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JACK BARTLETT'S SALMSON SPECIAL

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May General Meeting – Monday May 2
VSCCWA Caversham Clubrooms
6.30 for 7.00 pm

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Ed at Northam in 2014

ED FARRAR AND HIS MG J2 SPECIAL

BY BOB CAMPBELL

I had a lot of help with this story, firstly from Ed and Cris Farrar, but also from all the club members who have supplied photographs of the car from various VSCC events over the years. For details of the story of the origins of the car I am indebted to the editor of the MGOC magazine Enjoying MG, Jon Pressnell, and his UK contacts.

Among the many ingenious specials enlivening our historic racing scene in Western Australia, for more than 40 years a standard-looking – at least at first glance – J-type MG was often to be spotted, campaigned by the same owner all those years. But the car is not all that it seems.

Way back in 1977 a young man in Western Australia inherited some money from his grandmother. As he wondered how to use the windfall, a friend, John Hunting, who happened to own a J3, suggested that what the



A UK shot of the truncated rear of the lightweight aluminium body as built. Rear wheels are 16-inch with 15-inch rims at the front.

then 20-year-old needed was a pre-war MG. So it was that Ed Farrar used his grandmother's legacy to buy an MG J2 special from the UK. Now, 45 years later, he still owns it, although ill-health means that he and the car have now retired from active competition.

The MG has an interesting history. It was built as a lightweight door-less racer by Roger Cadogan, at the time an electronics engineer who had been racing a supercharged TD. The car was closely modelled on a similar special being campaigned by Geoff Coles, then a leading light of the MMM Register. The basis was a J2 chassis Roger had already restored and what he describes as "many other odd bits and pieces". Some of these were contributed by a friend of the time, Dermot (Ted) Reynolds, including an F-type gearbox and a special bellhousing; Ted Reynolds also painted the finished car. Roger also fitted an N-type water pump and he still recalls



Ted Reynolds in the MG at a wet Wiscombe hillclimb.

the effort involved in drilling the cooling holes in the larger P-type brake drums

Everything was done for weight reduction, according to Roger. 'You might as well have been out on the track in a Bacofoil suit. The whole thing was made of 20swg alloy sheet, pop-riveted into place. The body, which extended forward to the firewall, with a resultant short bonnet, had an extremely rudimentary frame made of steel angle-iron, with just one hoop under the scuttle and another around the back, which was absolutely flat.'

The car was completed in time for a first competitive outing at Brands Hatch in April 1971 – not bad going, considering that the project had only been started over Christmas the previous year. 'It was so quick to build, because there wasn't much to it,' says Roger. 'I remember how simple the wiring loom was, for instance, and we used a small motorcycle battery, which was just about capable of starting the car when the engine was warm.'

Soon fitted with a Centric supercharger, the special was raced by both men, and eventually ended up in the hands of Ted Reynolds, from whom it passed to the well-known dealer in pre-war MGs from whom Ed Farrar bought the car in 1977. Associated with the car is the British (Bournemouth) registration LJ 7069, but it is understood



Ed with the J2 and a more sophisticated MG Special at Phillip Island in 2005.

ABOUT THE J-TYPE

Current from August 1932 to January 1934, the J-type was a replacement for the M-type, C-type and D-type, and used M-type mechanicals in what was essentially a D-type chassis. In total 2494 J-types were made. Most were the two-seater J2, of which 2061 were produced; following a long way behind were the J1 four-seat tourer, with 262 made, and the J1 Salonette closed saloon, with 117 made. Further to this, 23 chassis went to outside coachbuilders. Power for the J1 and J2 came from a 36bhp two-main-bearing 847cc ohc engine, derived from that of the contemporary Morris Minor but with a crossflow head, and mated to a four-speed gearbox.

The J1 tourer body was basically the same as that of the D-type tourer, but with a more curved cutaway to the doors and sides; the Salonette, meanwhile, was essentially as the D-type Salonette. Swept wings arrived on J2 from late 1933, at which stage the J1 tourer was deleted.

Additionally there were two competition models: the J3, which was a supercharged 746cc version of the J2, and of which 22 were made, and the J4, a two-seat doorless racer, again with a supercharged 746cc engine, and of which nine were produced. Both models were only available for the 1933 season.

that this was a number transferred to the chassis at the time of its move to Australian ownership.

At this point it is important to correct a couple of stories that have gained currency. Firstly, it is misleading to call the MG 'the Ted Reynolds special'. The car was built by Roger Cadogan – who still has the rough sketches he made of the planned body – and was only latterly in the possession of Ted Reynolds. Secondly, it does not have a Brooklands history. This tale might have come about for an amusing reason: Roger Cadogan's house in Salisbury, where he completed construction of the car, was called Brooklands.

Photographs from 1971 show the J2 running without the mudguards and headlamps it later gained, and with four stub exhausts. 'You can imagine the noise it

made,' remembers Roger. 'When I first started it up, my neighbours sarcastically enquired whether a Spitfire had just flown over.'

