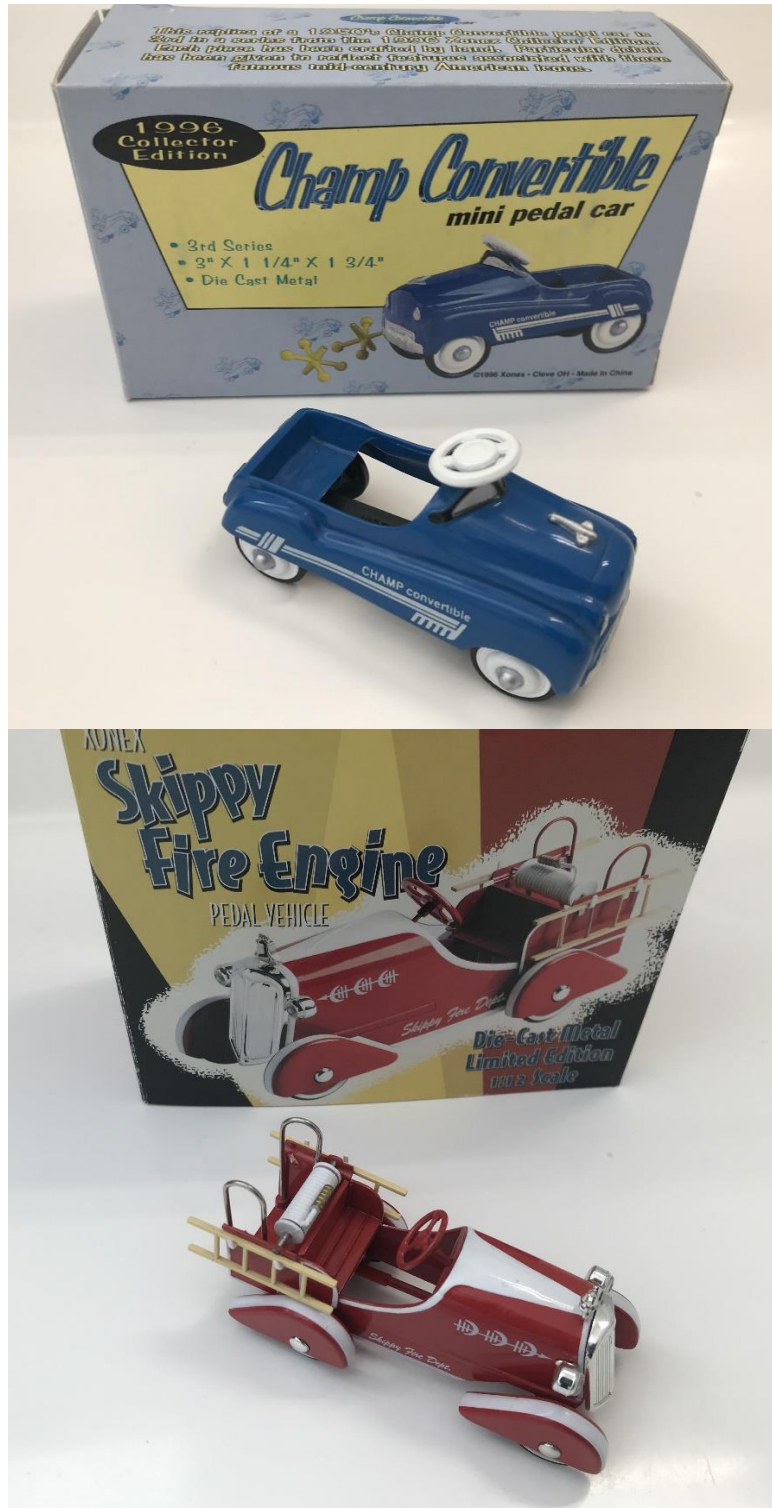


# --GEARBOX--

🎄 DECEMBER 2023 🎄

**HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.**

**CONTACT: Bill Kenchington on Ph (02) 4945 4830 OR Andrew Vile on (02) 4933 5607 in business hours only.**



***Pedal cars are featured in this edition of the Gearbox. The above pics are courtesy of Bill and are of two scale model pedal cars by Xonex that he owns. The blue car is about 75mm long and the red fire engine is about 90mm long. They were purchased back in 1996 for \$15 each. Real pedal cars were very popular when most of us were growing up and they were often Christmas presents for many a young lad way back then.***

**----- SO A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE FROM THE GEARBOX CREW -----**

# HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INCORPORATED

## Minutes of Club Meeting Held at Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club on 14 November 2023

**Meeting Opened:** 8.05 pm.

**Members Present:** 22      Apologies: 3      Visitors: 1

**Welcome to Members and Visitors:** President Andrew Vile welcomed all to the Club.

**Previous Minutes:** Moved: David Rosser    Seconded: Trevor Palmer “That the October 2023 Club Minutes be accepted”.    Carried.

