

## **BENDIGO SWAP RE-VISITED**

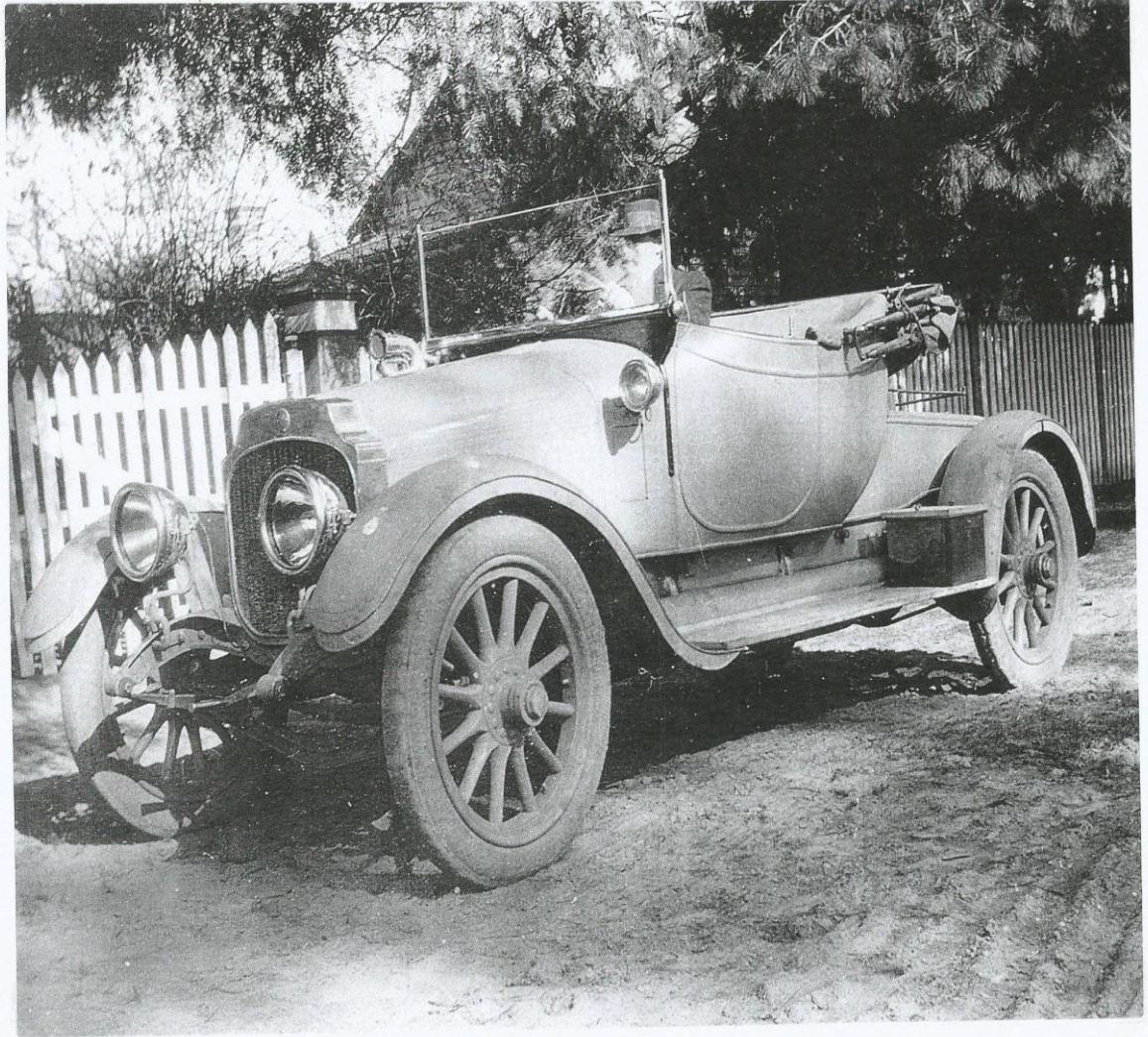
**Dave Stuart.**

In November last year a team of Vauxhall enthusiasts decided to revisit the Bendigo Swap Meet as it was 20 years since John Giddy (Vauxhall guru) had died. The Bendigo Swap was a favourite weekend away for John and the Vauxhall team, with a booking made each year at the famous Shamrock Hotel in Bendigo usually with a booking of the Lola Montez room which I have seen sleep 12 or so weary swappers. As you can imagine there are lots of stories to tell of our twenty or so weekends at Bendigo however I think the one to remember is when 12 of the usual team were flown to and from the swap in Laurie Ogle's 1937 Lockheed Electra. The trip down to Bendigo in the Lockheed was a trip to remember. However the return trip has its terrifying memories of our low level flight in the Kangaroo Valley to plot Laurie's farm on the sat nav for the pilot who was to return the following weekend for a flyover of the property whilst Laurie's daughter was being married to a Qantas pilot.

On the way to Bendigo we took an extra day with an overnight stop in Wangaratta to catch up with Vauxhall repairman John Kent and to see all the vintage type restorations being carried out in his workshop. Dinner that night at our motel included both John and Justin Coxhead another 30-98 man from Bright.

The following morning we ventured off to see Rod Warriner and Sheila Wheatcroft at Avenel. An inspection of Rod's workshop revealed mostly vintage Bentley parts and his 4 ½ litre, however we did see his recently restored XK150 Jaguar Coupe. Sheila prepared a magnificent morning tea of scones and pikelets together with much needed coffee to clear the head of the previous night's activities.

We then continued on to Lancefield and to the property of Malcolm Sloan who has his grandfather's A Type Vauxhall. His grandfather purchased the A Type new and



**MALCOLM SLOAN'S GRANDFATHER IN THE A TYPE**

Malcolm has a long term project ahead of him to restore the car. Malcolm showed us the A Type and it was nice to hear the car is to remain in the family and not sold.

