

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC

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-SPECIAL EDITION GEARBOX-

- No. 4 -

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

'VIRTUAL' model comp placegetters.



This is the Daimler SP 250, sometimes known as the 'Dart.' Between 1959 and 1964, just over 2,600 SP 250s were made. It is a little 'different' to the usual British and Italian designed and bodied sports cars that we often see at car shows nowadays, but it is another example of life being simpler back then. Look at that unpretentious leather seated interior with a few compulsory gauges, a couple of switches and a plain three spoke steering wheel. No touch-screen and nothing much else there that could be a distraction when cruising the highways.



-PLACEGETTERS FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2023 'VIRTUAL' MODEL COMPETITION -

FROM THE TOP DOWN:

First – Bill's Cobb and Co Stagecoach

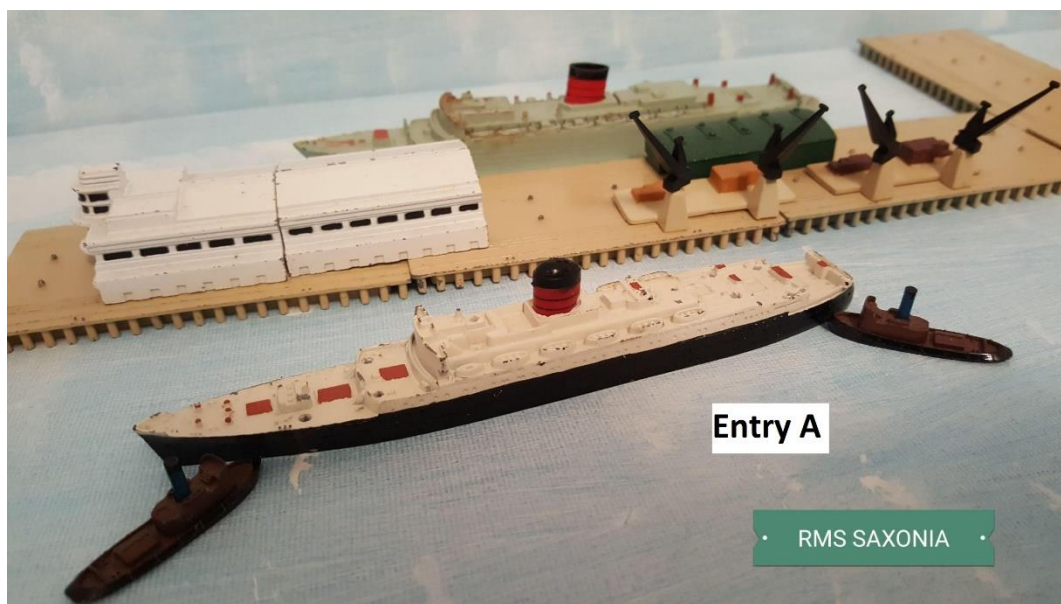
Second – Mark's R.M.S Saxonia

Equal Third – Matt's Scammell Articulated Truck



COBB & CO Stagecoach by Matchbox - Yesteryear

Entry B



Entry A

RMS SAXONIA



Entry E

Scammell
Articulated
Truck

Matchbox Superkings K33- 1975

-PLACEGETTERS FOR THE OCTOBER 2023 'VIRTUAL' MODEL COMPETITION -

FROM THE TOP DOWN:

First – Ernie’s Matchbox buses.

Second – Mark’s Isle of Wight Open-top buses.

Third – Matt’s Sydney Explorer double decker.



Entry E



-PLACEGETTERS FOR THE NOVEMBER 2023 'VIRTUAL' MODEL COMPETITION -

FROM THE TOP DOWN:

First – Brian B's Salt Lake Racer

Second – Matthew C's Dinky Car carrier and trailer.

Third – Bill's Woodies



1950 Chrysler Woody

1948 Chevrolet Woody

1950 Ford Woody

Entry C

With one more 'Virtual' competition remaining for the year, that being for December, I'd like to thank all the members who take part and especially Paul, Shane and Bill for the work they have put into this part of the club's activities. It gives us 'distance disadvantaged' members a chance to be involved in the club activities, even if only in a small way. From now on I will add the pics of the 'virtual' comp placegetters in the Gearbox each month as we do with the 'Real' model comp placegetters. So, the December winners will go in the January Gearbox.

