

THE ALVIS CENTENARY RALLY



Having been involved in the organisation of an unrelated three day car event before day one of the Alvis Centenary Rally, we absented ourselves from it on Saturday, the second day and drove to the small town of Euroa about 150km north of Melbourne to overnight with Peter Miller, Dale Anderson and Geoff Ross.

Following morning we drove a similar distance to Albury which is on the Murray River that defines part of the border between NSW and Victoria.

On arrival we were welcomed by Heather Goldsmith who lead the team of event organisers.

Registration was simple and each driver was presented with the most complete rally bag that, by far, was the most comprehensive I have ever seen. The contents included a multimeter, a battery LED lantern, a monocular, a screw driver set (that contained the unthinkable Phillipshead drivers for anyone who was really desperate!) car cleaning materials, a bag of sweets, a set of route notes and the list goes on and on.

The welcoming dinner was just that and it was great to catch up with people we had not seen for years and many that we had not met before.

More than a hundred people and toward 50 Alvises.

One of the dining room walls was decorated in photos that depicted some of the various departments in the early days of the Alvis. The photos had been arranged in the form of a T on its side, in the form of a piston and conrod. Was too subtle for me until identified during a later dinner.

Day 1 commenced with an English breakfast. I was delighted to find that June Lunsmann also had orange juice on her cereal, which provided some respite from those subsequently aghast at my similar choice.

Departure at 9.00am for Brad Jones Racing complex. For our overseas readers, the serious motor racing in Australia revolves around cars with body shells that mimic everyday V8 cars in appearance only and nothing else. Much of the shells are of carbon fibre. They have only one seat. They are capable of more than 200kph. Make much more noise than an Alvis FWD and are covered in sponsors decals. It is a very popular formula in Australia and draws thousands of fans as they are held on both street and purpose built circuits around the country.



Brad Jones Racing complex

The complex was just recovering from a weekend of racing in Tasmania and the success of the weekend was obvious in the staff's croaky voices and the sleepless faces.

The complex workshops were the envy of all, with their CNC machinery and the electronic gadgetry required to squeeze the last ounce of performance from the cars. The commentary was interesting and the staff and opportunities in the industry were profound.

Lunch at the St Ives Hotel followed and then a photo shoot at Monument Hill which proved to be a nightmare for the those assigned to position the cars. Big Red managed to embarrass itself by overheating and redecorating the pavement in green. Must be something it ate!



Above: Monument Hill

Below: Albury Station

Still the photos were worth the taking as the photographer had his favourite camera perched up a 5 metre pole. The group photo of all those present was compromised by the wind that caused the pole to rock. So as not to compromise the focus, the concept of the 100 people rocking in time with the camera was considered but fortunately the thought of 100 Alvisi with sea sickness canned the idea.





On to the Albury Railway Station for more pics.

Opposite the motel was the “Flying Fruit Fly Circus” and after dinner our visit was to learn about this unique organisation that is Australia’s national youth circus and the only full-time circus school for young people aged between 8–19 in Australia. It is located on the Murray River in the twin cities of Albury-Wodonga on the Victoria/New South Wales border.

The young performers were asked by their mentors to put together a short performance for us in their purpose built accommodation which resembled a huge hangar (no pun intended!) where they practiced in the 30 mins that their mentors provided us with a brief history of the organisation and its inception in 1979. The short display on the ropes and gymnastic work was a credit to them.



Day 2 was an easy drive to the Bonegilla Migrant Camp that was set up in the post WW2 immigration boom and was subject to significant unrest in the 1960s as a result of poor supervision, food and facilities. The remaining small section is now used as a museum and interpretive centre.

It was an unwanted reminder to some of those present of their early childhood, not necessarily at Bonegilla, but at other similar establishments in other Australian states.

Buses then took us the Bandiana Army facility and a visit to their museum. It was



extensive and there were a couple of Alvis designed and built vehicles present.

On the way back to the motel, many of us stopped at the airport to see a recreation of the DC2 that made an emergency landing at Albury during the 1934 MacRobertson London - Melbourne air race. At night, in appalling weather conditions, the aircraft was unable to find its way in the Albury area and fortunately made radio contact with the ground prompting the ABC to broadcast a request for people and cars to go to the racecourse and set up a flare path using their lights.

