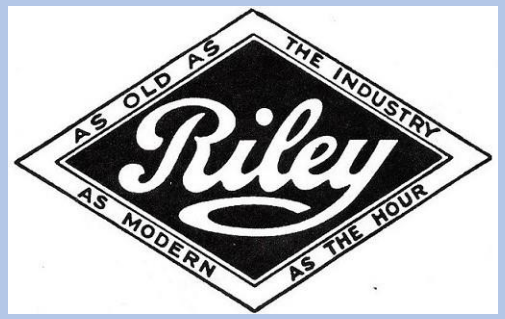


Rileys

The Way They Weren't.

"Rileys with a different style of body to their original one, when they were new."

By David Trunfull

(with the help of many others)

Introduction

- **While collecting photographs for my booklet on Australian Coach-built Rileys I discovered that I had many good photos of cars that I believed *had* *" a different style of body to the one they had, when they were new."***
- **As Rileys were modified or updated from the early days, they are a part of the Riley world that I believe should be recorded. This presentation does not go into the pros and cons of the construction of them, but is purely a pictorial record of them.**

- **For some of the cars, all that is different to how they were originally constructed, is the body, while others also have modified and shortened chassis and mechanicals. Some use a newly constructed reproduction chassis.**
- **Many of the photographs I have taken myself, some have been given to me, some have appeared in Riley magazines, and others I have copied from Facebook. A grateful thankyou to those of you who have assisted me with the photographs.**
- **If I have made a statement about a car, I have either researched the information to the best of my ability, or I have been advised by people whose knowledge of Rileys I trust. lf I have made any mistakes, please accept my sincerest apologies.**

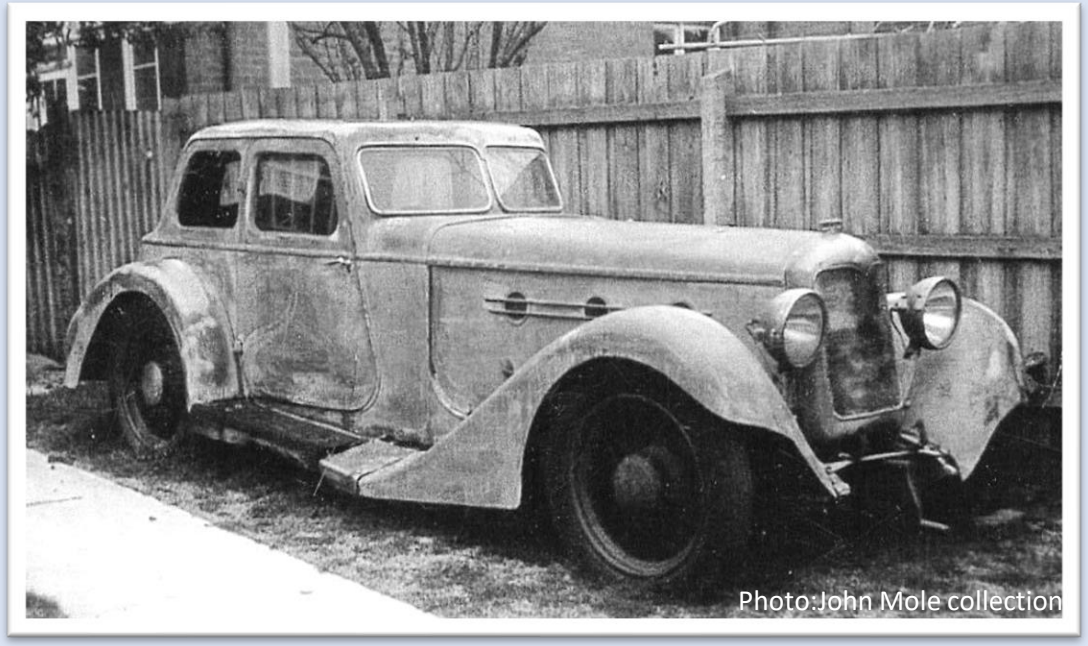


Photo:John Mole collection

This is a Side-Valve which was re-bodied by Martin and King in the 1930s. It looks like it should have a straight eight, rather than a 1.5 litre side-valve four. The body was for sale in the 1970s in the Blue Diamond. I don't think there were any buyers.

The updating of an earlier chassis, with a later style body was quite common in the 1930s and 1940s. Some re-styles were more successful than others.

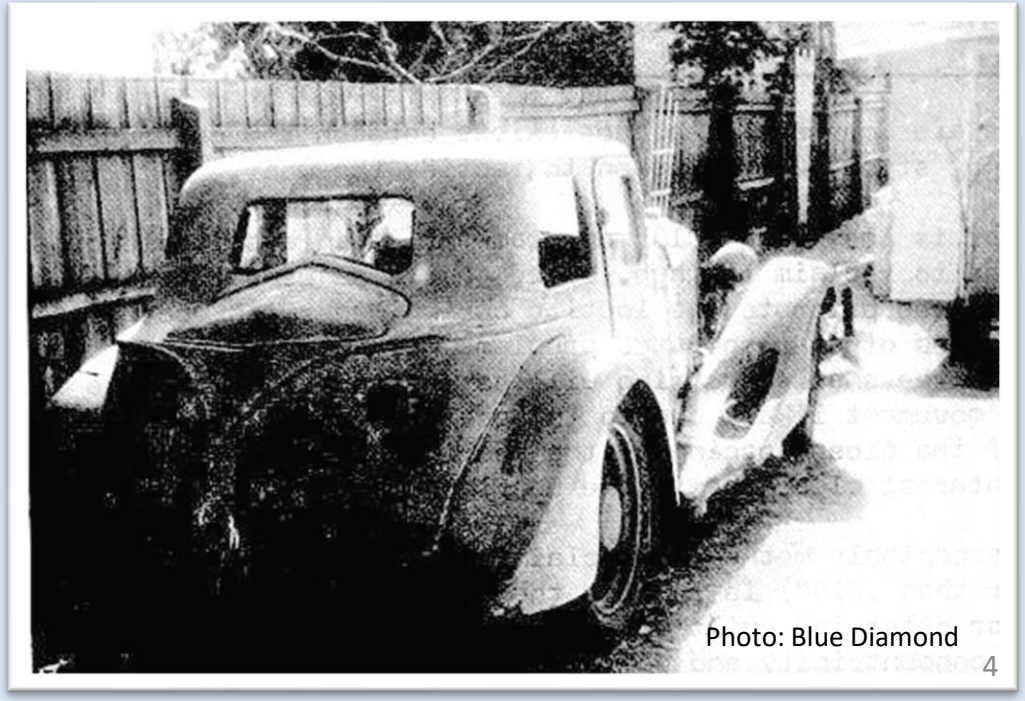
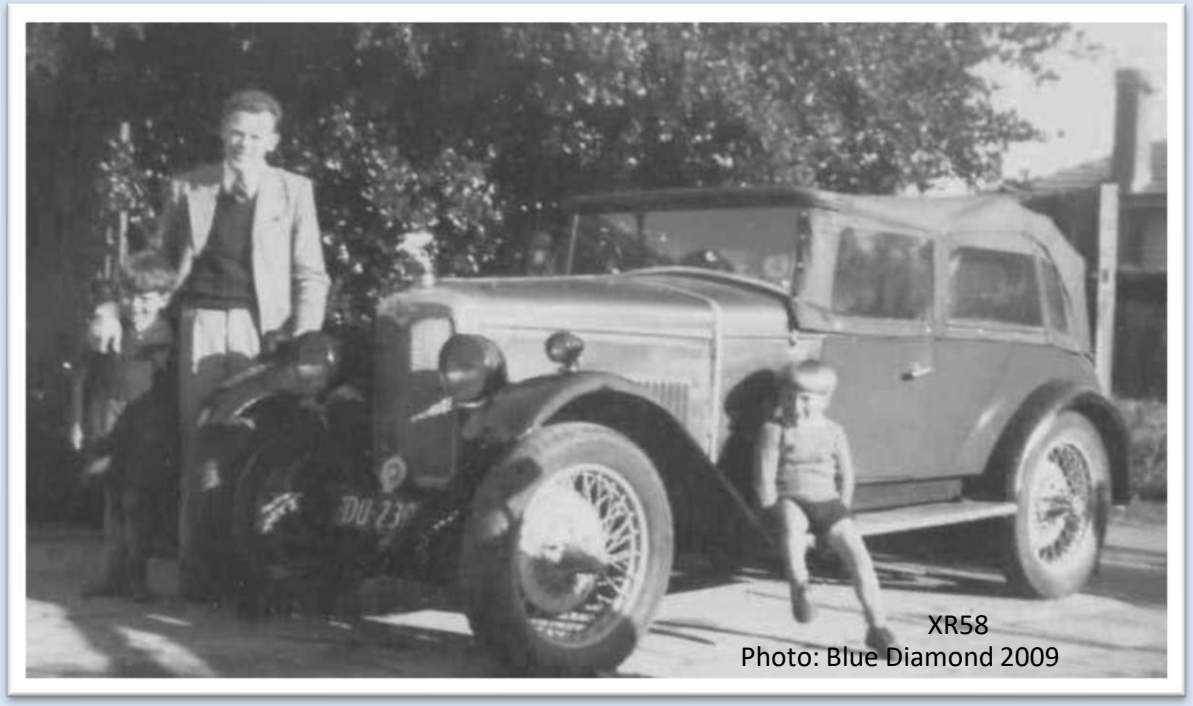
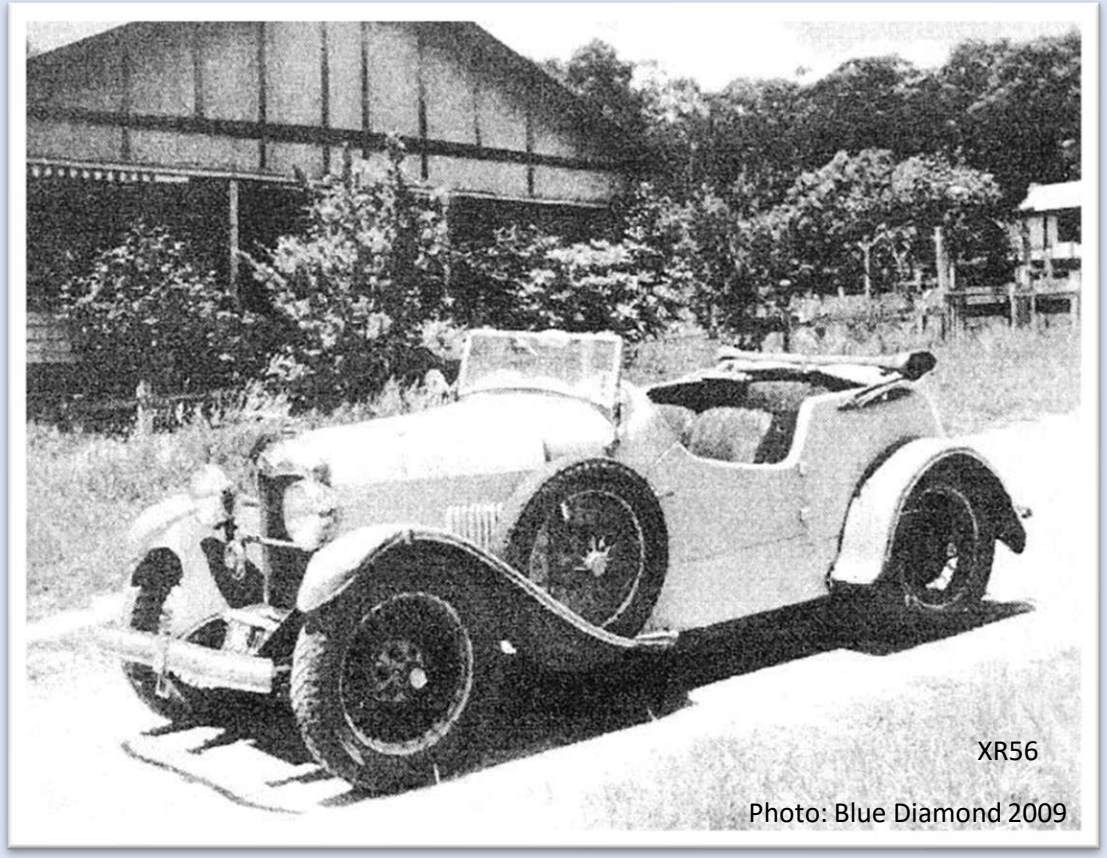