**Treasurer’s Report:** The Treasurer reported that the Club funds stand at \$1,185.39.

Moved: Allan Evans    Seconded: Paul Campbell    “That the Treasurer’s Report be accepted”      Carried.

### **Correspondence:**

#### **OUTWARDS:**

Members – Advice that Christmas Party venue is at Edgeworth Tavern due to closure of Club’s Bistro.

Members and Others – November Gearbox.

Bill and Elizabeth Cohen and Members – Club’s memento on Celebration of the Life of Phil Cohen.

Members – November Model Competition, AGM/November Meeting Reminder and Advice that the Club’s Bistro is now open.

Members – Details for “Show Us Ya Slotz” visit and display planned for 12 November 2023.

Members – Advice of the AGM to be held on 14 November 2023 at Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club.

Mike Yarrington – Reply - Order of 40 name plaques for 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Model plinths.

#### **INWARDS:**

West Aust MCC (WAMCC) – October 2023 “Showcase” magazine.

P H Cheah (SMAC) – Feedback on November Gearbox.

Ian Hind (WAMCC) – Feedback on November Gearbox.

Canadian Toy Collectors Society – October 2023 Magazine.

Canadian Toy Collectors Society – Comments re November Gearbox.

Bill and Elizabeth Cohen – Reply - Appreciation for Club’s memento on Celebration of the Life of Phil Cohen.

Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club – Advice that venue hire for 2024 remains at \$25 per meeting.

Radio Station 2 NURFM – Reply – Thank you and happy to promote events such as the 2023 Toy Fair.

Mike Yarrington – Request approval to name plaque artwork for 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Model plinths.

Moved: Ernie Williams    Seconded: David Rosser “That the Correspondence be accepted”.    Carried.

#### **Matters Arising:**

Show Us Ya Slotz Return Visit and Model Display – This was held on Sunday 12 November 2023 with 11 in attendance and 6 members displaying.

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Model – The name plaques have been ordered and arrangements have been made for the decals to be applied to the vans. Production of 40 plinths is in progress. It is planned to have completed 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Model available to members at our February meeting.

Club Membership Promotion Banner – It is planned to have this available by the Kurri Kurri School display in March 2024.

Police Rescue Visit, Carrington – This is to be arranged for a date in 2024.

Newcastle Museum Display – Mutually agreeable date to be arranged for 2024.

Club Christmas Party – This will be on Tuesday 12 December 2023 at the Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club at 7.00pm for 7.30pm.

Frontline Store (Broadmeadow) Private Opening – This is planned for Tuesday 9 January 2024 and opening at 7.00 pm.

#### **General Business:**

Model Competition Prizes for 2023– Our thanks go to Narelle of Frontline Hobbies for the donation of the following vouchers as prizes:-

1<sup>st</sup> Prize -\$50, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - \$40 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - \$25 for the Actual Competition plus 1<sup>st</sup> Prize - \$25 for the Virtual Competition.

Kurri Kurri School Display – This is to be held on Sunday 24 March 2024 (Details to follow later).

Toys for Sale – Trevor Palmer and Mark Jenkins have a number of items for sale to members tonight.

Free Magazines – See Andrew Vile tonight if interested.

**Model Competitions:**

*Results for November:*

*“Actual” Model Competition: “Open” – Qualified.*

1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Mal Hattingh.....	Land Speed Records.....	31 Points
2 <sup>nd</sup> .....	Brian Blyth.....	Schuco’s.....	28 Points
3 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Pieter Zeeman.....	Micro Cars.....	17 Points

*“Virtual” Model Competition: “Open” - Any scale.*

1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Brian Blyth.....	Salt Lake Racer.....	26 Points
2 <sup>nd</sup> .....	Matt Campbell.....	Car Carrier and Trailer.....	16 Points
3 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Bill Kenchington.....	Woodys.....	15 Points

**Next “Actual” Model Category - December:** This Competition is in recess and will resume at our February 2024 meeting.

**Next “Virtual” Model Category - December:** “Predominantly Silver Vehicle” - Any scale and up to three (3) models but ONE PHOTO ONLY.

