

Pointed Tails - Mike Sherrell has the Last Word...

Mike Sherrell reminisces on L0617, a good friend, a mad scientist and a crazy plan...

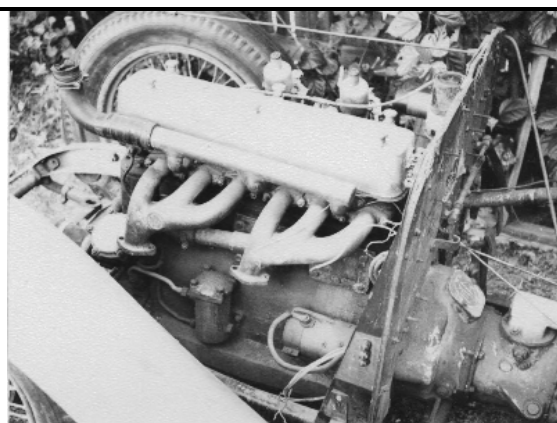


Seeing John Lawson's L Magna (L0617) in the March newsletter sent me back to 1966 or thereabouts. Rumours of sightings of a K3 in the south west of WA had persisted over the years, enough for a group of TC owners to make the trek down south for a look around. A tip off and a bit of luck unearthed the culprit in Burekup. It turned out to be an L Magna, more or less in bits. Not long after, it reappeared for sale in Bunbury, where it had been roughly assembled to resemble a car. This event was to be the beginning of a long association with Bob Irvine, the L and me. Bob and I were already embroiled in all things TC, but here was a new avenue of discovery. In the meantime, he had acquired a pranged TF, (front left corner),

which we loaded on to a trailer and headed for Bunbury. It was an even swap, each thinking he had the better of the other. Not long after, Bob was sent off to Weapons Research at Woomera in South Australia, being the Mad Scientist he was. He drove his TC east and left the L with me in Mosman Park, where it languished for some years and while I restored my TC for the second time. That was in 1968.

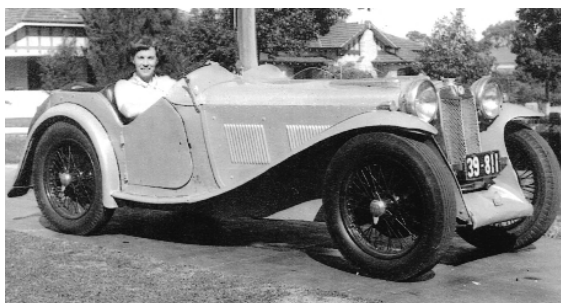


L0617 as found in 1966
Photo from Mike Sherrell



L0617 engine - as found
Photo from Mike Sherrell

Moving house to South Perth in 1970 meant the L needed to move also, to Adelaide, and some years would pass before anything further happened. Towards the end of 1976, Bob rang me with a crazy plan to assemble what we had of the L and drive it to the MG National Meeting in Katoomba, Easter 1977. Several weeks before the event, I flew to Adelaide to assist and following much burning of midnight oil, during which many obstacles were overcome, we had cobbled together, literally out of rotting cardboard boxes, what resembled an L Magna, jumped in it and headed for the Blue Mountains. Unfortunately we only made it to the end of the street. The rear wheels locked solid and we slid to a halt. It was a tipping point. Both frazzled by one eleventh hour after another, we teetered between tossing it in there and then, and having a cuppa and thinking it over. Several cuppas later it was out with the diff. to find a fencing staple had found its way into the works. Don Shinnars came up with another diff. and after a long day we decided on an early night and another attempt at first light. We had blown the Friday night Natter & Noggin but we could still make Saturday's Concours, probably not in the most suitable car for such an event but what the hell. Well believe it or not, the mighty Magna ran like a dream from that morning on and we arrived scruffy and tired in time to park an equally scruffy L Type in the Pre-War line up. The performance of this wonderful old machine had completely won we hard line TC owners over. I should also mention that this L Type's extended



visits back to WA in the late '70s and '80s were the inspiration for some well-known local identities becoming entrenched in the Pre-War scene here. Later, Bob went on to have it restored by Finch & Hocking to Factory L2 specs, twice bringing it back to WA and using it extensively in SA. Then he went and got himself killed in a mid-air gliding collision after he had already won the Gliding Nationals that morning. It was universally understood that the L would automatically come to me following Bob's untimely death, but it was not to be, eventually finding its way to John Lawson, who has looked after it, well it seems, ever since.

Pat Kerr of Shack Motors, Fremantle, imported L0617 in 1938, the previous owner apparently being Bill Ward of Surrey (Charles William Ward of Rosebank, Buckingham Way, Wallington, Surrey and related to Park-Ward, coach builders), the car described as "a specially modified L Magna Drop-head Coupe". Pat himself said it was a Continental Coupe and Bob's investigations revealed many tell-tale signs of it being just that, with perhaps a drop-head conversion having been carried out. We were told that the original body was left in England, but I heard a much more colourful story, of the body being (un)ceremoniously tossed overboard crossing the Equator, and it is this one I prefer to believe. Shack Motors, being body builders themselves, produced an L2-ish body for the car.