper-Ford then a twincam Brabham BT6. He went on to race, mainly in F3, in Europe. Bill Stone was famously the first employee of the March company in 1969. He left in 1971 to found Sabre Automotive, doing contract work for Chevron and Mallock as well as March. His partner in the enterprise was a young Adrian Reynard, to whom he sold out his shares in 1976. Sabre became Reynard while Bill returned to NZ and a life of farming.

Before long however he was back in England, first running another fabrication business and then getting involved in touring-car management. The following year Reynard hired him as the first employee of the BAR Formula 1 team, and he then joined Minardi before returning to NZ for good with his second wife, the former Susanne Mallock.

What is not so well-known about Bill Stone's racing career is that it started in air-cooled machinery. He won the NZ 250 airfield championship on a Jawa CZ in 1960 and 1961, before switching to four wheels with a 650 Triumph-powered hillclimb special built by former JBS driver John Scurrah. He then moved on to the little-raced ex-Frost Mk9 Cooper-Norton 500, which he used in Auckland area hillclimbs in the 1964 season, and the start of the following season. He also raced it in minor events at Pukekohe, Ardmore and Matamata - and bigger events as well. He was a competitor in the Gold Star race at Pukekohe in November 1964, possibly the last time an air-cooled car raced at this

Bill Stone at Pukekohe with the big-twin JAP in the ex Ron Frost Cooper Mk9-26-55. Photo from David McKinney.

level in New Zealand. Although listed in the programme for this race at 499cc, it is believed he had now fitted an 1100 JAP twin. He then moved up to the National Formula class. *DM*

LES LESTON

Les Leston died in May at the age of 91 after being ill for many years. He was famous world-wide for his equipment and accessories business in High Holborn, London. Les first raced a Jaguar and then a modified Kieft 500 as the Leston Special and was a works driver for Cooper in 1954, winning the British F3 championship. The same year and into 1955 he raced an 1100 JAP engined Cooper, perhaps the last driver to do so seriously.

CLASSIFIEDS

For sale: 1958 Scarab/Triumph 650, extensive NSW history. Triumph pre-unit 650 twin engine/gearbox. Total restoration 2008-9. Asking \$19,500. Terry Perkins, 0265 835765 or trp62129@hotmail.com

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: Sidney Rudge, built mid-'50s by Len Sidney, 1938 4v Rudge 500, later JAP and Vincent. Ready to roll \$25,000, John Hazelden, 03 5968 4025

For sale: Walkem Vincent, converted mid-'50s from the original 1952 Walkem Manx. No engine but comes with CoD and log book. \$20,000, Paul Zahra, 0418 362 369 or z.oz@rocketmail.com

SYDNEY'S PIONEERING HOOPER 500

The Sydney-built Hooper 500, which first appeared in January 1948 at Hawkesbury hillclimb, was not quite the first Australian-built 500. But it was the first "real 500," in that it was the first east-coast car to use purpose-built chassis and suspension, unlike the naive, almost clumsy, cars which had appeared earlier. Even more encouraging for the infant Australian 500cc movement, it was the first 500 to make regular appearances, and almost from its initial appearance it proved faster in sprints and hillclimbs than all but the most powerful conventional cars.

Bill and Jack Hooper ran Davidson & Napier, on the corner of Foster and Blackburn Sts in the Sydney CBD, near Wentworth Ave's motorcycle alley and immediately behind the Golf Shop in Elizabeth St, which for many years was famous for its rooftop neon sign of a putting golfer. From before WW2 the business had specialised in motorcycle frame repairs and tube and exhaust-pipe bending; Sid Napier later moved to do the same sort of work in-house for the big motorcycle supplier Hazell & Moore. Historian Brian Green-