**Meeting Closed:** 8.35 pm.

**HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.**

***Club Positions for 2024***

**CLUB COMMITTEE**

- President.... Andrew Vile**
- Vice President.... Brian Fairhurst**
- Secretary.... Bill Kenchington**
- Treasurer.... David Standen**

**Magazine Editor.... Jointly Terry Payne and Bill Kenchington**

**Competition Organiser.... Shane Neems**

**Librarian.... Paul Campbell**

**SUB COMMITTEE**

- Public Officer .... David Standen**
- Events Co-ordinator .....Paul Campbell.**

**HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.**

***Membership Fees for 2024***

**Adult Members - \$25.00 (Gearbox Emailed), \$50.00 (Gearbox Posted) and Junior Members (Up to 16 years) - Nil Cost**

**New Members plus Badge Cost.**

***This will knock the socks off you.***

Classic and Sports car have just reported that the only Ferrari GTO Tipo 1962 campaigned by the factory team, sold for **US \$51,705,000** at R.M. Sotheby’s auctions on 13 November. That made it the most expensive Ferrari ever sold at Auction. This Ferrari was one of only thirty-four GTO Tipo 1962s built. It made its debut in May 1962 for the factory team at the Nurburgring 1000 km race where it came in second overall and first in class. It was then prepared for the 1962 24 Hours of Le Mans race, together with three other Ferrari types entered by the Factory team. However, it did not finish due to overheating during the race. After various owners and some time spent in hill-climbing competitions, it was restored and has won many trophies when shown at events.

So far, the most expensive car ever sold at auction was a 1 of 2 Mercedes-Benz 300SLR Uhlenhart Coupe that made **US \$142 million**, and again at R.M. Sotheby’s auction in May 2022. It was sold to an unknown Billionaire. (TP)

**HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.**

**2023 CHRISTMAS DINNER MEETING**

**Date: Tuesday 12 December 2023**

**Time: 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm**

**Venue: Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club Auditorium**

**(Where we hold our club meetings)**

**Details: Tables will be set up in the auditorium where our dinner will be held.**

**Members upon ordering their meals at the Restaurant will be provided with a buzzer.**

**When notified members are to collect their meals.**

**Drinks can be ordered from the Main Bar.**

**Guests: Wives, partners, family members and friends are all invited.**

**Note: There will be no business nor "Actual" model competition conducted on the evening.**

**However, the "Virtual" model competition will be held as usual.**

**\* Presentation of prizes for the Actual model competitions will be made on the night. \***

**The Virtual finishes in December and we will award 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at our January Frontline Meeting.**



**HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.**

***Model Competition Categories for 2024***

**"Virtual" Model Categories:**

**January** – "Family Owned Vehicle" – Any scale one (1) model only.

**February** "Open" – Any scale.

**March** – "Emergency Vehicle" – Any scale up to five (5) models.

**April** – "Vehicle Associated with Food or Drink" – Any scale up to three (3) models.

**May** – "Tractor" – Any scale up to three (3) models.

**June** "Open" – Any scale.

**July** – "Vehicle with any Part Brown" - Any scale one (1) model.

**August** – "Vehicle with Three (3) or less Wheels" - Any scale up to three (3) models.

**September** – "Vehicle Associated with Aviation" - Any scale up to two (2) models.

**October** – "Steam Vehicle" - Any scale up to three (3) models.

**November** – "Open" – Any scale.

**December** – "Vehicle Associated with Christmas" – Any scale up to three (3) models.

**“Actual” Model Categories:**

**February** – “Open” – Any scale up to five (5) models.

**March** – “Vehicle with a Hook” – Any scale up to three (3) models.

**April** – “Vehicle with Four (4) or more Wheels” – Any scale up to three (3) models.

**May** – “Vehicle Starting with the Letter A” – Any scale one (1) model.

**June** – “Open” – Any scale up to five (5) models.

**July** – “Christmas Vehicle” - Any scale up to two (2) models.

**August** – “A Recreation Vehicle” - Any scale up to three (3) models.

**September** – “A Cargo Vehicle” - Any scale up to five (5) models.

**October** – “Roadside Services Vehicle” - Any scale up to three (3) models.

**November** – “Open” – Any scale up to five (5) models.

*Luxury dining, **H.M.A.C.** style. (Yes folks, that's how you do it!!)*



It would appear that the club had a great day at their last visit to 'Show Us Ya Slotz' with some members displaying as well as competing. Not sure what Bill is examining here, but apparently the fish and chips were tops. A full report will appear in the January Gearbox. *Terry.*

## PLACEGETTERS FOR THE NOVEMBER REAL MODEL COMPETITION



1<sup>st</sup> - Mal's Land Speed Records



2<sup>nd</sup> - Brian's Schuco models



3<sup>rd</sup> - Pieter's Micro models

## LEYLAND P76 TURNS FIFTY IN 2023



Love it or hate it, there is no doubt the Leyland P76 is a part of the Australian car culture. The Leyland P76 car was released in Australia in April 1973 to compete against the Big 3 car models at the time.