Photo: Blue Diamond



XR58
Photo: Blue Diamond 2009

This car was 2-seater, that the owner converted into a 4-seat tourer to accommodate his growing family.



XR56
Photo: Blue Diamond 2009

I haven't got much information about this car or the next two, but I think that they are vintage tourers that have been updated with a 1930s style body.


XR57
Photo: Blue Diamond 2009

This car is photographed outside the Commonwealth Government Marine Engine Works in Port Melbourne in 1957.


608032
Photo: Blue Diamond 2009

60557

Photo: Brian Graham

This car started with just a bare chassis (60557), and parts were collected from several cars. It has a fabric body on it, as does the one below.

6010178

This car is on a shortened chassis.


XR7

These well known and travelled Riley Nines have owner designed and very practical body work.


XR23

Photo:Phil Evans

This car was constructed in N.S.W. but came to Victoria.

This is another car whose basis was a bare chassis

An excited potential owner rang me once to say that he had found a “Brooklands” in Queensland. I suggested to him that for the price that was being asked for it, it was probably unlikely. He proceeded with the purchase and completed its construction.

This car was completed by the son of Barney Dentry.

XR11

Photo: Coachbuild.com

These two cars are reproductions of the James Flood bodied Nines, that competed in the 1932 Monte Carlo Rally, driven by Jean Robertson and Kath Howell, and Captain Pat Morice. The one on the left is now in Europe.

609601

Photo: John Mole

These cars are built on Mark lV chassis, rather than the Mark lV Plus chassis of the cars that competed in the Rally.

XR32

Photo: Riley Gazette 2020

What was this driver looking at?


6013289

Photo: John Mole Collection

This Nine to me has a French look.

XR9

Photo: John Mole Collection

This car has a Nine chassis, but has a 12/4 engine.

XR52

Photo: John Mole Colllection

This article about the Rizzo special is from Australian Motor Sports in 1947. The article states that the engine is a 12/4, the differential is from a Riley 9, and the chassis was constructed using parts from a highly modified 1935 Standard married to bits of an Austin 16 Would you still call it a Riley?

AUSTRALIAN SPECIALS—No. 12

"The RILEY SPECIAL"

Right-hand man to genial Rex Marshall of the well-known Monza horse breeding establishment, Arthur Rizzo was in an ideal position to reap the benefit of experienced advice and help during the building of this extremely potent Special, which has shown itself in its comparatively brief competition life to be one of the quickest litre-and-a-half unblown cars we have out here; times of 19 seconds for the accelerated quarter-mile on the very slippery surface at Marsden Park last November and 22.92 seconds on Foleys Hill, nearly two seconds faster than any other unblown 1,500 c.c. car that has even been up that tricky climb, speak for themselves.

The Riley is gradually achieving respectability in appearance nowadays, appearing first of all without any body from the seats back, then with a naked radiator block, and we understand that by the time this has been printed it will have been fitted with bonnet sides; this seems to us to be the logical way of building a Special—to look after the chassis bugs first and then to worry about elegance of bodywork later, although it goes without saying that a properly designed chassis will lend itself to elegance far more than will one of lesser breed.

As with most Specials, Arthur's aim when he started its construction was to make a car that would meet his ideal as nearly as his pocket would permit and, again as with most Specials, the result is a living demonstration of his ability to overcome the difficulties raised by apparently irreconcilable bits of different make within the limits imposed by available finance. In this connection we cannot help the thought that the fitting of two Ford V8 engines into as many Riley chassis was influenced to an unknown extent by the construction of this Special—or vice versa—as the engine came from a Sprite tourer and various other components came from a V8 Riley saloon, which is still a V8 but with a difference.

The Riley engine is, of course, admirably conceived for competition purposes, with its inclined overhead valves in fully machined hemispherical combustion chambers, and although at present two SU carburettors are fitted, Arthur is quick to take a hint and was having a pretty close look at the Dixon installation on the Snow Riley at Nowra last month. Ignition is by Scintilla Vertex, firing one central plug in each of the four cylinders; the exhaust manifold is a beautifully flowing piece of work—aluminium sprayed for appearance and heat transference qualities; and cooling is looked after by a Willys 77 radiator block in conjunction with pump and fan. In unit with the engine is the Wilson preselector gearbox, the controlling lever of which is mounted in the usual Riley quadrant on the right hand side of the steering column.

The drive is taken from this to the back axle by a short propeller shaft and the back axle itself is from a Riley 9; there are two crown wheel and pinion sets which give a choice of ratios of 6 to 1 and 5.22 to 1, and the normal rear tyre size is 16 x 6.50. Mathematically minded characters may care to work out the score—Arthur states that although he didn't like doing it, he has had the engine up to 6,200 a couple of times.

So much for what makes it go. It is of interest to note that the engine was bought in March, 1946, and after looking around for a month for a suitable chassis the decision was made that one would have to be made, and thereupon a Standard 9 h.p. chassis of 1935 date was set about, married to bits of Austin 16 h.p., turned upside down, fitted with seven tubular cross members of chrome molybdenum aircraft steel, and became the basis of the Special.

The chassis frame members pass beneath both the front and rear axles, in a manner similar to the original Alta, and this gives the car a very low centre of gravity. Suspension is by semi-elliptic springs all round—the front springs being of Riley 9 origin, straightened suitably, while those at the back came from the Standard 9; shock absorbers were bought new (about the only bought parts of this car). Things are a bit cramped in front, where there is only 1/16-in. clearance between the radiator block and the front axle, and again between the front of the engine and the radiator block; to fit the dynamo in, a bit had to be machined from the front end and Arthur has often wondered what would happen if the engine took it into its head to shift forward on its mountings.

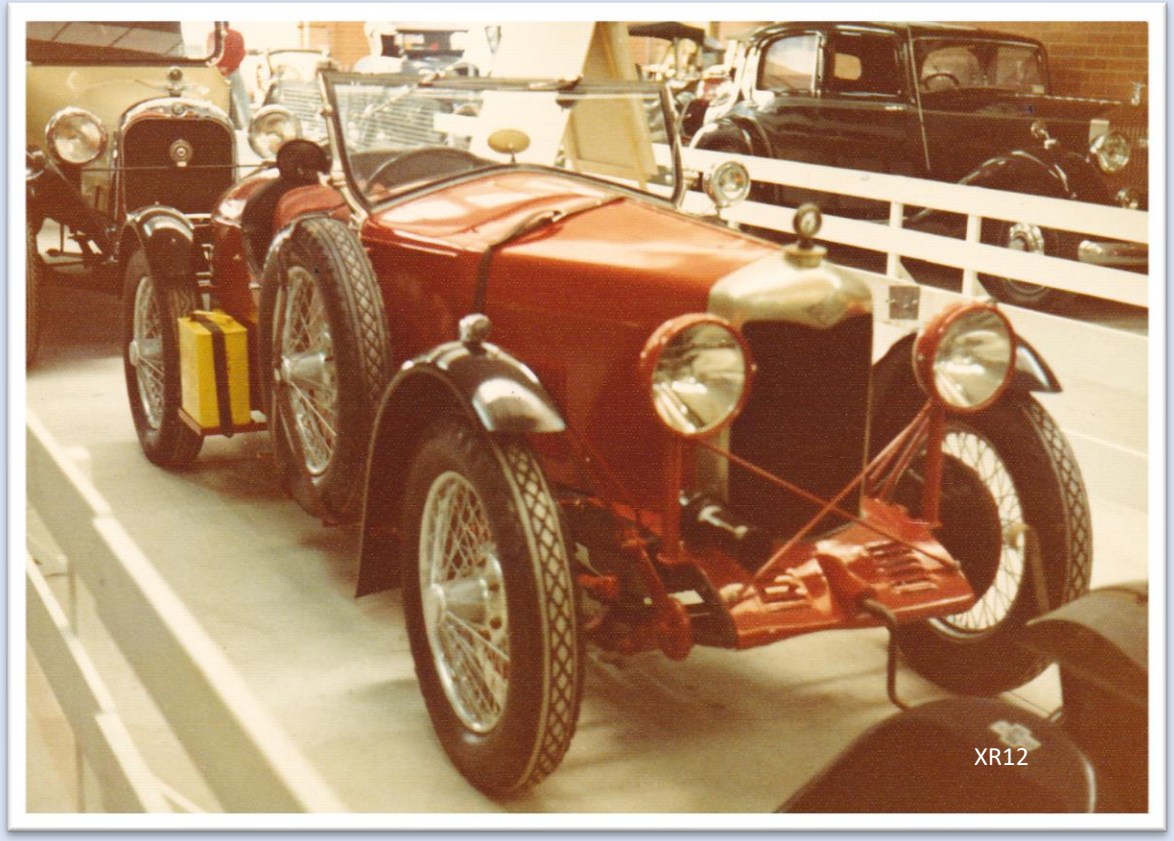
The brakes themselves, i.e., back plates, drums and shoes, are original Riley, but the operating gear is specially made, and works by cables in flexible conduit. Pedal movement in relation to braking effort is large, with the effect that the brakes are very progressive and powerful, but lose their tune rather readily; to offset this, there is

XR64 Photo: Arthur Babbington?