Again, thanks to everyone taking part in the comp and I hope we have more great entries in 2024. Terry.

FORD ESCORT MK 1 - *Good old fashioned front-engine, rear-wheel-drive.*



1968 saw the release of Ford's latest newcomer in Britain, the classy little Escort two-door sedan. Britain's ***Auto Express*** Motor Magazine would go on to say, *'During seven years of production, more than two million Mk1 Escorts found buyers. Such success was guaranteed by low pricing and a huge range of derivatives thanks to various body styles and a wide range of engines.'* Out of just over 2 million Ford Escort Mk 1s manufactured, around 56,000 were produced in Australia between 1970 and 1975.

The Ford Escort was pretty much a basic rear-wheel drive vehicle with a four-speed manual gearbox and later three-speed automatic transmission as an option. And in keeping with its elementary structure, it had a MacPherson strut front suspension and semi-elliptical springs at the rear with a live axle and the steering was of the rack and pinion type.

As ***Auto Express*** said, when released in 1968 it came in many variations and trim levels starting with a two-door model in three trim levels, De Luxe, Super and GT forms powered by either a 1098 cc or 1298 cc straight four cylinder engine. Shortly after, a Panel Van was released, and both engines now came with the option of an automatic gearbox. The four door sedan, and a station wagon (Estate) did not arrive till 1969. Upgraded power outputs to both engines occurred in 1970 and the model range was changed to four trim levels, Standard, L, XL and GT as well as the introduction a new model, the RS1600 that came with a Cosworth 1599 cc engine. On top of all this, the *'Mexico'* version was also introduced with the Kent 1.6 litre engine and was one of the most iconic models in the Mk 1 range over in Britain.



Above pics - Hongwell brand 1:43 scale diecast model of the Ford Escort Mark 1 - Courtesy of Bill K.

The *'Mexico'* as a stand-alone model, came about due to Ford's success in the World Cup Rally that commenced in London in April 1970 and was conducted over 16,000 miles finishing in Mexico. Though Ford had intended to use the Twin Cam engined Escorts in the rally, after much reconnaissance and analysis of the course, it became obvious that reliability was more important than high power and speed. The 1598 cc Kent crossflow head engine was selected to power the rally escorts due to its strength and previous reliability record. An Escort won the rally with five rally prepared Escorts finishing in the top ten. The Mk 1 Escort had suddenly gone from an affordable basic road car to a well credentialed rally car. Speaking of the *'Mexico'* model upon release to the public ***Classic Driver*** wrote that *'It had a number of advantages on the road, in that it had decent performance, was easy to maintain, relatively easy to insure, and above all, it was great fun to drive, something which is still true today.'*



Vanguards 1:43 scale diecast model in Wiltshire (England) Police livery

More changes occurred in 1971 with the addition of a *1300 Sport* model that was a 1300GT model with less sporty and creature comfort features, however it was not till 1973 that the next upgrades occurred with all models having modifications to improve their suspension package and the addition of a two-door 1300E. *See next pic.*

The 1300E was a result of Ford wanting a luxury trim level model and they used the 1300 GT as a base for the 1300E which was then fitted with an upgraded interior and special paint schemes and the 'E' was meant to stand for 'Executive.' Production ceased at the end of 1974 with just over 10,700 1300E models being produced. 1973 would also see the end of the 1300GT and the start of the RS2000 with the 1993 cc Pinto engine. A four-door version of the 1300E went on sale in 1974 with a higher luxury specced interior, metallic paint and a vinyl roof. The Escort Mark 1 was replaced by the Mark 2 in 1975.



Previous and above left – Vanguards 1300E model. Above right - The interior in the 1300E luxury trim level model.

There are two Escort diecast scale models that I took an interest in, the first as mentioned above being the 1974 Mark 1 Escort two-door **1300E** as I have that model in 1:43 scale diecast by Vanguards. *See lead-in and above pic at left.* The second model was the Mark 1 Twin Cam used in motor racing and rallying and raced by Frank Gardner.

Within a few months of the launch of the new Escort, Ford had already decided it would be developed into a motor competition sedan as they were not sure that the Mark II Lotus Cortina, now heavier, would have the same impact on motor sports as its predecessor. Ford Britain's Advanced Vehicle Operations (AVO) in Essex were quick to produce a twin-cam version of the Escort and Ford's factory team, Alan Mann Racing, were responsible for developing and racing the now homologated Escort.

