A

BRIEF

HISTORY

OF

ALVIS

INTRODUCTION

The text for this booklet was originally prepared by Charles Mackonachie and extra text by Rex Harvey for an Alvis Owner Club publication entitled 'A year by year history of ALVIS with illustrations of car model types.'

Following an initiative by the Alvis Car Club of Victoria and the authority of the authors, the original text has been retained and photographs of 'Australian' Alvis cars, with few exceptions, have been used in the production of this booklet.

The AOC booklet also had photographic and other material from Dave Culshaw and his input is also acknowledged.

This booklet will provide a quick reference resource, dating significant events and model runs for both the beginner and the seasoned Alvis enthusiast.

Acknowledgement is also made to the many photographers whose art is featured in this booklet.

John Lang
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1918 G.P.H.de Fréville designed his first engine.

1919 T.G.John purchased Holley Bros & Co. Ltd. (carburettor manufacturers) in Hertford Street, Coventry and started making the Hillman Electra stationary engine (which continued until 1921) as T.G. John & Co. Ltd.

He also made the frame for the Stafford Mobile Pup Scooter. G. Tattersall, later the racing manager for Alvis, won the first race for the company, riding a scooter in Scotland.

1920 John purchased de Fréville's engine design and took over the name Alvis, a registered trademark used by de Fréville on his aluminium pistons and castings. Production started of the side valve 'Alvis 10/30' (4 Cylinder, 1460cc, £600).

1920 10/30 Chassis 6071

1921 A modified 10/30 lapped Brooklands at 93 mph. The air cooled twin cylinder Buckingham was in production, but it was not a commercial success. The Company was renamed 'Alvis Car & Engineering Co' and moved to Holyhead Road, Coventry.

1922 The 'ducks back' body style was introduced for a sports version of the 10/30, known as the 11/40 (4 Cylinder, 1598cc, £595). Production of side valve 12/40 (4 Cylinder, 1598cc £550) was started. G.T.Smith-Clarke and W.M.Dunn joined the Company.

1923 12/40 Tourer Chassis # 3176

1923 A new O.H.V. engine was designed by Smith-Clarke who, together with Dunn, redesigned the car; which became known as the 12/50 (4 Cylinder 1460-1645cc, £580). This model would become the mainstay of car production and ensure the survival of the Company through the twenties. C.M.Harvey (12/50) won the 200 Miles Race at Brooklands at 93.29 mph.

1925 12/50 Beetleback Chassis # 5493

1924 The only team of British cars to finish the 200 Miles Race, Alvis took 39 class records in one day, with distances up to 700 miles and speeds ranging from 70 - 97 mph. However, funding difficulties led to the appointment of a 'liquidator'. A new company was formed in early 1925 after a staying order was made, and a complicated debt repayment scheme was put in place.

1925 A supercharged 12/50 engine in a front wheel drive chassis took World 1½ litre records and lapped Brooklands at 104 mph.

1926 Production of the 12/40 side valve ceased. The 12/50 engine was available in sports and touring sizes. A front wheel drive, two seater, sports car was offered, catalogued at £1,000.

1925 SC 12/50 Ducksback Chassis # 3391

A streamlined supercharged straight eight 1½ litre front wheel drive car was entered for British Grand Prix but was scratched after the practice and both cars entered in the 200 Miles Race were forced to retire.

1927 The first six cylinder Alvis, the 14.75 (1870cc, £695), was introduced. S.C.H. Davis (12/50) won the Six Hour Sports Car race at Brooklands.

A straight eight FWD car with modified 1½ litre engine lapped Brooklands at 121 mph.

1928 14/75 Tourer Chassis # 5937

1928 Alvis became the first British manufacturer to put a front wheel drive car into production, with independent suspension all round (4 Cylinder, 1481cc, £610). A FWD won the 1½ litre class in the 24 hours race at Le Mans and L.Cushman took second place in the Tourist Trophy race. More world records were broken at Brooklands.

L to R: 1928 FE Chassis # 7231 and 1928 FA Chssis # 6992

1929 The 14.75 was upgraded and named the Silver Eagle 16.95 hp (6 Cylinder 2148cc, £695). With modifications this car continued in production until 1936 (6 Cylinder 2362cc). The 1927 straight eight 1½ litre engine was used as basis for a new sports car, raced at Le Mans and in the T.T.

1928 Silver Eagle Chassis # 7462