This is a more recent photo of the Rizzo special

This photo was taken outside the Tasmanian Parliament in 1989 on our Club's first trip to Tasmania. Unfortunately I didn't get any details of the car.

XR5

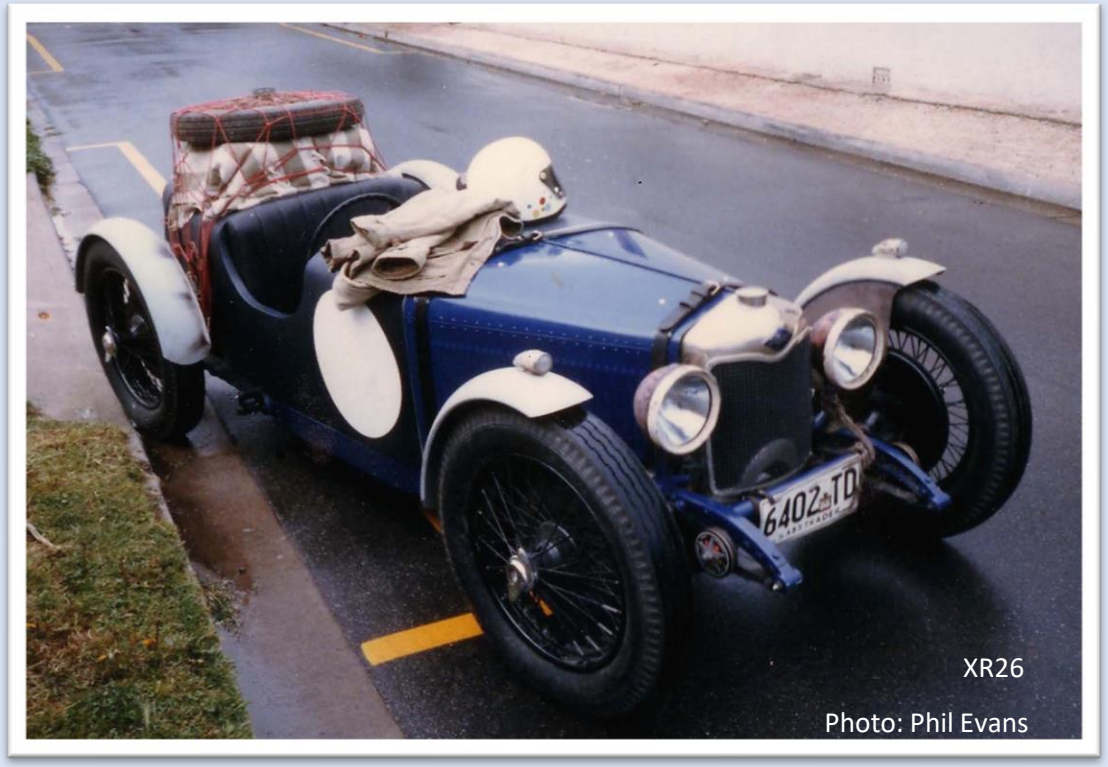


These two cars were built by a Victorian Club member in the 1970s and 80s. The photo on the left was taken at the James Flood Antique Automobile Show in 1975,where I had a part time job.

This car was based on a Merlin 9 chassis.


XR34
Photo: RMCA Gazette 2020

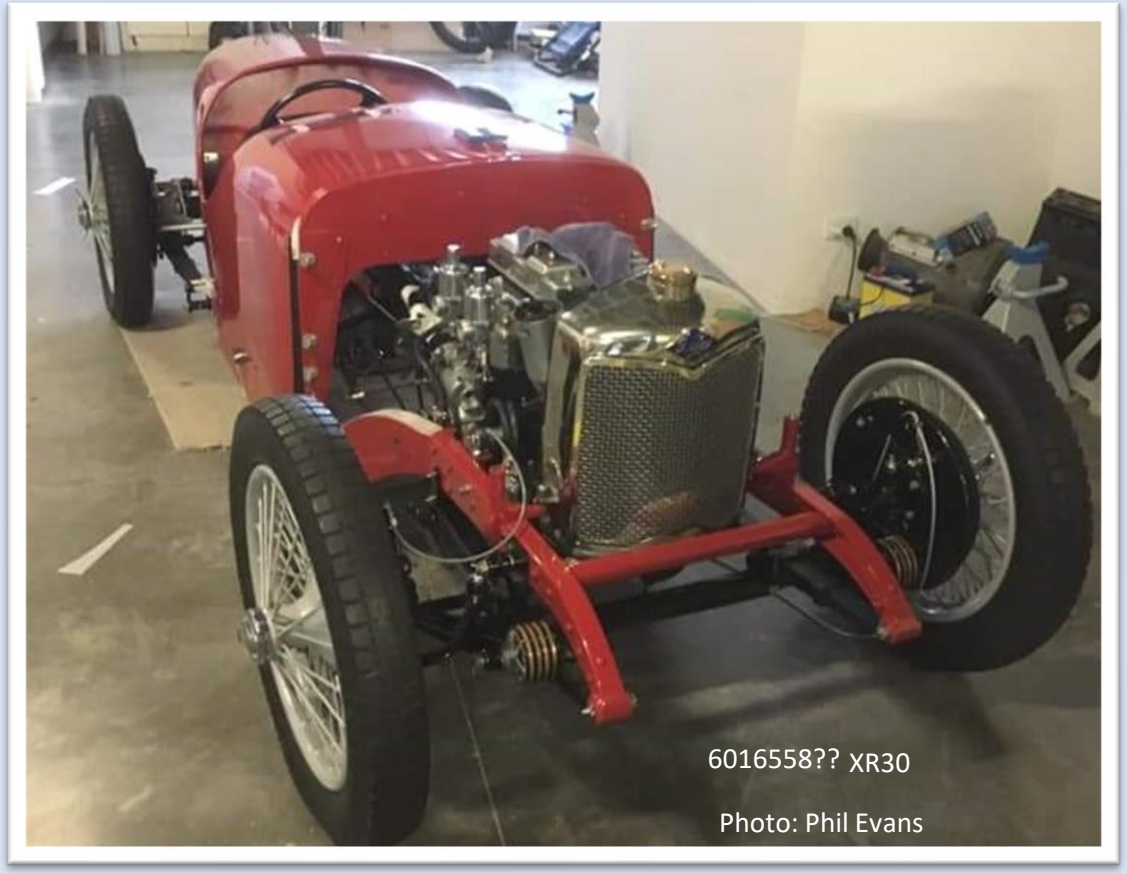

26F4654?
Photo: John Mole



XR26

Photo: Phil Evans

The next three cars were constructed using a reproduction "Brooklands" type chassis



6016558?? XR30

Photo: Phil Evans

XR29
Photo:Ean McDowell

This car is now in Europe

607115 Photo: Noel Wyatt

This Nine is now powered by a 12/4 engine and was developed and raced widely by its previous owner.

Previously it had been made into a “mud bash” special in the 1960s. The keen eyed should be able to recognise a couple of members in this photo.

6018281
Photo: John Mole collection

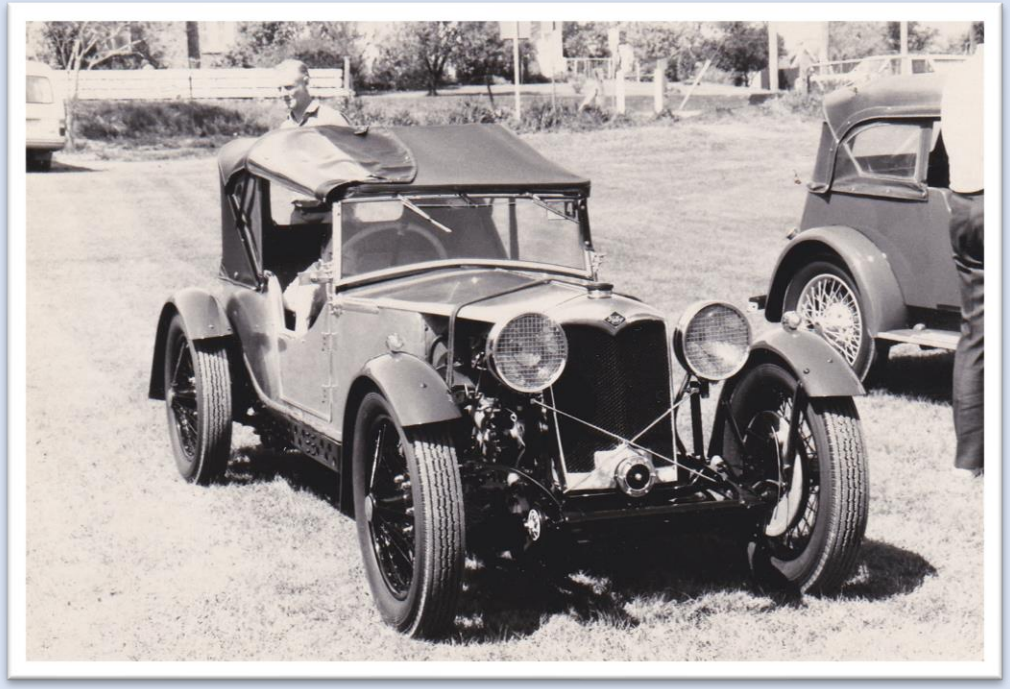
The creator of this car once owned a genuine Brooklands, bodied by James Flood.