by Graham Howard

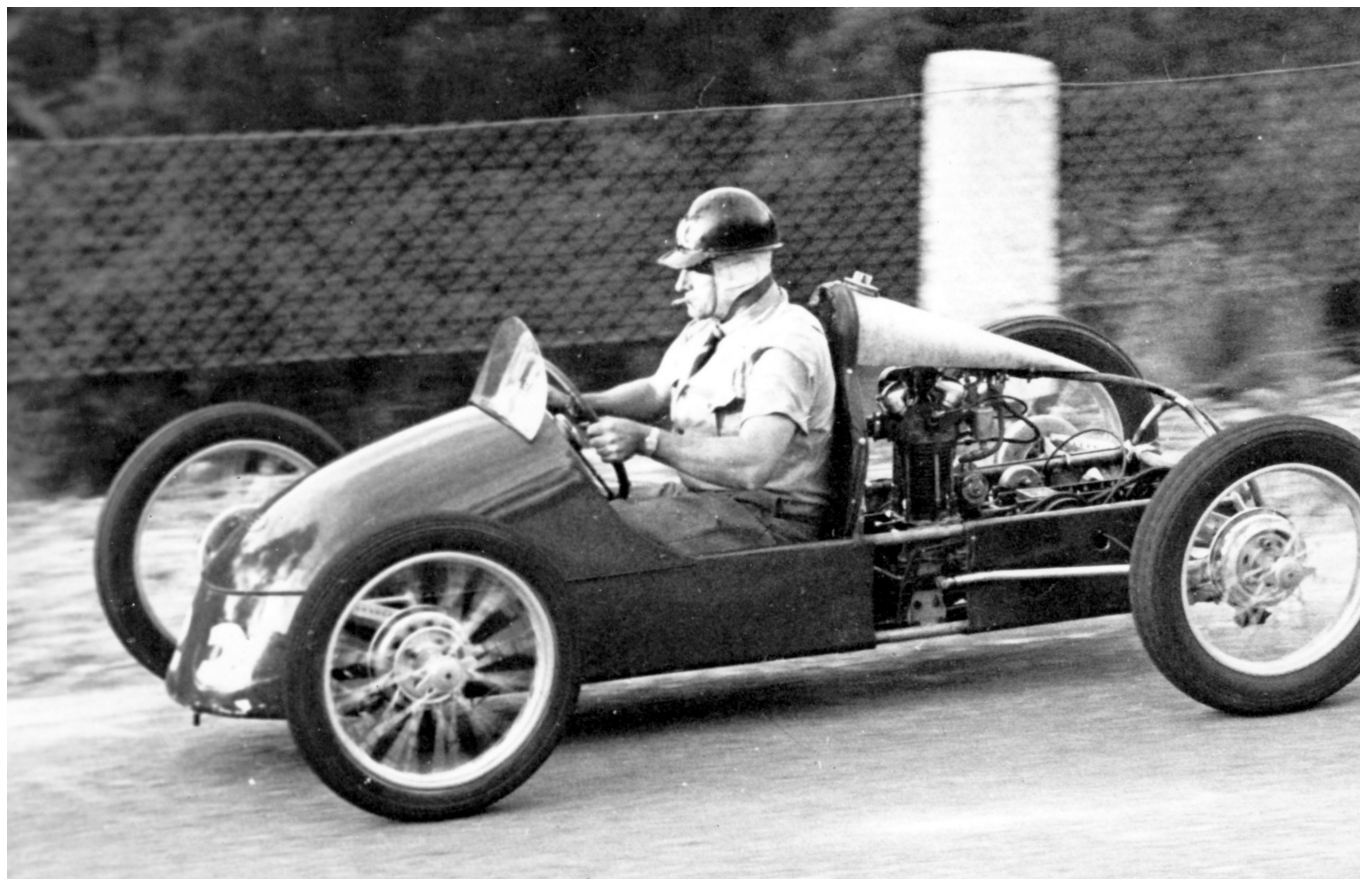
field recalled Jack Hooper had been a useful grass-track motorcycle racer pre-war; hard to say, then, whether this was an unlikely background to have produced such a well-thought-out four-wheel racer, or whether the Hooper brothers' specialisation in two-wheel machinery meant they had nothing to unlearn.

No question, however, that it was their small workshop and their professional skills which allowed them to build the car in just ten months, and even that time – as Fred Schubach pointed out in his March 1958 story about the car in Australian Motor Sports magazine – involved "working leisurely," and only at weekends.

It was an admirably light and simple car. Schubach wrote that it copied Fiat 500 track and wheelbase dimensions, but otherwise the car was highly original. It had a chassis of two pairs of 1.5 inch 14g chrome moly tube, with cross members and 8" vertical joiners at front, rear and behind the seat. The chassis was said to weigh 80 lbs and the complete car, without nose paneling, weighed 450 lbs.

