

**Paul Campbell**

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This month we hear from two of our Australian friends, including some insight into the awful bush fires there, news on the annual SVW Event in July and the Brooklands MG Day in April, Steve Curtis reminds us to check our timing chains and I report on some work I'm doing on my VA Tourer.

## **Chairman's Jottings**

It is that time of year when ones thoughts start to consider what events to participate in during the year. As most of you know I am quite active in either my VA or MGC and attend many local (Leicestershire) events plus those considerable distances away.

We're planning to attend this year - Brooklands MG Era, Jacobite Run, Charnwood Caper, Old Speckled Hen, MG Live, the SVW Event and the Rainbows Run. If you are now starting to plan your year, there are three principal events where a good SVW turnout can hopefully be achieved especially as the MGCC is celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year – Brooklands MG Era, MG Live and of course our SVW Event. It would be great to see you at these events with your SVW car if at all possible.

One of my annual winter jobs is to update the Index of Articles on the Register website, which many members find useful in locating technical information and help on their cars. Late last year Walter Prechsl sent me an initial document he had produced on the differences between the Wet Clutch and Dry Clutch power units fitted to VA. This was a very significant and major change during the production of the VA. On searching the Index of Articles it became obvious that this important detail had not been fully detailed before. How many VA owners have obtained second hand power unit spare parts and found they did not fit?

Walter's initial document stimulated me to start compiling a comprehensive article identifying all the individual component changes. This is becoming quite a large document (13 pages to date) due to the level of detail. I am planning to have a simple guide to the differences published in the SVW Review and the full detailed document on the website once I have completed the work.

My research has identified considerable other changes that were made to the power unit during its production between 1936 and 1939. I believe the modern term would be "continuous improvements" which unfortunately give us problems in identifying second hand spare parts.

Happy SVW motoring.  
Jim

**Rob Dunsterville writes from Downunder:**

I've just reviewed the Register website and read your obit on Bas. You mentioned he found VA0251 in a breaker's yard. I am not sure that is correct. It's only a minor point but I will give you my recollections.

In the summer of 1975 I was living in London and visited the Norfolk property of the Cramer Brothers, I was shown several K saloons and tourers and VA 0251 amongst other cars in Nissen huts. I bought a KI and a KN saloon which survive in Australia as a K3 replica and a lovely special-bodied K tourer. I didn't buy the VA as it didn't have enough appeal to attract an Aussie buyer even though it was the first!

The Norfolk property was not a breaker's yard but a collection of cars the Cramer Brothers had acquired over time. They were collectors/hoarders and didn't restore any as far as I know. 'Hoarders' is used today as a rather nasty description but thank goodness they did buy and hoard so that others had access to them later to return them to their former glory!!

On returning to London, Cramer showed me his brother's K3013 in a lock-up, which had a small bench seat in the back! Ten years later it was bought by Gerhard Maier and then restored to Ulster TT body shape.

I have always had a love for the SVW range and drove Gary Wall's VA Pickford (correct spelling!) on a NZ rally a few years ago. As co-organiser of the Australian Pre-war Register's biennial Rally in 2015 I had registered 20 SVWs to attend but only 16 arrived, which is still a Downunder record.

I'm currently writing the history of SA2387 which arrived in Sydney without a body, now being restored. At the 2015 rally (above) there was a VA that arrived in Sydney without a body and the factory sent front wings from a saloon, so the nearside has the spare wheel. This car was bodied in Sydney with a tourer body similar to the factory one but now with the spare in a different location. There's also a shortened chassis WA being restored with a two-seat wooden boat-tailed body so we have a few different SVWs including Malcolm Robertson's SA Coupe.

Thanks Rob, lots happening Downunder as ever! Looking at Bas de Voogd's own scrapyard like place where it had been for the last 20 year", so that chimes reasonably well with Rob's memories. VA0251 is currently back on the market looking for a new owner [Ed].

**Wilmot Breeden Front Bumpers**

Known as harmonic stabilising bumpers, they are intended to reducing the effect of torsional vibration in the chassis. Wilmot Breeden supplied harmonic front bumpers to several up-market car-makers; Rover used them until 1947. These have substantial lead bob-weights mounted in the rolled ends of the bumper blade, with the whole bumper assembly able to move relative to the chassis on a full width steel leaf spring.