This is a Western Australian Car

6010504
Photo: Brian Graham

This was built in N.S.W., but now lives in Bendigo.

6019548
Photo: Brian Graham



This car was photographed at a Concours at Wattle Park in the 1980s.

Photo: Matthew French

This car was photographed at Lakeside Raceway QLD in the 1980s.

XR62 Photo: Barry Hickson

This car has a Plus or Plus Ultra series chassis but a later body was fitted on it, most likely from a Le Mans Sport Tourer. It was assembled in the weeks prior to this Warwick Farm race meeting in 1965. (Info: Bob Winley Dec. 2020)

XR33 Photo: Riley Gazette Jan 2020

These are Queensland based cars.

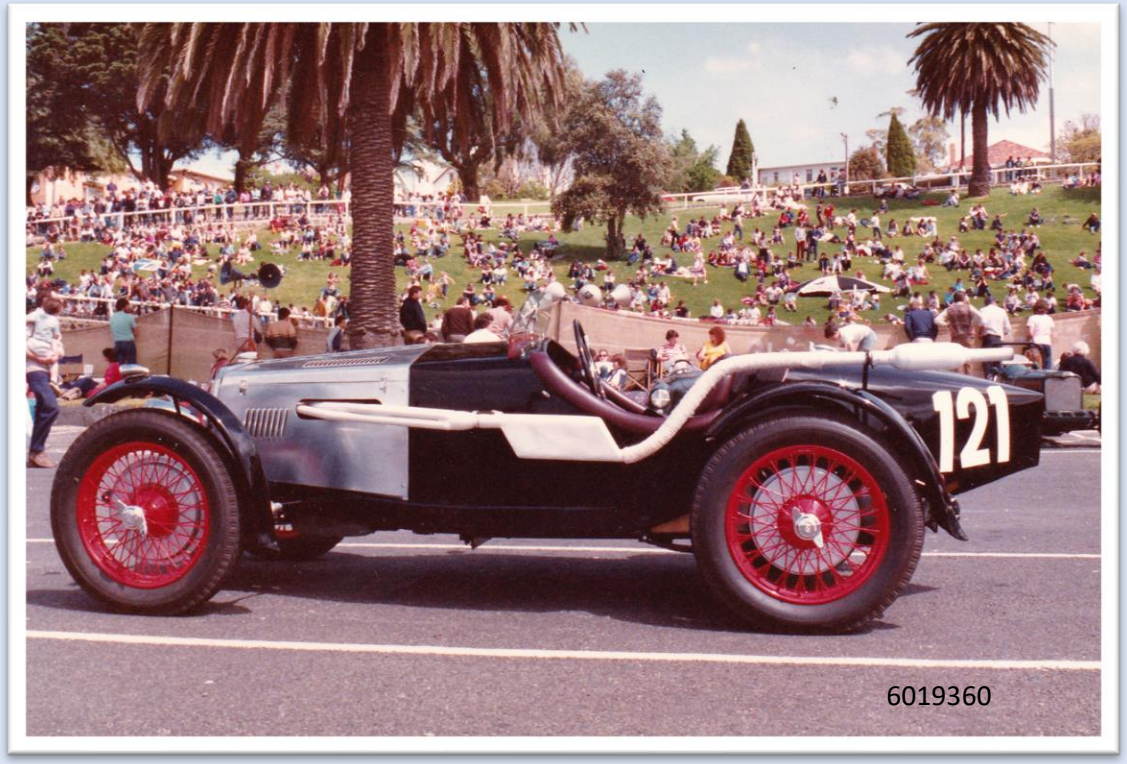
The basis for this car was a Kestrel 9, that had been bought by a previous owner to assist with the restoration of his Lynx.

I photographed this car in the rain at the Ballarat Rally, and didn't note what or whose it was.

Recently Matthew French posted the photo of the car on the right on Facebook, and I thought it looked very similar to the one above. We concluded that it was the same car, and it was built in Queensland, came to Victoria, and is now in the U.K.

6013034
Photo: Matthew French

This Nine was updated by the father of a well known N.S.W. member in the 1950s. It later came to Victoria, and is now in New Zealand. This photo was taken in Queensland, but the car is known to have travelled widely across Australia.



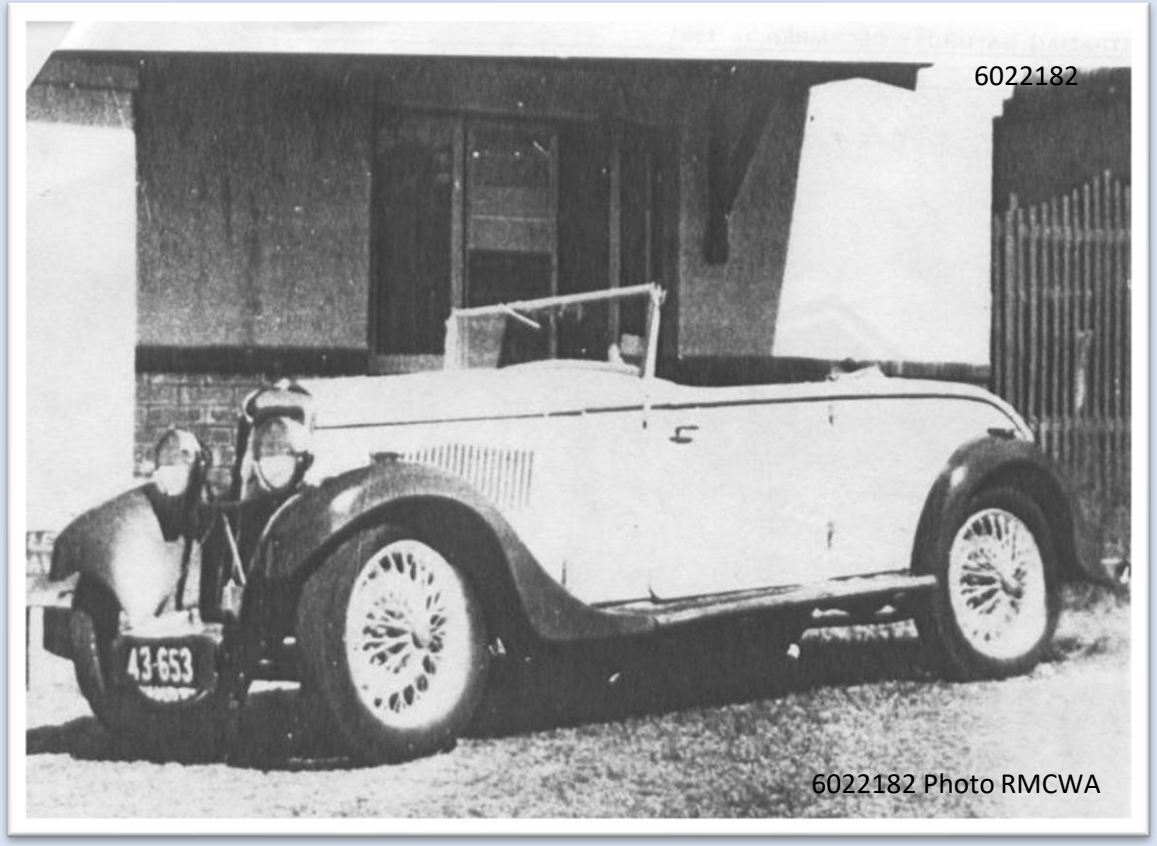
6019360

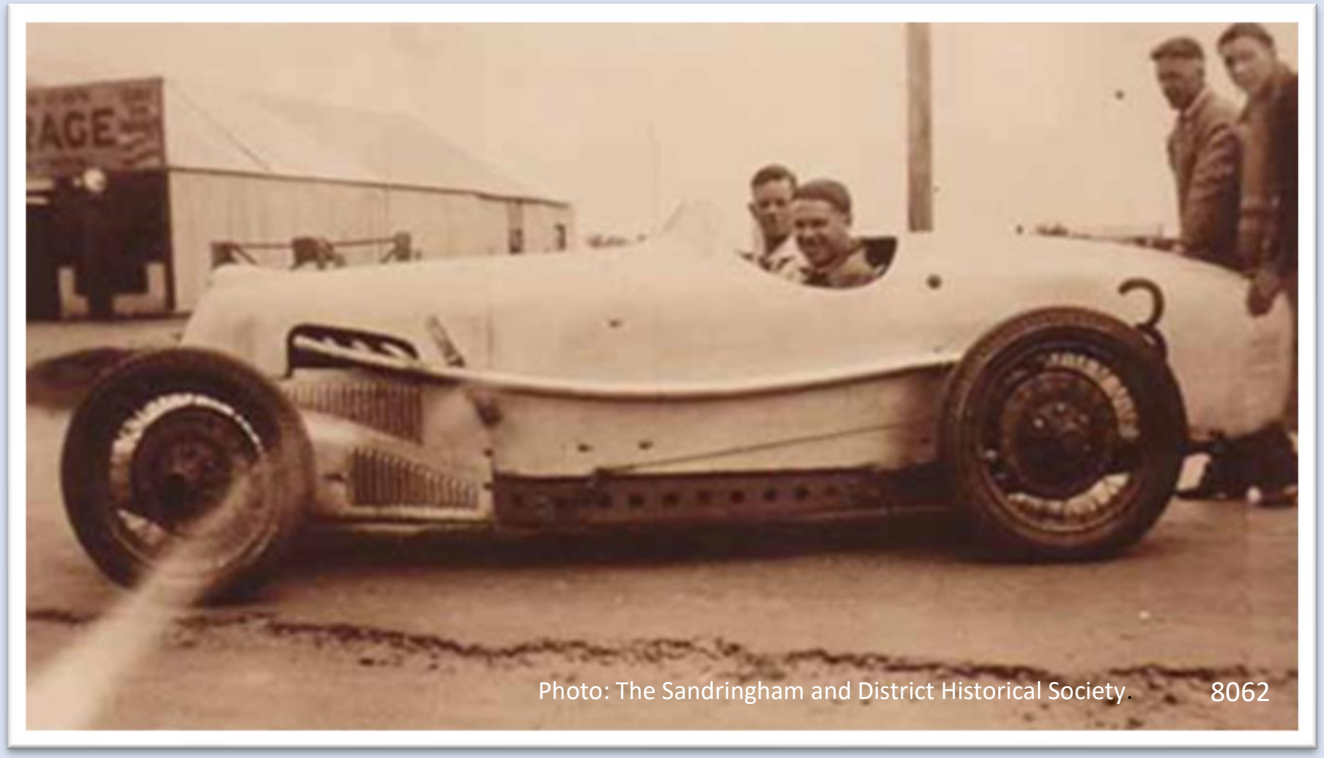
This car was constructed in the 1980s. This photo was taken at the Geelong Sprints.