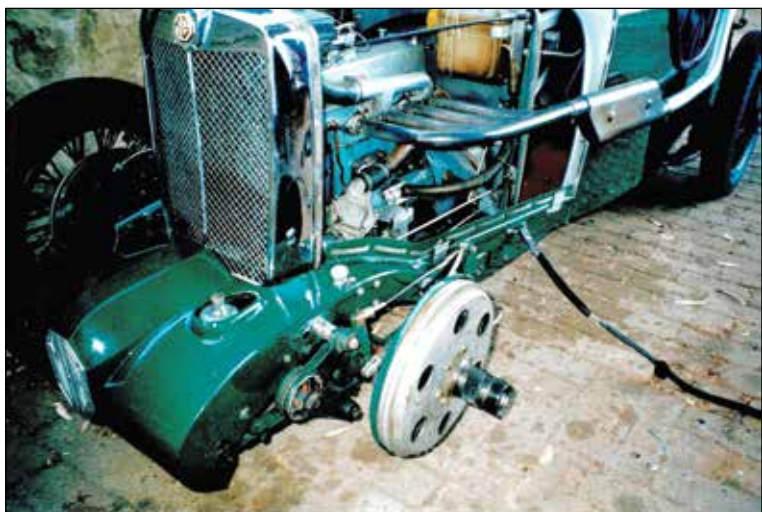
The J2 has an 847cc engine, the same size as was fitted when it left the factory, but it is from an MG PA and as a result has a stronger three-bearing crankshaft that can stand a higher state of tune without affecting reliability. As for the F-type four-speeder, as fitted to the J4 racing cars, Ed says that it is a beautiful gearbox and that in 45 years of ownership he has never missed a shift.

The engine is boosted by the vane-type Centric supercharger, driven off the nose of the crankshaft and fed by a large SU carburettor. Sparks are provided by a Smiths magneto. The J3 and J4 competition models were reduced in capacity by having a shorter 73mm stroke to fit within the 750cc class, so with its extra 100cc this car is almost certainly more powerful than a J3. The racing J-types were produced in much smaller numbers, so it is not surprising that many J2s have been modified to a similar specification by enthusiastic owners.

Since Ed has owned the J2 he has competed in literally thousands of events, including the very first York Flying 50 regularity event in 1980, which was also Ed's first competitive outing and in which he was the youngest competitor. Since then he has been an active member of the Vintage Sports Car Club of Western Australia (VSCCWA) and was the club's president from 2005 to 2007. The



Ed (bearded in overalls) examines the damage at Mindarie Keys..



Detailed shot of the left front corner after the post Mindarie rebuild.

MG has been a regular competitor at VSCCWA fixtures such as the Vintage Stampede, the Round-the-Houses races in Narrogin, near Perth, the Albany Classic weekend, with its hillclimb and regularity events and the one-off hillclimb at Boyd Road, Keysbrook.

Away from the VSCCWA, Ed has competed in WA's Classic Rally and the Grand Prix Rally. His trophy cabinet carries a silver charger engraved '1994 Dutton



The billet crankshaft (bottom) is much more substantial than the original.



Ed leads Barry Mackintosh in the Bartlett Special at Northam, 2014.

Grand Prix Rally Post-Vintage Under-2000cc First Driver'. Ed is understandably very proud of that trophy. In March 2005, he and the J2 competed at the Phillip Island Classic Festival of Motorsport, Australia's biggest historic race meeting.

In spite of enthusiastic use, the gearbox has



Ed and the J2 in the paddock at Albany in 2016.

The light-alloy bodywork was severely bent, with the headlamps pushed back, the front mudguards twisted and the beautifully-shaped scuttle and the aeroscreens flattened. Ed must have ducked very effectively, as he walked away from the crash. The wrecked car was trailered home and a comprehensive rebuild commenced.

This was completed in time for Ed to compete in most of the events of 2000. Changes to the specification included a slightly longer body and a general tidy-up, fixing things that had shown up over the years. Other than that, the body itself was rebuilt largely as before, which did raise an interesting point. Ed knew that his J2 was very light, but his old friend John Hunting wouldn't believe that it weighed only 500kg, until Ed put it on a weighbridge and proved his point. Ed says that the light weight is at least in part due to the aluminium panels being only 1mm thick as opposed to the 1.2mm thickness found in most aluminium body panels.

Ed's current project is a replica Q-type MG with a 939cc PB engine fitted with a Zoller vane-type supercharger. It should be a very quick little car when completed, and an interesting counterpoint to the Cadogan J2 special.

Unfortunately, Ed's competition career has come to an end as he is suffering from Huntingdon's Disease, an inherited degenerative disease. Ed has fought off the effects of the disease for much longer than expected, but it has now progressed to the extent that he is no longer able to drive his beloved J2 and has had to retire from competition.



Ed and the J2 charging up Mt Clarence Albany in 2017.

never required a rebuild, which Ed puts down to careful and regular maintenance. However, the engine did require major work after a welded repair to the drive flange on the rear of the crankshaft failed. A billet crank from Phoenix Engineering was fitted and the engine has given no further trouble.

The J2 has been rebuilt twice and during the first rebuild the opportunity was taken to improve access to the clutch by extending the bonnet to the rear, which necessitated shifting the scuttle rearwards by the same distance. More major body work was required after a broken stub axle resulted in a rollover at a hillclimb at Mindarie Keys in August 1999; I was at the event and remember wondering how Ed had managed to roll the J2.



Rear view at Albany in 2016. Not much changed since 1971.



J2 pressing on, Boyd Rd Keysbrook 2005.