The Cosworth 1.6 litre Twin-cam engine known as the 'Formula 2 FVA' engine was used and some of the modifications made included a special suspension package and the extended wheel arches to take in the large racing rims and tyres as can be seen on the model pictured below. The end result was a highly tuned racing machine that dominated touring car racing almost immediately, not only in Britain, but worldwide in both road racing and rallying.

The Alan Mann Racing Escort Mk 1 raced by Frank Gardner is a great looking machine and is modelled by Atlas in their British Touring Car Champions series in 1:43 scale diecast. *See next pic.* Frank Gardner was an Aussie icon as far as motor racing goes and was spoken of as being one of the world's toughest, most determined and professional racing drivers. He was not only a driver but an engineer, team manager, driving coach as well as an author.



Historic Racing wrote that *'Frank Gardener was a typical Australian all-round sportsman, professional boxer, swimmer, lifeguard and motorcycle racer. In 1952 he was swimming and racing for the state and was Captain and sweep oarsman for the surf lifesaving crew that won both State and National titles.'* He travelled to England in the late 1950's and worked as a race engineer for Aston Martin and later joined Jack Brabham's organisation where they became lifelong friends.

Over his career, Frank raced in the F1 competition and other open wheeler events especially Formula 5000 where he took out the Rothmans European F5000 title in 1971. He was often a placegetter in the annual Tasman Series and won the New Zealand Grand Prix in 1972 and came second twice in the Australian GP. Most of us know him for his tin-top or touring car racing where he won the British Touring Car Championships three times. His second title came driving the Escort Twin Cam modelled by Atlas *in the above pic.*

Frank's association with this potent little Ford Escort was due to his relationship with Alan Mann Racing, Ford's UK factory works team who enjoyed much success in the late 1960s. Frank drove many cars for the Alan Mann team including an aging American Ford Falcon Sprint rally car that he massaged into a potent racing sedan for him to take out his first British Saloon Car Championship in 1967. 1968 saw him take out the BTCC championship again and in the new Twin Cam Escort. He would take out the BTCC again in 1973 driving a Chevrolet Camaro and this would be his third BTCC title. In between all his auto racing career highlights, Frank took part in and was eighth over the line and first in class driving a Lotus Elite with David Hobbs in the 1962 Le Mans 24 Hour Race.

He had renewed his passion for racing in Australia by the late 1970s and had six Bathurst 1000 starts. His most successful being the 1975 race. He teamed as co-driver with Bob Morris in the Ron Hodgson Motors Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34 and they came in second, two laps behind Peter Brock and co-driver Brian Sampson and it must have been a hard race as the third placed Torana was another six laps behind. Frank also won the Australian Sports Sedan title in 1977 in an extremely modified Chevrolet Corvair. He would go on to manage the Benson and Hedges Ford Sierra team when Tony Longhurst and Tomas Mezera won the Bathurst 1000 in 1988. Finally, and according to *Historic Racing*, having returned to Australia to race in the sports sedan championships, *'winning the title in 1976 and 1977... he decided to call it a day behind the wheel... and went on to run the Craven Mild, and later JPS, Diet Coke and Benson and Hedges racing teams for Holden, BMW and Ford from the 70's to the 90's.'*

In Australia, though many Ford Escort Mk1s were raced, one of the best performers was Alan Moffat in an ex- Alan Mann Racing Mk 1 Cosworth Twin Cam Escort. Though it was earmarked for the 1969 Trans Am series in the U.S.A. to compete in the under 2 litre class for Holman-Moody, one of Ford's U.S factory race teams, it was not used. At the behest of Ford Australia's motor sport manager, Al Turner, the Escort ended up in Australia to be raced by Moffat in 1970. Though he raced his famous 1969 Trans Am Mustang quite successfully, this Escort was used regularly in the early 1970's by Alan Moffat in Sports sedan events. After its early success, Moffat had a more powerful engine fitted to make it competitive against many other Aussies who were now racing Mark 1 Twin Cam Escorts as well.

Finally *Unique Cars* said, *'the Escort was a gem, and it quickly topped the sales and production charts. Between the Escort's introduction in 1968 until the release of the Mk. II in 1975, there were some 2,155,301 built.'* *Terry.*

A nice little Collection of Ford's from the South Hants Model Auto Club in England.