This car started life as a Le Mans Sports Tourer, which was a Riley model produced in Australia. This car is now believed to be in W.A.

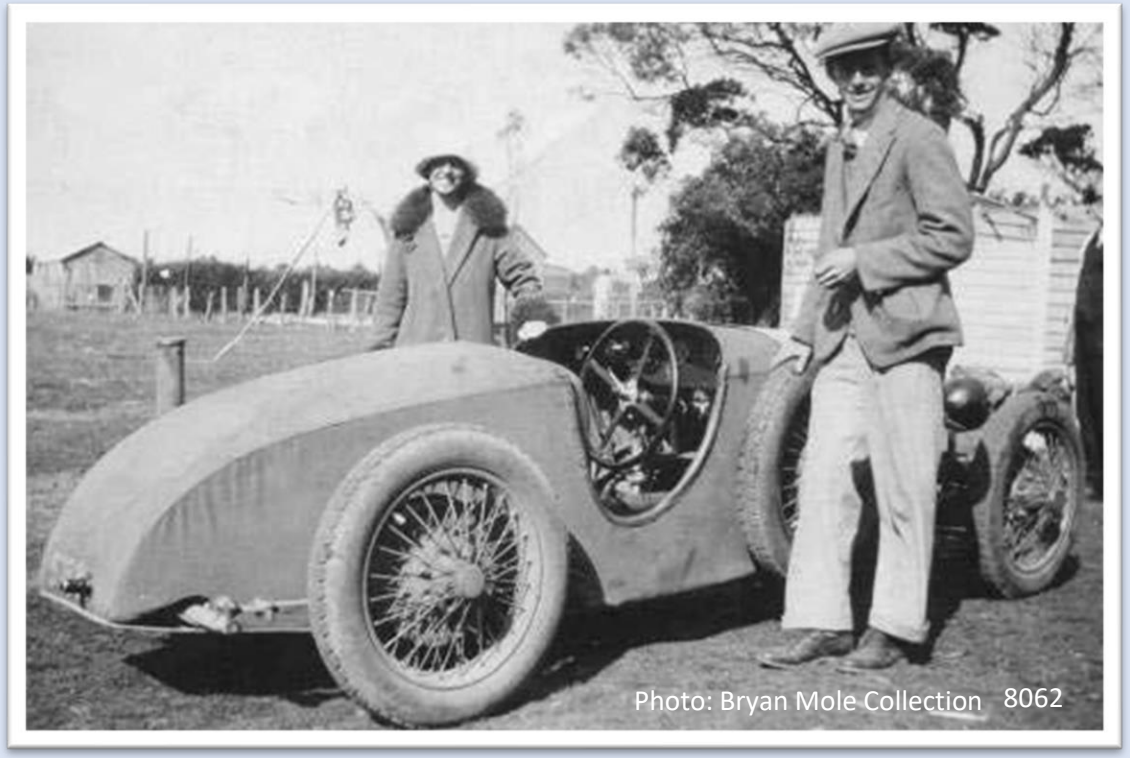
The photo on the right is similar to what the car above would have looked like when it was new. (It is pictured at Warwick Farm race track.)

This tourer was created using the chassis of the roadster below. The roadster body was built by Bolton's of Perth.





These photographs show how a car can be developed over time, in an effort to remain competitive. I have read that Barney Dentry entered the car on the left, as the "Dentry Special" in races in the 1930s, even though it is still essentially a Riley Brooklands.



This is the same car in earlier times when it had a fabric body

I believe this car started life as a steel bodied Australian version of a Monaco. After an accident, Barney Dentry converted it into a utility for his garage. The current owner converted it into this coupé. It now looks similar to photos I have seen of Australian built coupés, none of which seem to have survived.

This photo of the Dentry "ute" was taken at a Concours held at Dorset Gardens Hotel in the 1980s. In the 1960s it was owned by the Riley Motor Club of Vic., and the signage on the door was still visible, when I first saw the car in the 1970s.

6027664
Photo: Arthur Hilliard

Many years ago this Imp had its original body removed and an RMB engine was installed. Later it is believed that an Autovia V8 engine was fitted. (Source: The Riley Imp by John Gathercole 1988)

The original Imp body of 6027664, was fitted to a lightweight reproduction chassis in the 1950s, by Jack Downing.

XR14
Photo: Matthew French

XR2

This car is reproduction of a Riley Imp, and is from Victoria.

XR16

Photo: Matthew French

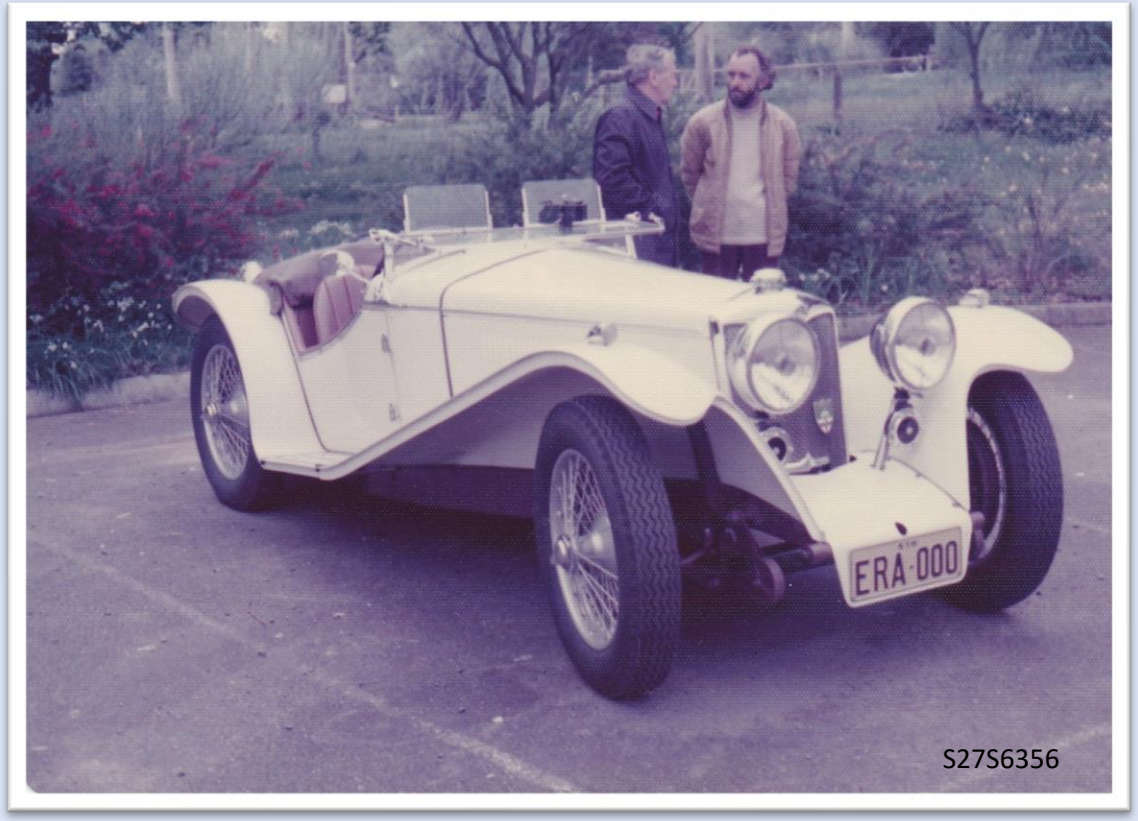
This car used the Sprite S27S6356 for its inspiration.

S27S6356
Photo: Shannon's Club Website.

These cars appear on the "Shannon's Club" website. The owner states that it "was the only Sprite manufactured with MPH style guards and was imported in 1938."

He also states that chassis S27S6356 has been re-bodied with the T.T. style body above. The chassis on the right, now appears to have the Sprite body fitted on what I assume is a reproduction chassis.

XR16
Photo: Shannon's Club Website.



These are photos of S27S6356 in earlier times. The photo on the left was taken at a Victorian Concours at Dorset Gardens in the 1970s.

The photo on the right was taken at a pre-War Riley Motor Club event at Bacchus Marsh in September 1937.

Photo: Shannon's Club Website.

On the Shannon's Club website, the owner calls this chassis a *"Riley Sprite Replica Project".* He states that it is an " *exact replica chassis, jigged from my original Riley Sprite" (chassis number S27S6356)* He also states that the " blue chassis pictured is *" of an identical replica chassis assembled to driveable stage for the owner of an original Sprite body.*

Photo: Matthew French

This is an original Sprite body imported into Queensland without a chassis.


22T994
Photo: David Pagano, FB Sept. 2020

This car is a T.T. Sprite reproduction currently being built in N.S.W.

22T1603
Photo: Geoff Burford BD Nov.2018

This car is built on a 22T chassis.