Suspension at each corner used a short transverse quarter-elliptic spring as a bottom link, and a top wishbone made from pairs of 1.5 x 0.25 inch steel strip, drilled for lightness. Each wishbone pivoted on a Model T Ford kingpin. There were no dampers front or rear, the car relying on interleaf friction. Fabricated front uprights incorporated 1930s Morris Minor axle ends. Fabricated rear uprights used the outer ends of a Minor rear axle with a second bearing carried in a bolted-on machined alloy housing, and later there was a long radius arm on each side. Driveshafts were from WW2 Norton sidecars, which had a powered third wheel.

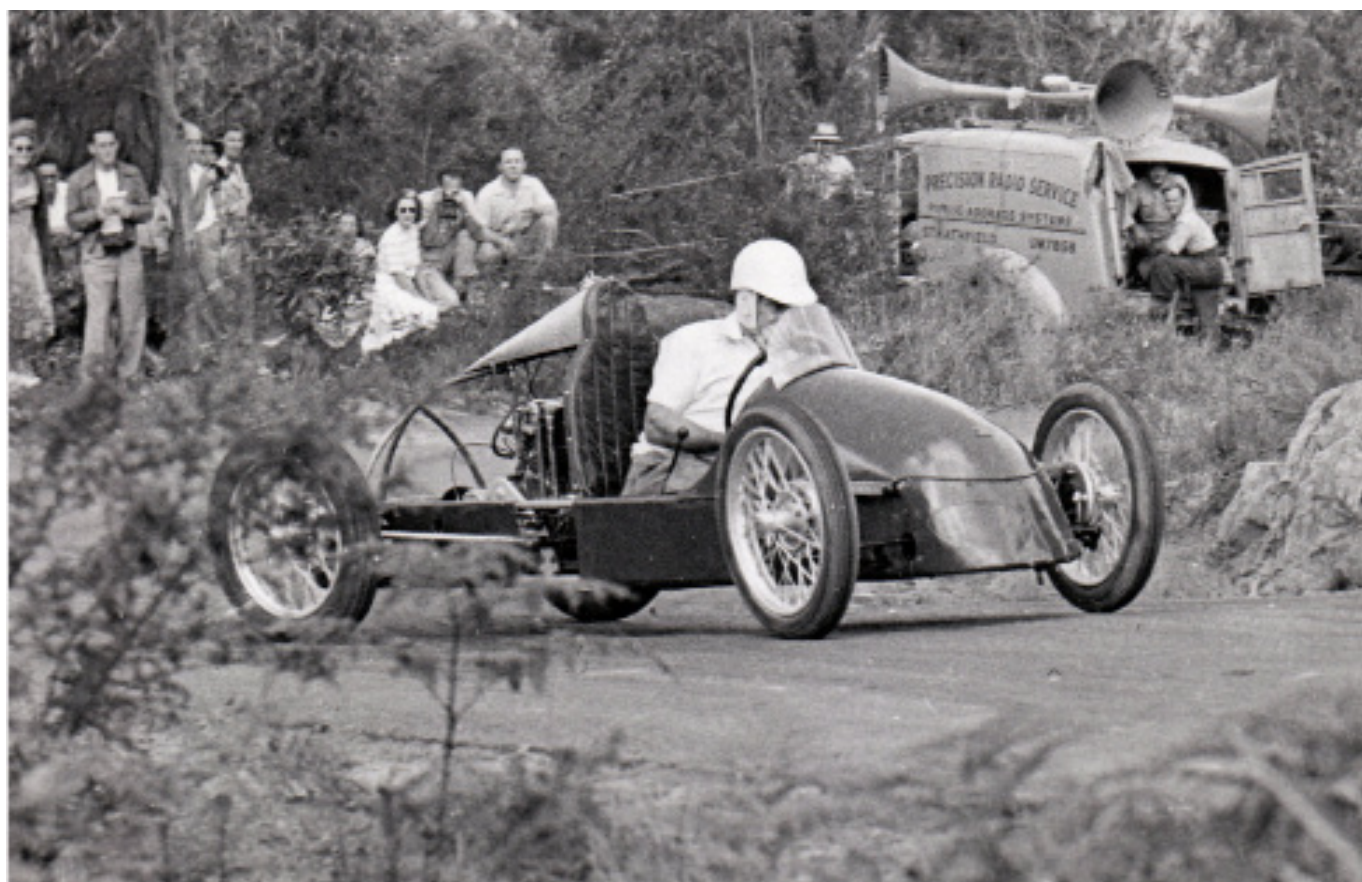
Brakes were Morris Minor, operated by motorcycle clutch cables; during 1949 the rears, and later the fronts, were converted to hydraulic. Front wheels were 19-inch Minor, rears 18-inch from a Raleigh three-wheeler. Steering was by Model T Ford epicyclic reduction box and drop arm, a beautifully light and compact system. The track rods needed to be mounted ahead of the pedals for space reasons, but if the Ford drop-arm was ahead of the pedals