From Lancefield we travelled north towards Bendigo and at Kyneton caught up with Ivan Smith who owns a 23-60 Vauxhall which he purchased in the 60's from the original owner. It was the first time I had met Ivan and we all found him very hospitable and interesting to talk to as he was actually born in Kyneton and being in his 80's knew nearly everything there was to know about the town and its people. He showed us through his large collection of veteran and vintage cars as well as his Valiant collection. Ivan did own the Chrysler dealership in Kyneton for a number of years and in his collection he has the very first and the last Valiant to come off the production line. We spent about three hours at Kyneton and found it hard to leave however prior to leaving Ivan mentioned to me that he was considering having a clearing sale with his Vauxhall spares and would I be interested. Well you can guess what my answer was and it was agreed that I would return to see him in about a fortnight once he had gathered up his collection of spares and had them all together.

We left Kyneton and headed for Bendigo which was only a short drive and there enjoyed some end of day refreshments and dinner at the Shamrock Hotel. Richard Walton, Murray McDonogh and I took the Lola Montez room and Jim Weir, Lyel Murrell and Brian Boardman took to Dame Nellie Melba room. Three in each room was a novelty and a luxury compared to the old days on our visits to the swap.

The weekend at the swap went as usual, up early, a quick breakfast then out to the showground to see what treasures could be found. It is always good to catch up with other Vauxhallians and vintage type people during the day, most are from Victoria however there are swappers who we meet up with each year who come across the ditch (a New Zealand term) from New Zealand. The Saturday night saw us at the Irish Pub not far from the Shamrock where we all enjoyed a fine dinner and shared old tales normally relating to John Giddy or Vauxhalls. The night ended up with a salute to John with a taste of the usual port or two. We made it back to Sydney in the one day and all hoped that it was not too long before we could repeat the weekend away for the Bendigo Swap.