22T1332
Photo: Brian Graham

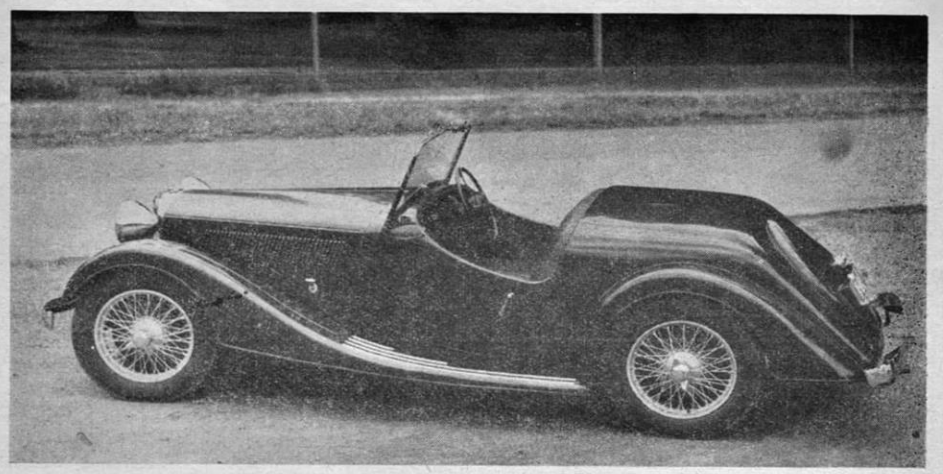
XR55
Photo: Brian Graham

This car is based on an Adelphi 12/4 chassis.

This car was built in N.S.W. on a 1935 6 cylinder chassis. A 2½ Litre engine was fitted. This has now been replaced by a 1½ litre one.

Photo: Riley Gazette 2020

A man from Orange built this roadster from a Kestrel in the 1940's. He shortened its chassis by twelve inches. Even though the car was only about ten years old, his reason for rebodying the car, was its poor condition.



Mr. E. Keegan of Orange, N.S.W., made this appealing roadster out of a Riley 1½-litre Kestrel saloon; the chassis is about a foot shorter than standard.

AUSTRALIAN SPECIALS - - No. 32

"A RATHER SPECIAL RILEY SPRITE"

This month we have for review a Riley, rebuilt and modified by Mr. E. Keegan, of Orange, N.S.W. The car was originally a 1½-litre Kestrel saloon with preselector box, and as the bodywork was in poor condition, he decided to scrap this and attempt to rebuild the car into a comfortable, roomy and economical roadster; the alterations which were carried out were put in hand mainly to adapt the car to Mr. Keegan's own particular requirements rather than to try to improve on the original design, but did bring about a considerable improvement in performance, and the Riley is now an entirely individual and attractive sports car.

After the saloon had been reduced to a stripped chassis, a foot was cut out of each side member and the torque tube; these sections were offered up again in their shortened state, and electrically welded, resulting in a wheelbase of 102 inches. The propeller shaft was shortened and re-splined. Three leaves were removed from each of the rear springs, and a pair of blitz shock absorbers fitted to the back axle; the front springs were rebuilt.

The engine was completely reconditioned; its ports were lightly polished, larger intake valves were fitted and Sprite pistons substituted, giving a compression ratio of 6¼ to 1. As Mr. Keegan has always maintained that mixture distribution has as much bearing on smooth running and economy as it has on performance, he decided to fit two S.U. carburettors in place of the original Zenith.

Two brass body S.U.'s as fitted to the later Morris Cowleys, were found, and fitted experimentally although they were ⅛ inch smaller in the bore than required. It was also decided that they should have their flanges and butterflies turned through 90 degrees, so their bodies were cut behind the butterfly spindles and brazed together in the new position. Amal floats and 8/40 Morris top feed float chamber tops were substituted for the original equipment, and the carburettors were then mounted on a square section inlet manifold, fabricated from sheet steel and serving all ports in common.

It was later found necessary to lighten the dashpot pistons, and after a good deal of experiment, needles were turned up from ⅛ inch brazing rod. The results were so satisfactory that these carburettors have become a permanent fixture. However, subsequent tests proved that fuel was disappearing at an alarming rate, so there was once again recourse to lathe and micrometer, and another pair of needles was made which gave excellent fuel consumption. Acceleration suffered somewhat, but the performance was all that the owner required, and he is quite satisfied with the result.

Due to a previous excursion over rough country, the exhaust pipe and silencer had been wiped off together with a major part of the cast iron exhaust manifold, so a complete new system was made up and fitted. The manifold was made up of four pieces of steel tubing bent down from the ports on an easy radius, into a common flange to which the original exhaust pipe was bolted.

After the radiator and a few more bits had been added to the chassis, the mechanical side was more or less complete. Before work started on the body, the car was extensively road tested with a bucket seat fastened to the bare chassis, into which the slightly apprehensive owner tucked himself and set out to see what would happen. To one who is not as young as he used to be, observes Mr. Keegan, and for the last thirty years has driven nothing livelier than a motley collection of 40 or so family sedans in various stages of disrepair, the experience was rather startling.

With the saloon axle ratio of 5.2 to 1, the acceleration was really good. The engine would run up to peak revs in a surprisingly short distance, and it was thought that a higher gear ratio would be an advantage; eventually, a crown wheel and pinion giving 4.5 to 1 were made and fitted, with which acceleration is nearly as good, but the car performs with much less apparent effort.

The next step was the body. After considerable thought and a few alterations, the bulkhead, which comprises the tool lockers, the instrument panel frame and part of the steel floor from the saloon, was fitted. The floor was extended to the rear of the chassis to form the bottom of the boot, and wheel wells were made up and welded into place.

This 12/4 based car is photographed in Tasmania, but I think it may have been built in Melbourne.

This is a 6 Cylinder based car from N.S.W.

26M4051

Photo: Brian Gannon

This car was built from the rusty remains of the 12/4 Merlin below. I believe it is now in Malaysia

Photo: Matthew French

XR45

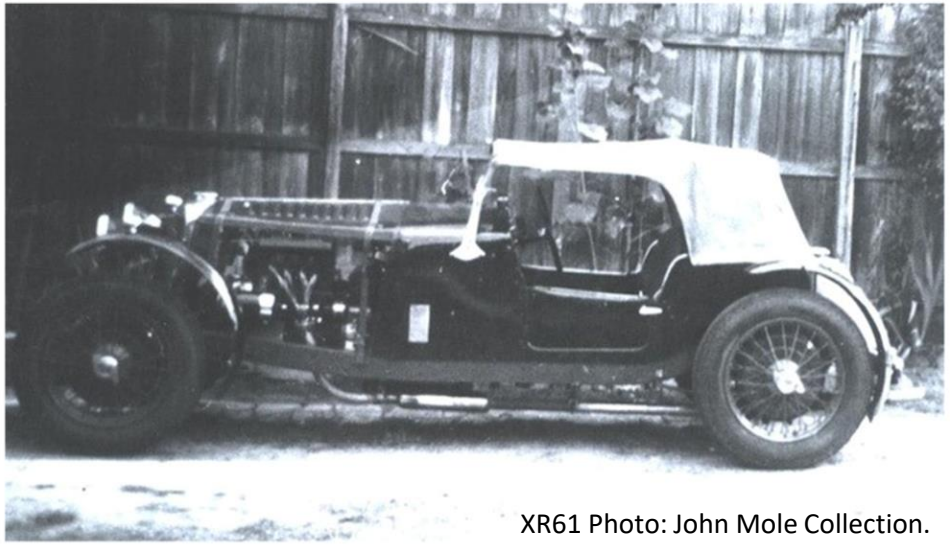
Photo: Shannon's Club website

This 12/4 engined car was built in S.A., but is now located in Queensland.

XR39

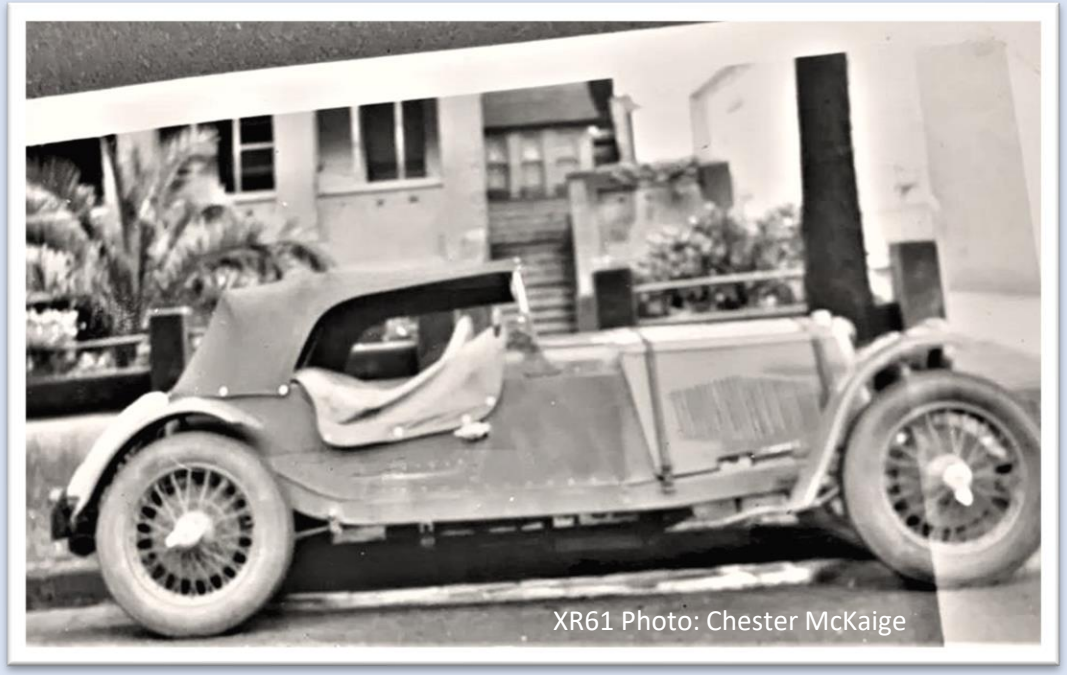
Photo: John Lakeland

I have been told that the owner of this car has the 12/4 engine from the Rizzo Special.



XR61 Photo: John Mole Collection.

This Nine special was built in the 1960s, and I believe the photo below is also of the same car. It is believed to have later been in an accident, so it probably no longer exists.



XR61 Photo: Chester McKaige

This MPH evocation and its owner, I am sure needs no introduction. Its owner also built the car on the previous page.

This car started life as a Blue Streak Kestrel.

This 6 cylinder car has a supercharger.

This car is based on a 15/6 chassis. It was a 6-light Kestrel found in a swamp in Singapore.