it would reverse the steering action. The drop-arm was therefore located behind the axle centreline, operating a pivoted fore-and-aft idler arm running between the clutch and brake pedals and connected to the two track rods at its forward end. It was the car's only apparent compromise. It also had some geometric faults, and during 1949 it was replaced by a rack and pinion – mounted ahead of the pedals! – manufactured by Bill Hooper.

Mostly driven by Jack Hooper, the car ran its first year with a heavily-modified 1928 TT Triumph single-cylinder pushrod engine, in which form it was very effective. However, from early 1949 this engine was replaced by a year-old ex-Vic Duggan five-stud JAP, with a big improvement in performance. The engine, the upright Norton gearbox and the final drive axle, were carried between a pair of steel plates running the length of the engine bay and rubber-bushed at the front. On debut the car had simple alloy side panels only, but

Left: Jack Hooper coasting down to the start at Hawkesbury showing the lowered headrest/fuel tank used with the JAP. Photo from Brian Greenfield.
Right: Jack and cigarette at Leura, January 1952.
Below: Jack with the Triumph engine at Foley's Hill, February 1949. Photos this by page by Byron Gunther.



from its second outing it also had a simple two-piece nose cowl. Despite later claims that the Hooper never had bodywork or hydraulic brakes, these features were all mentioned in reports from the period

The car had a total of 27 starts between 1948 and 1952, but only in sprints and hillclimbs (the Hoopers claiming lack of suitable race competition) and never outside NSW. It was only with the arrival of Ron and Austin Tauranac's ES2 Norton-powered 500 in 1949 that the Hooper even had another 500 to run against, and the Tauranac car took nearly three years to become closely competitive.

With its Triumph engine, the Hooper's best quarter-mile time was 18.25sec, but with the JAP it came down to a best of 16.65 at Castlereagh in November 1949, where its two-way average was 16.71. It never approached these times in later years, its best time at the 1951 Australian Records meeting at Mt Druitt being an average 17.86. At the Australian sprint championships in 1952, the Hooper's 17.44, against Dick Cobden's 17.07 with the 500cc Mk5 Cooper JAP, was writing on the wall.