Quite a few months went past before Ivan had collected up all his spares and advised I could come down to see what he had. As a result Murray McDonogh and I travelled down in my ute with trailer behind to carry the loot home if we were successful in our dealings with Ivan. We had a wonderful run down to Kyneton as the countryside was so green and though it was July it as though we were in springtime. Victoria had received an enormous amount of rain during the previous months and the ground was waterlogged with large tracks of water lying in the paddocks.

We arrived at Ivan's workshop mid afternoon where he had placed all the parts he wanted to sell on two pallets. There was a 23-60 crankcase, two blocks and a head still fitted with it rocker arms, braked front and rear axle, a water pump, three oils pumps, set of CAV headlights, set of front mudguards and numerous other engine and chassis parts too good not to make Ivan a serious offer. Ivan accepted our offer and the deal was done with us to return the following morning and load the ute and trailer.

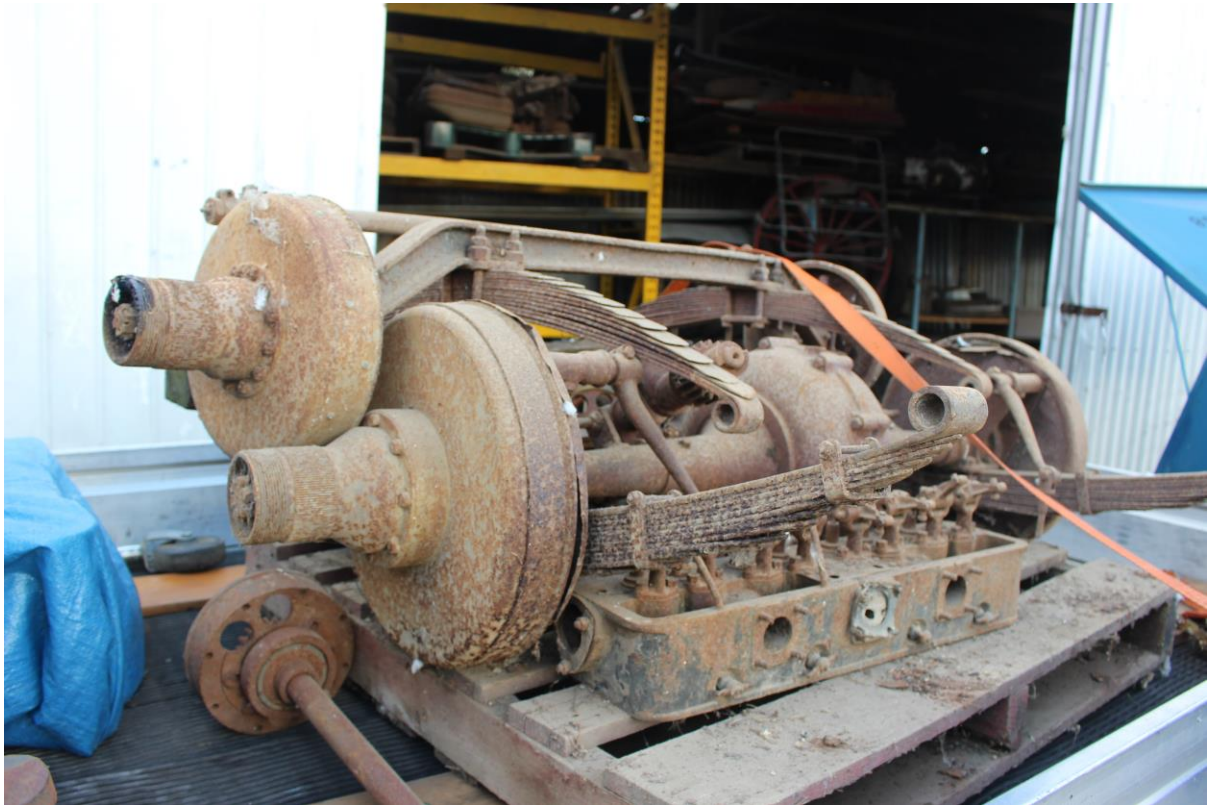
This is where we came unstuck in Kyneton so to speak. It snowed during the night and we woke to find the ute and trailer covered in snow and it was bitterly cold with the wind and chill factor making it very uncomfortable. As they say in the outback, the wind would blow a dog off the chain. We called into Ivan's workshop at 9am to announce we would have to come back as we would surely catch pneumonia being out in the cold whilst we loaded. Ivan said we were very wise and agreed to store my trailer in his workshop until we returned. We left for home soon after we had our bacon and eggs in the local eatery in the main street of the township. All the hills around Kyneton were covered in snow and we had to take care as there were reports of black ice on the road we were travelling on to Lancefield and Kilmore.