This car was once a 1939 Nuffield saloon, similar to if not the one pictured below.

Post-War Cars

Photo: Coral S. Jones Facebook 2020

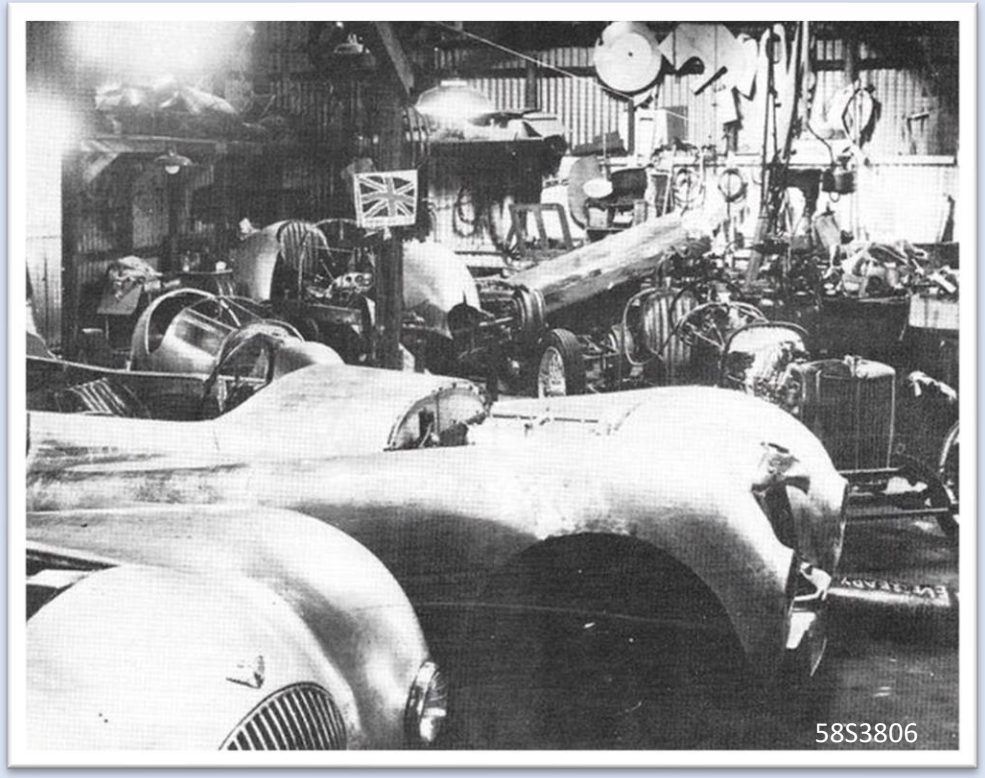
58S3806


58S3806

Photo: Graeme Pinkney

This chassis of this RMB based racing car is believed to be the only one that was imported as a bare chassis, and it was fitted with a body built by Head Brothers, of Murrumbeena. The photo on the right was taken at Calder Sprints in the 1960s, after it had lost the Head built body.

This is 58S3806 with its original Head Bros. body, shown competing at Rob Roy Hill Climb.

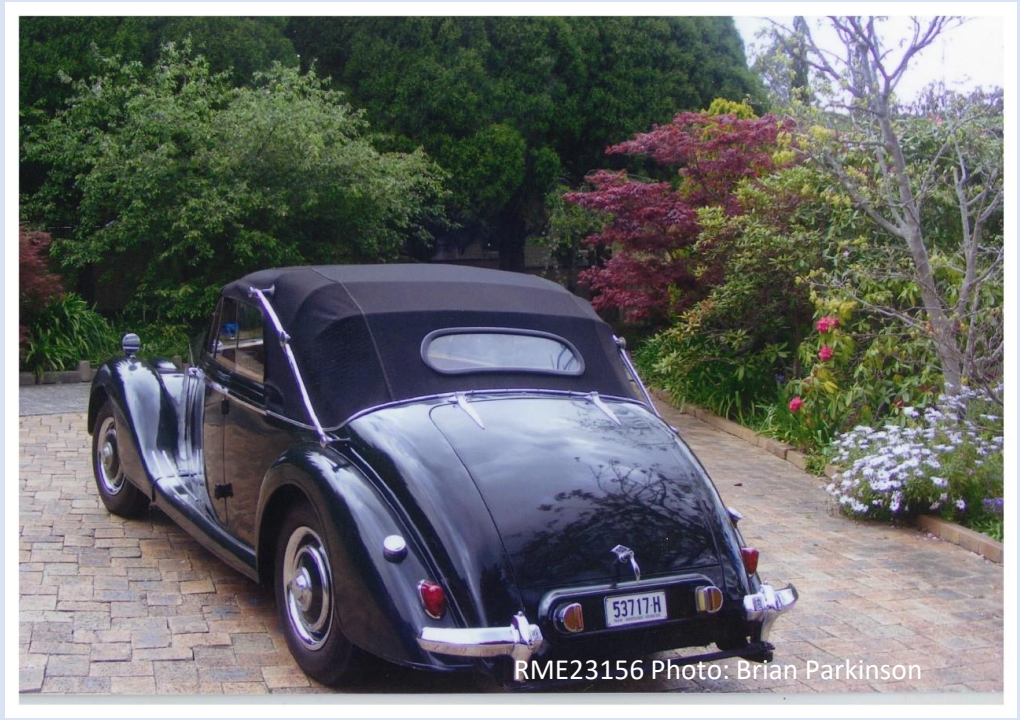


This photo was taken at the Head Bros. workshop in Murrumbeena, while the car was being built.

This coupé was originally a RMA sedan, which was then converted into a ute.

I took this photo of it in its ute form, at a Moorabbin wrecking yard, in the 1970s.

These two cars were built in Queensland.



RME23156 Photo: Brian Parkinson

These two 1½ Litre based dropheads were built in the 1990s, by a well-known RMCA member in N.S.W. Their front guards and bonnets are off a RMB, which makes them look more like a genuine RMD, even though they are built on a 1½ chassis.

41S19969

The car on the right was built in 1993, and the one above in 1995.

XN28 Riley Record Jan 2020

57S2762

This photo was taken at the Beechworth National Rally.

This RMA was converted into a four door tourer. It is pictured at the Riley 100 year Celebration in Glen Iris, but it is now in a museum in N.S.W.

This RMA based car was built in the 1960s in Adelaide, by an ex Ferrari employee.
It is made in steel.

This RMA roadster, was initially built in the form shown in the lower photo. Subsequent owners re-imagined it as the car in the photo on the left.

XN1 Photo: Torque Tube

This RMA based car has one of the neatest looking hoods, I have seen on a converted sedan.

XN12 Andrew Purnell. Classic British Cars in Australia FB Page (Feb. 2020)

59S4315

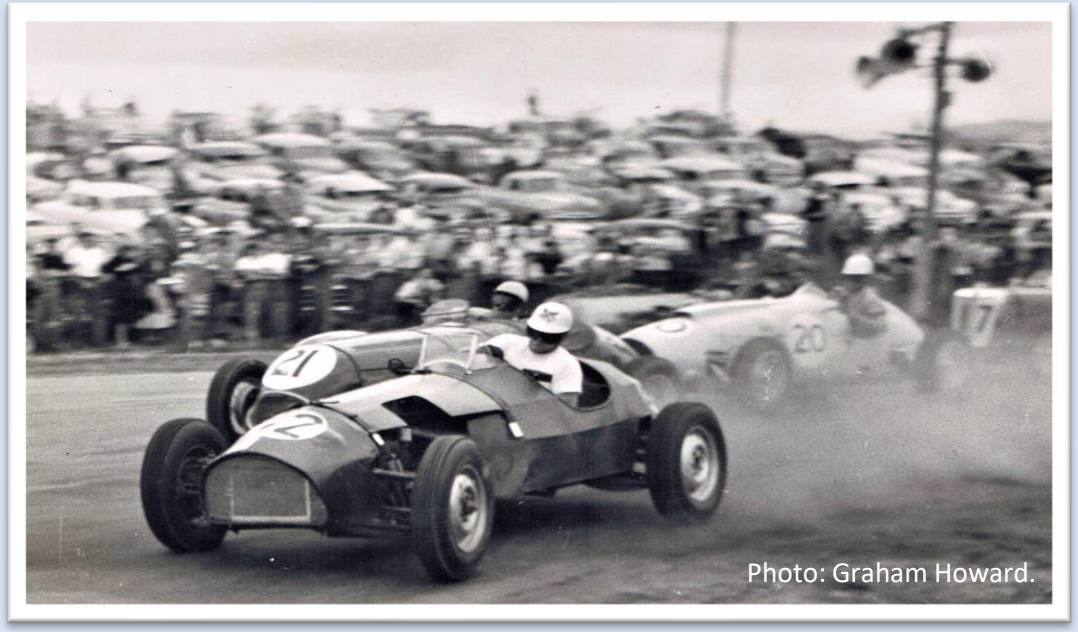
This reproduction of a Drophead is very hard to distinguish from a Factory built car.

59S6953

The inspiration for the building of this car was a "Blue Diamond" article in the 1970s, about what the factory built roadster should have looked like.

This was built by Ron Evans in the early 1950s. Ron used the mechanical components of a wrecked Riley 2½ in its construction. The diff. was mounted independently in a front suspension cradle, using brackets welded to brake backing plates, and splined shafts with universal joints at each end. Input to the diff was via a transfer box, made by his company RVM Engineering. The body was the first racing car in Australia to use a fibreglass body which, was reportedly quite heavy (Notes: courtesy of Arthur Babbington.)

This is an earlier version of the car prior to it having the fibreglass body fitted. The fabric body was once on a Hudson special that was colloquially called "the Petticoat Special."



60S6029 Photo by G & M Harman

I first saw this car at Warwick Farm Race-track in about 1974.

XN3 RMB Special (NSW) TT Mittagong 2014

XN2 FB_IMG_1543313611412 (20)

This car on is the well known shortened 2½ of Bob Healey. From the several photos I have seen of it, it appears to be a bit of a handful.

XN2 Photo:DPT

This car was created in the 1980s, in the form shown below.

This car is a reproduction of a Rheinboldt and Christie drophead.