And speaking of Fords, after our November Gearbox article on the 'disappearing' Ford Consul Mark1 in England, one of our Friends from the South Hants club in England, Mick Haven, sent me some photos of his models and an interesting story on them.



The above pic is Mick's Ford Consul Mark 1 with a set of 'Minilites' mag wheels fitted and is the same as the green model shown in the Gearbox. Mick lived ten minutes from the Ford factory at Dagenham in the 1950s and when they were in a nearby showroom, he says it was a 'must' visit. Besides the Consul, the showroom also had the six-cylinder Zephyr and Zodiac models on display.

Thanks to Mick who has kindly sent the following pics as well. Below is a very rare convertible model and is displayed at the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu, England. Underneath that is a pic of a 1955 model at the 'Simply Ford' event in 2020 and in mint condition. Mick noted that it was for sale, but without an asking price being shown.



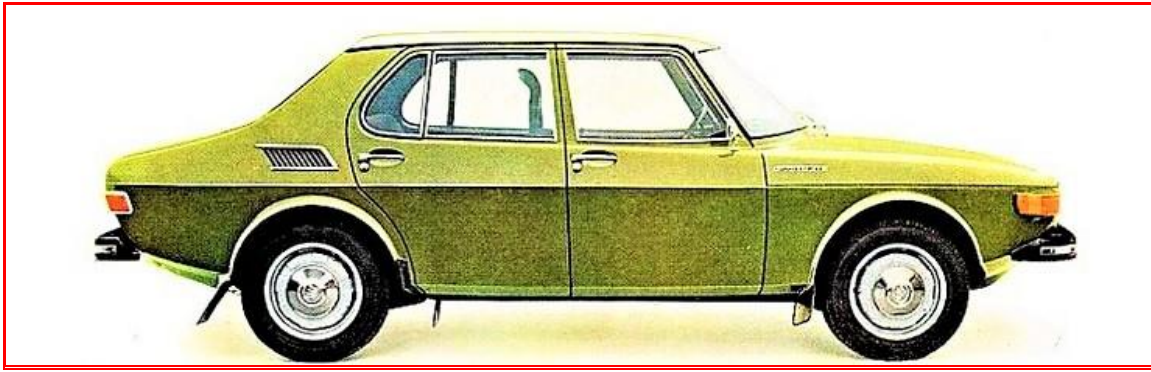
In his younger days, Mick had a Ford Zodiac Mark 2 and it was the two tone blue on blue model. It would appear that Mick and some of his mates had a lot of fun in it, including a time on holidays on the Isle of Wight when he was off to the pub and was joined by some passengers. He said, *'Fourteen of us in the car that night, six in the front and eight in the back. Exactly how the clutch pedal and gears were operated remains a mystery. There were arms and legs intertwined across the seat. We never ever saw her Majesty's finest, which was fortunate, because he would have had a fit and I would have picked up points.'* Now that would have been a sight to see. He went on, *'Eventually I sold it because it had knocking big ends and I couldn't afford to get it sorted. Nevertheless, it had got us the two hundred miles or more there and back from home to the island. Its rego was WLM 63 which in this day and age would be worth more than the car, assuming it still existed.'* The next pic is an old Corgi Vanguards model.



The pics below are also Vanguards, except the pink estate which is a 1960s Lansdowne Farnham conversion by Abbott. I'm also the happy owner of a red Trax Zephyr Mk 2 Ute. If ever the word 'cruiser' could be applied to a car it was those Mk 2s. They are as rare as chooks teeth here as they suffered a lot from rot and parts aren't easy to come by. They're long gone but never forgotten. *Mick Haven.*



- Saab 99 - The thinking driver's choice -



'1949 Gave us the Saab' I wrote in the **November 2020 Gearbox** about a British **Autocar** motor magazine story that had a list of post WW2 cars they considered of immense importance for each year. For 1949, their nomination was Saab's first model, the '92.' Historically, and as mentioned in the previous **Gearbox**, SAAB stood for Svenska Aeroplan Aktiebolaget, a company founded in 1937 specifically to develop airplanes and deliver them to the Swedish military. They decided to look at automobile production in 1945 which led to the release of the model 92.

Continuing on with ideas from Giles Chapman's books related to cars we loved over the decades, I was taken in by his stating that the 1969 **Saab 99** was *'The thinking driver's choice.'*



The first Saab 99 was released in 1968 as the 1969 model and only in two-door type.