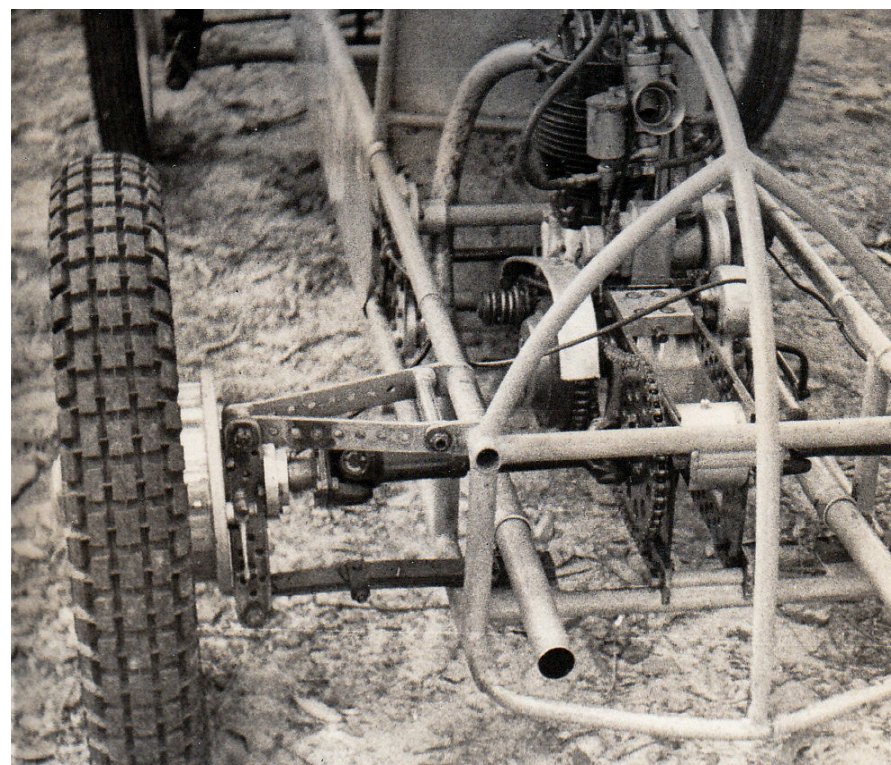
While Triumph-powered, the Hooper's only hillclimb appearances were at Hawkesbury, where it got down to a best of 64.5sec. This dropped by a neat four seconds on its first outing with the JAP, improved further to 59.2 in November 1949 when the car set outright FTD, and came down further to 58.99 in November 1950.

It twice set FTD at Foley's, its best a 21.56 in February 1951, just .01 slower than the then outright record held by George Reed's Ford V8. In July 1952 the Hooper ran 21.63 when Cobden's Cooper 500 ran 21.23 and — significantly — Ron Tauranac ran 22.03. At King Edward Park in October 1952 both Cobden and Tauranac were faster, and while the Hooper was clearly off-tune, this was its final appearance.

It was later owned by motorcycle racer Tony Fatouros, who fitted it with a single-cam Norton engine before selling it to Austin Tauranac. When it re-appeared it had bigger brakes, beefed-up suspension (including telescopic dampers) and a complete new alloy body painted lemon yellow. The stumpy Hooper wheelbase does not appear to have been changed. Austin raced the car for just on a year, between mid-1955 and mid-1956, (as a Norton Special; he did not enter it as a Ralt), and won a number of handicap races at Mt Druitt, although not as many as later claimed. He also finished an impressive third in a C-grade three-lap scratch race at Mt Panorama at Easter 1956. Next owner lived in Broken Hill, from where it moved to Adelaide in the late 1950s; by the early 1960s it had dropped from sight.

Brian Greenfield remembered Bill Hooper as "Very taciturn; Jack was more

Below: the Hooper on debut with twin-exhaust TT Triumph, Hawkesbury, 1948.
Photo by Eric Cunningham.



the front man." Fred Schubach recalled that the Hoopers never joined the 500cc Car Club — "They were outsiders." In the early 1950s Brian Johnson, who was working at Omodei's, the motorcycle dealers in nearby Pitt St, was planning a 500 of his own. He often visited the Hooper shop at lunchtime and remembers Ron Tauranac dropping in to talk. While the Tauranac 500 was probably started about the same time as the Hooper, in early 1947, it took longer to complete, but the two cars had several features in common, notably the use of strip-steel wishbones and Model T steering box. As well, the Tauranac car—but only for its first two outings—followed the Hooper in not using dampers.

At least two later NSW-built cars, the JAP-powered car built by Bob Joass and first raced by Ash Marshall and the Rudge-powered car built by Dave Stephenson, showed some Hooper/Tauranac influence. Both used Model T steering boxes, while the Marshall 500 (where the influence was more Tauranac than Hooper) also used strip-steel front wishbones.



After starting Loose Fillings in 1999, Graham Howard has retired from full time duties as Editor. He has edited — and written a great deal—of the first 40 issues and we all owe him our gratitude for bringing so much air-cooled racing car history to light. Graham will continue to contribute to Loose Fillings. Publisher Garry Simkin will look after news, views, gossip and small ads. Production editor Terry Wright will handle major articles and photographs on air-cooled history or technical topics. However, please contact either on any matter.

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