This reproduction Drophead from Queensland, uses genuine Factory RMD doors.

This car was converted into a station wagon in N.S.W. in the 1960s, using the roof of a Holden FC. It is now in Tasmania and unfortunately has been in a fire.

I took this photo of a RMB based car at the Caloundra Rally a couple of years ago

This car was photographed at the 2019 Kalorama Rally.

XN23 FB Ashok Singh Adelaide 121304482_181258300197392_7587556625620546685_n

Although this car has a pre-war look it is built on a 1948 RMB chassis.

XN30

XN24

Photo: David Clash

The car on the left is the prototype Devaux coupé (Car 001) It is built on a shortened Riley RM chassis, and fitted with a 3.4 litre Jaguar engine and Moss Gearbox. The car on the right is Car 004 and is built on a specially constructed chassis.

A modified Riley dash was also used in Car 001

P

This car has a Pathfinder motor and gearbox, and it retains the right hand gear change.

This South Australian car, also has a Pathfinder engine, and has been competing for many years.

XN5

This A.C.T. car was a regular participant at rallies in the 1980s.

XN11

Photo: RMCA Gazette 2020


XN7

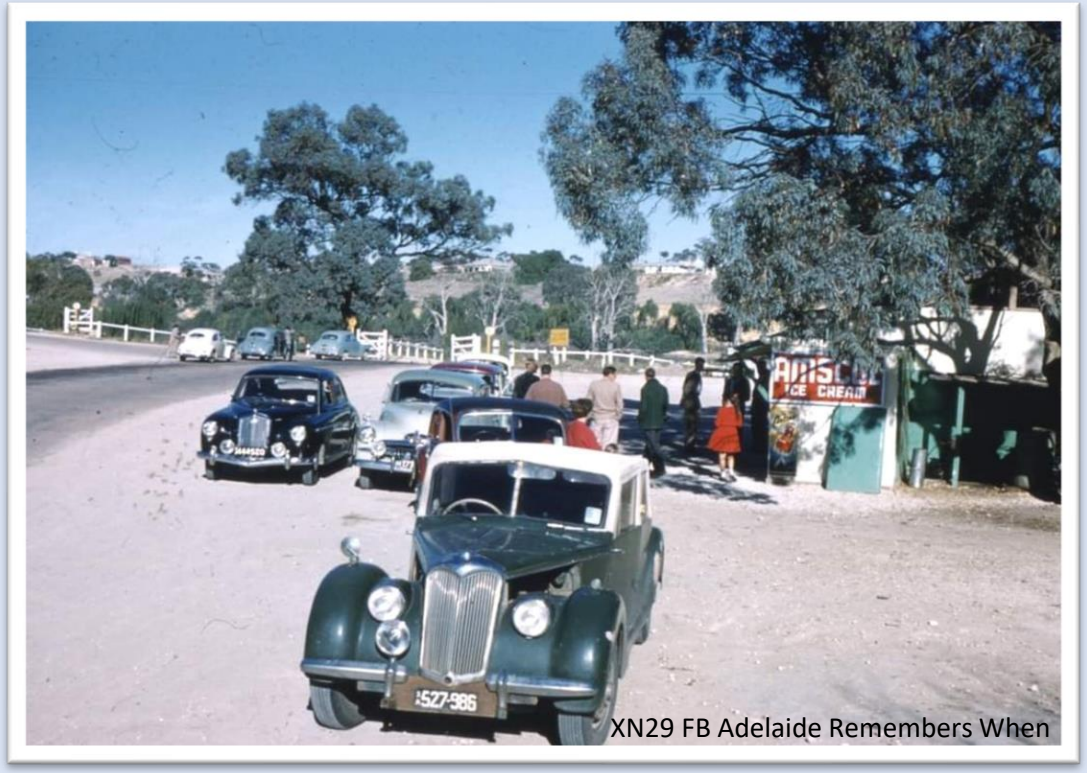
This coupé was trailered to the 2019 S.A. rally from Queensland.


XN20

Photo: Blue Diamond

This incomplete car was advertised in the Blue Diamond in 2016 for $2000.

This car has the roof of a 1970s Mazda 808 Coupe welded on to it.

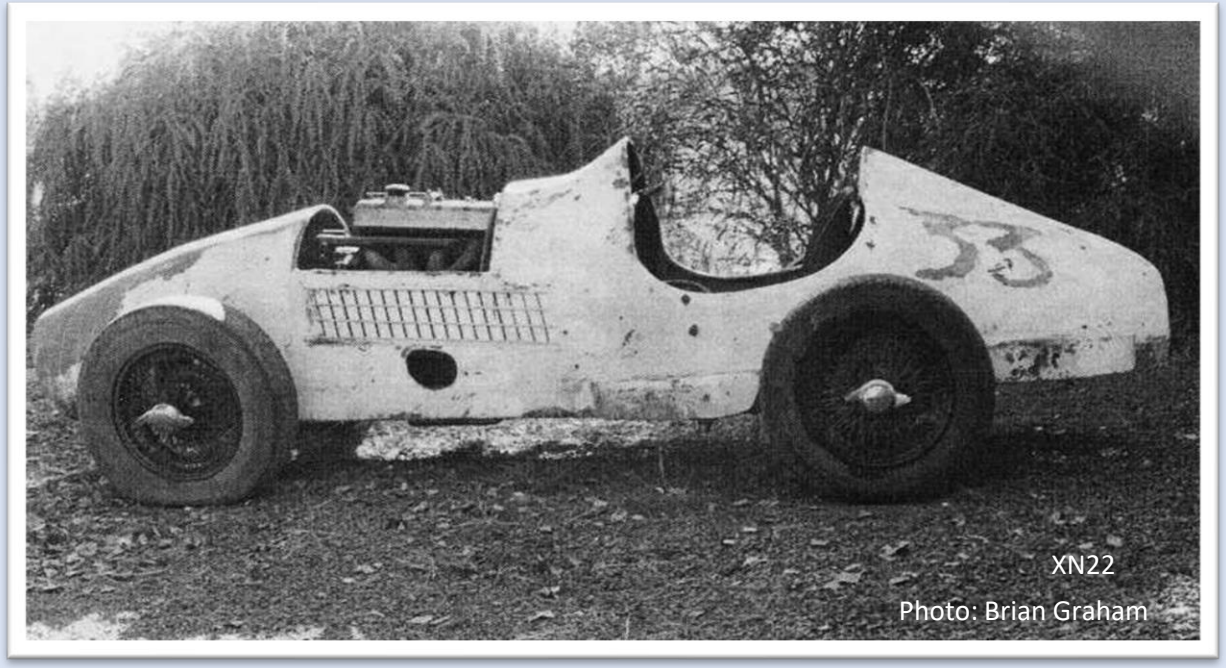


XN29 FB Adelaide Remembers When

This period photo taken in the 1950s at the Blanchetown punt on the Murray river, shows a 2½ that has had its roof removed.

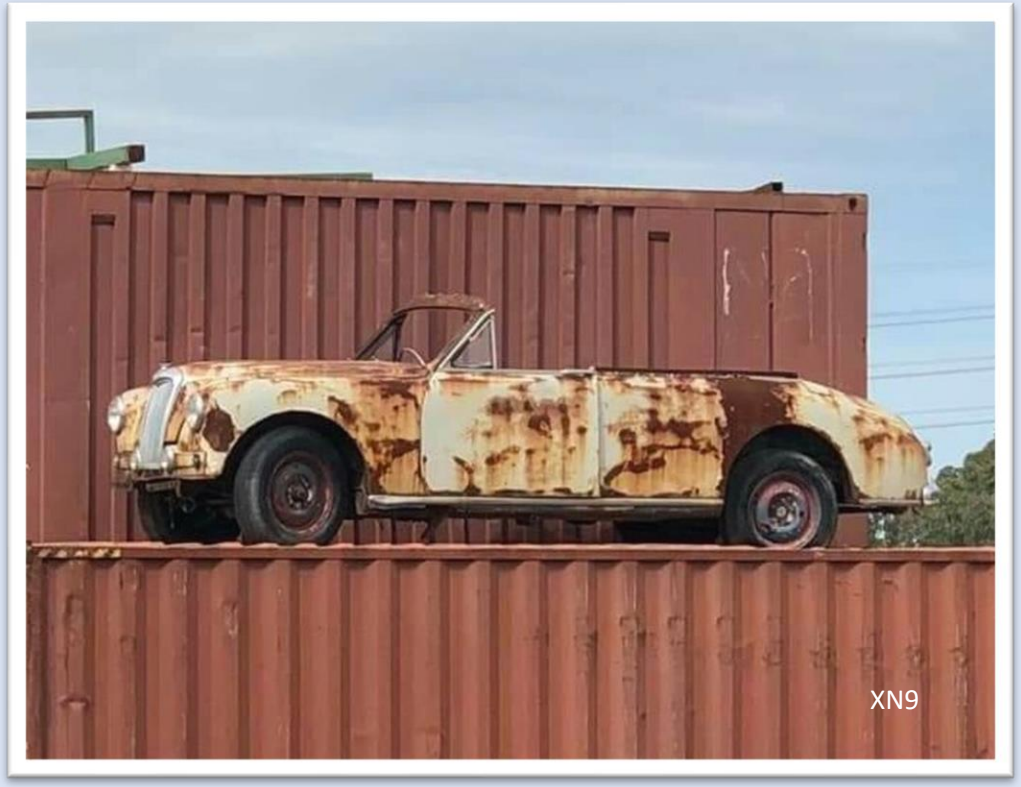

XN8 Photo: Pat Marshall Cormack

This 2½ based racing car, now in N.S.W., was in W.A.



This Pathfinder engined car was listed on our 2006 Club membership as being a 57 Special.

This unfinished Pathfinder project has been around for many years.



Conclusion

I think this presentation demonstrates the wide variety of Rileys in Australia that have a different style of body than the original one. I hope it will be useful in identifying some of the cars in the future. Many of these cars wouldn't have survived at all, if it wasn't for the efforts of their owners. There are likely to be many more out there.

Our Clubs' Registrars have much information about our cars, including these ones, and are therefore a valuable resource we can use to find out more about a specific car.

I hope you found the presentation of some interest.