The Saab management signed off on the development of a new and larger Saab model in 1964, but at that point in time, Saab was not in a position to develop a new engine that would be suitable for a proposed larger vehicle. Saab then entered into a partnership with the British Company, Ricardo Consulting Engineers Limited, that led to an association with Standard-Triumph. The outcome for Saab was an arrangement for Triumph to build a new 1709 cc over-head cam slant four-cylinder engine for Saab. As an aside, Ricardo still exists today as an environmental and engineering consultancy firm. They are still pioneers in engine technology and currently have a partnership with McLaren.

A number of the new Triumph built engines arrived at Saab and this led to around twenty five prototypes being tested in modified Saab 96 bodies. One prototype Saab 99 was shown to the public in November 1967. Testing continued throughout 1968 before the Saab 99 was released for sale to the public in two door versions at the end of the year and this would be the 1969 model. The Triumph 1709 cc engine was quite modern with a Zenith-Stromberg CD carburettor developed specially for Saab. It had an aluminium cross-flow cylinder head and a chain driven overhead camshaft that produced 87 hp or 64 kw and would have upgrades over the life of the engine.

Being a front wheel drive vehicle, the engine was mounted longitudinally between the front wheels, but slanted over 45 degrees to reduce the cars bonnet height and lower its centre of gravity. This, together with its double wishbone front suspension setup, led to the Saab 99 to possess excellent handling and roadholding. The engine was water-cooled, but had an electric cooling fan which was unusual for that era. It also had four-wheel disc brakes fitted, a deep wrap-around curved windscreen and a large glass area for good driver vision. The body was styled by Saab's Karl-Erik Sixten Sason who was originally involved in their aircraft engineering.

Sixten Sason had been a freelance designer before joining Saab and was responsible for Saab's automobile designs from day one and had based those designs on his aviation engineering experience. It has been noted that the Saab 99 was almost immune to cross winds. Unfortunately Sixten Sason died just before the Saab 99 was released.



Factory pic for advertisement – 1970 4-door model.

Saab were always conscious of the Nordic climate and road conditions and paid special attention to rustproofing, not only to the body panels, but even down to the hub caps, bumpers and various grilles by having them made from either stainless steel or aluminium. Safety was also a consideration and the Saab 99 had impact absorbing padding around the window and roof pillars. Over time, Saab would add more world leading safety features such as headlight washers and wipers, bumper bars that sprung back into shape after a 5 mph impact, side-protection bars in the doors and a fibreglass head lining for occupant protection in the event of a rollover.

Oddly, upon release, the Saab 99 had an ignition key mounted between the front seats to lock the car's transmission when parked. In its design, Sixten Sason had the doors extending down to the floor with no outer sills which removed a potential rust trap.

Its first upgrade in 1970 saw a more luxurious interior, a redesigned dashboard and the introduction of an automatic gearbox. For the auto, the engine came with electronic fuel injection and an increase in power to 95 hp or 70 kw and all models now had an aluminium exhaust system. At the same time a four-door model was introduced giving the Saab 99 four versions, two and four door sedans with either a manual or automatic gearbox. In 1971 a 1854 cc engine was added as an option to the range, but this would become the standard Saab 99 engine in 1972.

Besides a *Police* version being produced by Saab, a couple of memorable *Saab 99* models along the way were the new luxury/sports Saab 99 'EMS' 2 litre model introduced in 1972 and fitted out with a new version of the Triumph slant four engine. This Saab engine was now at 1985 cc after being re-developed and built by Saab rather than by Triumph. 1974 saw the introduction of the Saab 99 Combi Coupe which was a two door hatchback model with a large one piece rear door that lifted upwards. The coupe hatchback models became available in four door versions in 1976 and in late 1977 had a 145 hp or 107 kw turbo engine model added to the Combi Coupe range.



IXO 1:43 scale diecast models of the 1977 Saab 99 Combi Coupe in Turbo form.