Richard Walton and I returned to Kyneton two weeks later to pick up the parts and we were again treated to some fine country hospitality by Ivan and his wife June. Ivan was able to load the heavy pallet onto my ute with his fork lift and the smaller parts were loaded into the trailer by hand. Ivan told me that he bought two 23-60 rolling chassis' from Darlington Point on the Murray River in N.S.W. about fifty years ago and these parts we had purchased were the remains from those two cars. Some of the parts are closely numbered with a running board valance stamped 568, crank

case 560, block 572 and head 565. I would have thought the valance identified the car however our A – D Type Register shows car OD568 is actually owned by Max Stephenson in Queensland and is known as “Penny” used by Max in his overseas marathons. Obviously the parts we have are from the same car however which number it was it not known.



**IVAN SMITH AND DAVE STUART**



**UTE LOADED WITH THE HEAD, BLOCKS AND FRONT AND REAR AXLE**



**TRAILER LOADED WITH SMALLER PARTS**

We dined with Ivan and June that night at the local services club and were into bed fairly early for our return trip to Sydney. The trip home was an absolute nightmare, it rained from the time we left Kyneton until we reached Goulburn. When I say it rained, it bucketed down being so heavy in waves we were slowed to 40 kph on the motorway with our hazard lights on. Visibility at times was no more than 40 to 50 metres ahead and the paddocks on both sides of the road were like lakes. Without doubt it was the heaviest rain that both Richard and I had seen and to make it worse we were driving in it. We stopped at the bakery in Holbrook for lunch as the rain had eased however whilst having our lunch it came down again and no one could leave the shop for an hour until it eased. I had phoned Mary that morning to say we would be home by 6pm however it was 8.30pm when we pulled into Glenfield. Richard then had to jump into his car and drive home a further hour to Eastwood whilst I had a hot shower and dinner.

Interestingly, we found that one of the engine blocks was not 23-60 and in fact from a 30-98 being stamped 58. When Jim Cuthbert owned his 30-98 OE56 it was fitted with the E Type 30-98 crank case E370 from John Giddy's E Type E366. OE56's engine suffered a major and at some stage had the crankcase changed to keep the car on the road. Fortunately John Giddy had purchased the damaged OE56 crankcase in his travels and later traded it with Eric Rainsford from South Australia, as at the time Eric was restoring OE56. So in effect OE56 now has its original repaired crankcase fitted as does E366. We believe the 58 block we have is the original one fitted to OE56 although being two numbers apart. In support of this, Richard Walton's 30-98 OE53 it fitted with OE55 block, also two numbers apart. So it may have been as these two cars are close in chassis numbers, the block numbers in the erecting shop at Vauxhall Motors may have been two numbers out of sequence at that point in time. All interesting to us Vauxhall believers however those who were around at the time are now long gone and makes it quite difficult to confirm these issues.

That ends the account of our good fortune having originally set out for the Bendigo Swap Meet to remember John Giddy and those memorable nights at the Shamrock. This last trip however provided the best results of all our times at Bendigo with the purchase of the Vauxhall spares from Ivan Smith. So I am sure the guru was still pulling the strings and looking over us somewhere from above and would be more than proud of our venture.