I removed mine from the VA Tourer to repaint the front valance section, but in so doing decided to refurbish all the bumper components and badge bar assembly. The substantial badge bar brackets that support the transverse leaf spring comprise the bracket itself, a Silentbloc that slides on to the dumb iron, a bottom cover and a top piece that converts the cylindrical shape of the Silentbloc to a flat surface for the transverse spring, all pulled together with a special U-bolt. My rubber bump stops were perished but they are available

from Meteor Spares (who mainly supply pre-war Rover parts). There are several sizes but the ones that fit the VA are 1 3/8".



There's something satisfying about handling these original 82-year-old parts that have barely been touched since they were fitted.

**Steve Curtis** sent in this photo of the timing chain on his VA Tourer where some link pins had started to fall out. He spotted one missing pin, but after removing the chain found another two! He's planning to fit replacement chains, but certainly something to check on a regular basis - thanks Steve.



### Website and Facebook Group

I'm not sure how it's happened, but I now look after the website and Facebook group in addition to writing these notes. This was rather unplanned but it does streamline things as I can get things on the website and let you know there something to see via the Facebook group. The website is under redevelopment (not by me I hasten to add!) and the new specification has been created and approved by your committee. In the meantime it's just a case of keeping everything up-to-date and relevant. Lots of items have recently been listed in Spares For Sale/Wanted, so do take a look.

## **Brooklands MG Day April 19<sup>th</sup>**

I noted that there are changes to the event this year so I made enquiries with Steve Castle, Head of Track and Air Event at Brooklands, who said the following:

“We have had to pull both the MG Day and British Marques Day together for this year, to try and free up some time in our calendar. The MG part of the day will be run much as it was last year, with a time line of MG models running up the Finishing Straight and the areas to the West of it. The MGF will be the feature model in the Paddock, and we hope to have separate displays for the MG TC which I think celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. We also want to make something of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the cessation of MGB production and the demolition of the Abingdon factory. The British Marques side of things will be allocated spaces around the Aircraft Factory apron, around Concorde and in and around the Aircraft Park during the day”.



Brooklands 2019

I enjoy both events and take different cars to each, so this year it will have to be the VA Tourer.

### **VA Head Gaskets**

*I heard of a stash of NOS Payen gaskets in January not too far from me. After a 100-mile round trip I came home with 11 of them (although a couple cannot be used)! They're no good for my own VA as I have the 1707cc engine, but I thought I'd grab them for those who may need one now or would like a spare. The last ones we had access to were selling for £110, but as a bulk purchase these will be rather less\*. Some of them come as full head sets in the original packaging and will cost more, but they are in super condition. I'm advertising them here initially so members have first choice, then in April I'll put them on the website and Facebook.... so be quick!*

*Email Paul Campbell (as above).*

*\*e.g. single Payen head gasket £55*

### **Australia Bush Fires – direct from our man the ground**

SVW Review editor Malcolm Robertson who lives in Australia's capital city, Canberra, reports that the note on the door of the bookshop at Cobargo, a delightful small town nestled in the bush on the far south coast of NSW says it all: "all books on the apocalypse have been moved to current affairs"! Along with many other small bush communities, Cobargo has been severely burnt by the fires that have ravaged Australia this summer. Malcolm's photos showing his SA looming out of what looks like a typical winter fog demonstrate the extent to which Australia has been impacted by the fires this season. The typical fog is bushfire smoke, blown several hundred miles inland from the fire grounds to the nation's capital, blanketing it under a dangerous smoky cloud and pushing the normally pristine air quality figures to the top of the global city pollution scale, easily surpassing cities such as Calcutta and Beijing. Similar days of bushfire smoke pollution have occurred in Sydney and Melbourne and, while the city population reaches for P2 face masks, Australia's political leadership continues to express surprise at the "unprecedented" events despite warnings from scientists and other experts who have been predicting such impacts since 1975. "All is not lost," says Malcolm. "I think I detected added performance in the SA due to the increased levels of combustible matter in the airflow."



In the first photo, Canberra's iconic Parliament House flag pole is barely visible through the heavy pollution and (inset) many houses and several buildings in the main street of Cabargo were destroyed by fire (Malcolm Robertson and ABC News).

Second photo - Malcolm's SA looms out of the heavy bushfire smoke blanketing Canberra on 1<sup>st</sup> January (Malcolm Robertson).