The aircraft subsequently landed safely and the following day was un-bogged with the help of the locals. The aircraft subsequently crashed in Syria on its return flight and all occupants were lost.



The DC2 under restoration is one of 3 remaining DC2s and will become a static display on completion.

Another after dinner highlight was the showing of the B & W silent film "The Kid Stakes" a delightful film made in 1927 in which Young "Fatty" Finn and his friends enter their pet goat in a race, but his rival "Bruiser" Murphy lets the goat loose, right before the race. It is one of the greatest comedies of the silent era, although it was largely dismissed at the time as simply a children's film.

Day 3 was 130 miles driving with the first stop at the Australian Stoewer collection at Tawonga that contained four or five of the marque and several other interesting cars. With Alvis in mind it was interesting that Stoewer had made a FWD car in 1933 and with the exception of its disc wheels and mindful that appearance is more to do with the coach builder, it look remarkably like an Alvis FWD.

On to the Mt Bright Brewery at Bright via the Great Alpine Road. The 12/50s were in their element; some with 4 up! All 15 on song.

Cars on display on the grassed area beside the brewery. Literally hundreds of patrons. Top marks to the chef;; no one went hungry.





Some of the cars on display at the Bright Brewery

Back to the motel via some more of God's own country.

A walk across what some Albryians consider is their Formula 1 track provided pizzas in the park for dinner.

The Grand Prix had finished by the time it was back to the motel! There were no winners, however they were back practicing the next day!

Day 4, as with every day, brought bags of sunshine and perfect driving weather.

Our display at Albury's QE2 square attracted a lot of interest from the public and again the NSW team had thought of everything. The library adjacent to the square had been featuring the Alvis Centenary with a 12/50 ducksback in the library proper. Photographs of the Alvis factory early days were on the walls and the library and museum were under the guidance of a very competent curator.

I must comment on the influence of Red Triangle Services that was evident in many aspects of the event from the goodies in the rally packs to the support in the library display et al.



The display bit didn't end when we left QE2 Square as the evening dinner centred around a Centenary theme which provided every imaginable get up from early motor racing garb with the acceptance that crash helmets, overalls and goggles were acceptable at the dinner table. Fortunately the cutlery hadn't been replaced by spanners otherwise the motorists would still be trying to pick up the peas!



Some regular minimalists were wearing small clues as to their addressing the theme. Others wore their 20s finery of costume jewellery, through to cads in striped jackets and those in bow ties. All in all a very memorable dinner.

There were also awards made for the concours judging and the bent spanner award for anyone caught using an shifter instead of a BSF spanner.



Day 5 (Finale) First stop was the Jindera Pioneer Museum opened in 1874 by Johann Rosler and Peter Wagner and became known as Wagner's Store to which there was a 3 bedroom residence attached. In 1967, the Jindera Pioneer Museum and Historical Society purchased the building and surrounding grounds.

The Pioneer Museum, one of the best known in NSW, recreates the material culture of the early German settlers, using only local relics. The complex consists of several historic buildings centred around the store, set within a sprawling, beautiful two acres of grounds which retains the original wattle and daub cottage erected by Rosler and Wagner, a remarkable and extensive collection of farm implements, equipment and forge, an historic post office, a gallery and several other outhouses and structures.



I was delighted to see period lighting in the majority of the rooms; these days, so rarely addressed in the restoration of historic buildings.



Lunch at All Saints Winery



On to the All Saints Estate Winery for lunch in an outside marquee. One was reminded that someone, many many years ago introduced rabbits to Australia and someone carelessly, but equally maligned some years later, European wasps. Both importers would face immediate deportation should they still be alive for something that we will never recover from. The Euros were very keen to sample the meal.

On to Max's Motor Museum where an eclectic group of cars from various eras were on display.

Saturday morning - Gentlemen and ladies; start you engines! Time to go home.

Great to see Alvis owners from New South Wales, Western and South Australia. Tasmania, Queensland, New Zealand, U.K. and Victoria present.

Absolutely a great event!

Look forward to the next National Rally in 2021 at Hamilton, Victoria.

John Lang



Max's Motor Museum



Chris Higgins having started his trip to Albury in his Firebird sedan, suffered a blown head gasket en route and the car went home on a flat top truck. But all was made good when Chris sighted the Silver Crest of Bruce Adam's at Albury with a For Sale sign on it and after due consideration a deal was struck and the car changed hands