Then, often thought to be the best of all, was the Saab Turbo introduced in late 1977 for the 1978 model year, and came initially in the two door Combi Coupe bodywork, though a few four door models would be turned out. **See previous pics.** *Hemmings* stated that the Saab 99 Turbo was *`the first fuel-injected, wastegate-equipped, turbocharged engine tuned for road-usable midrange torque over high-rpm power, packaged in a practical midsize family car.'* In general terms, the Turbo models increased the maximum speed of the Saab 99 from around 180 kph in non-turbo form, to 200 kph in turbo form. Saab also produced the Turbo models in two door sedan form. **See next pics.**

I read that by 1983, Saab was the world's biggest producer of turbo cars. Saab built 10,607 turbo models for worldwide sale between 1977 and 1981 with almost half of those going to North America.



Above and below – The excellently detailed 1978 Saab 99 `Turbo' sedan by Cult models in 1:18 scale resin.



With the many upgrades, both technical and cosmetic over the life of the *Saab 99* before being replaced by the Saab 90 in 1984, it became a very successful model for Saab with 588,643 models being produced. *Terry.*

- *Little snippets* - 1953 Buick Skylark -



1953 Buick Skylark convertible – Danbury Mint’s version in 1:24 scale diecast.

We spoke recently in the Gearbox about the birth of General Motor’s Chevrolet Corvette. It was initially presented to the public as a concept car at a General Motors Motorama event held at New York’s Waldorf Astoria hotel in January 1953. As we all know, it was a big hit, and production of the road-going model commenced in mid-1953.

Another General Motors automobile that had a 70th birthday last year is the rather lavish, for a convertible, 1973 Buick Skylark. Checking out these two vehicles, you can see that they are like chalk and cheese. The General also released another new model for 1953, their latest range of family sized Chevrolets with many advances over their immediate post WW2 models such as key-turn starting, extra shoulder level body width and a one piece windscreen.

Each of these models was totally different in concept. The Corvette was chasing the market created by the return of U.S. ex-servicemen post WW2 who had fallen for the small British and Italian sports cars like the MG and Jaguars. Some even had them brought back home. Chevrolet’s 1953 models were chasing leadership in the family car market with a massive number of body styles and trim level options available, and went on to sell 1.3 million of these new Chevrolets that year.

Buick, on the other hand, had other reasons for the introduction of this new model in 1953. It was the 50th anniversary of their formation, and to celebrate, the company decided to produce a special four-seater luxury convertible that became the *Skylark* and would only be produced in convertible form.

Buick’s Head-of-design at the time, Ned Nickles, was a fan of British sports cars, especially the MG brand. Though he owned many, he never felt they were suitable for long distance driving. Interestingly, it was Nickles who introduced Buick’s iconic ‘VentiPorts’ or small portholes along the side of the Buicks mudguards in 1949. In 1951, Buick had completed, and by 1952, showcased their experimental sports car known as the XP-300. It was based on design sketches by Nickles who became involved in its development through to completion. *See next pic.* It was showcased across North America receiving critical acclaim.



Nickles owned a new 1951 Buick Roadmaster convertible and decided to sketch designs for a customised body for his car. After Harley Earl had seen Nickles completed drawings, he decided it should form the backbone for a special 50th anniversary Buick model. A prototype was produced and the new model hit the showrooms in 1953.



Brooklin version in 1:24 scale white metal. Note there were no 'VentiPorts' on the Skylark.

The Skylark convertible was designed to be the superior 'premium' trim level Buick for 1953 and therefore, it became the 'Halo' model for the company. It was based on Buick's Roadmaster chassis and powered by Buick's first ever V8 engine known as the 'Fireball', rather than their traditional straight-eight engine. The new V8 engine had a capacity of 5.3 litres or 323 cubic inches and produced 188 bhp or 140 kw of power. The Skylark was the first Buick, and also one of the earliest in the automaking industry, to use a 12-volt electrical system.

Inside was pure luxury that included soft leather seats available in four colours, full carpeting and a radio with a power aerial. As well, when the front seat backs were tilted forward to allow access to the rear passenger area, the front bench seat would move forward automatically. Many Hollywood stars such as Bob Hope became owners of the Skylark convertible, but probably because it was twice as expensive as the standard Roadmaster models, sales were not great. 1954 would be the last year for the 'Skylark' name to be used as a trim level or model by Buick till 1961. Only 1,690 of the 1953 Skylarks were produced, so it is extremely rare for Buick collectors today. *Terry.*



1953 Buick Skylark convertible interior – Courtesy of Hemmings.



Matchbox 1:43 scale diecast model of the 1953 Buick Skylark.