The competitors were namely the HQ Holden Kingswood, XA Ford Falcon and the VJ Chrysler Valiant. In 2023 the Leyland P76 turned 50 years old, and this was celebrated at the 18<sup>th</sup> Leyland P76 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nationals at Parkes NSW over the Easter weekend 7-10 April 2023. One of our remote Club members, Paul Hentschel attended this Anniversary.

Paul, being a proud owner of a Home on th'Orange coloured Super Leyland P76 sedan (photo below), prompted me some many months ago to write this article.

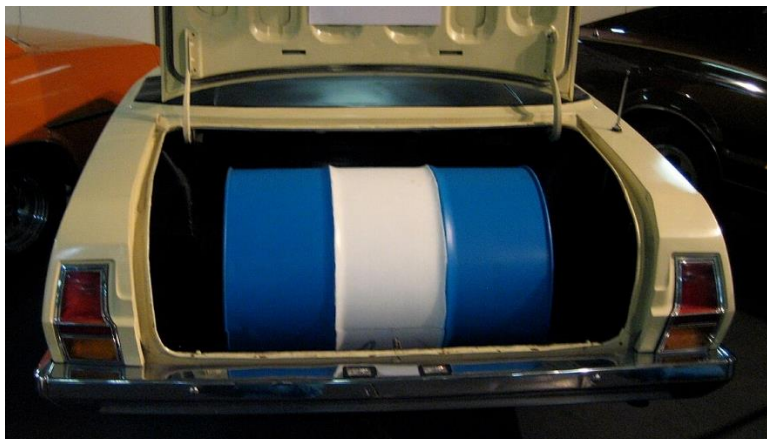


As we all know the Leyland P76 was not the success story that it should have been. The Leyland P76 which was designed by the Italian Designer Giovanni Michelotti was in essence an all-Australian concept by Leyland Australia. At the time of its development Leyland Australia's parent company British Leyland was in severe financial trouble. Some of the P76's were plagued with poor build quality and consequently the P76 received some bad press followed by poor sales. Nevertheless, the Leyland P76 received the Wheels Magazine car of the year award in 1973. Production of the P76 ended in 1975 with around 18,000 models sold.

The Leyland P76 concept was a great one and had it been given sufficient resources to allow it to be tried and tested before its release, as was provided to the competing Ford, Chrysler and Holden cars at the time, it would have been a different story.

The P76 sedan was available with a 6-cylinder (2663 cc/121bhp) or a V8 (4416 cc/192bhp) engine and came in three styles being, De Luxe, Super and Executive models (the latter two styles having quad headlamps).

One of the P76's biggest claim to fame was that it had a very large boot that could accommodate a 44-gallon drum, which it did as shown in the following photo.



The P76 achieved success in the 1974 World Cup Rally with Evan Green/John Bryson, winning the Targa Florio Section and coming 13<sup>th</sup> overall in the Rally. Leyland Australia celebrated the victory by producing a limited-edition version, the Targa Florio.

The wagon version never went into mass production nor did the Force 7V 3 door Coupe.

In 2013 and again 2019 Gerry Crown and Matt Bryson won the Peking to Paris Motor Classic in a Leyland P76 sedan. Trax has produced several scale model diecast variants of the P76 in 1/43 scale being the Super, the 1974 World Cup Rally Car and the Targa Florio. as shown in the photo below.



The following are pictures of a 1/43 scale resin models of the P76 Wagon by Rob's Classic Models and the Force 7v by Trax Models.



Authentic Collectables plan to issue a P76 Targa Florio (Blue) in 1/18 scale as shown in the lead in picture (hopefully in the not too distant future). *Bill Kenchington*

***THE SWALLOW DORETTI*** – UK designed specifically to sell on the West Coast of the U.S.A. But it was so good, it would soon disappear.

It might sound unusual to say a particular British designed car was aimed *primarily* at customers on the West Coast of the U.S.A., but this little roadster, called a *Swallow Doretti*, was just that and has a complicated history. It first went on sale in the U.S.A in early 1954 and appeared later in the year on the British market.



***Part of an Old Car advertisement from our late Member, Phil Cohen – 1954 SWALLOW DORETTI***

Some time back, the club received an invitation from Bill Cohen for HMAC members to attend the 'Covid deferred' commemoration of the life of his father, the late Phil Cohen. Phil was a dedicated HMAC member and contributor to the Gearbox for many years. I started to think about all his articles and those classic old automobile advertisements he sent us, especially those representing automobiles that I had never heard of. The ***1954 Swallow Doretti*** advertisement was one I loved as it was definitely about a car I had never heard of at the time, and led to a story in the Gearbox about this smart looking little automobile. I thought I would revise the original article with a little extra information about its creation, in memory of Phil.

For motoring enthusiasts, the Doretti story is quite interesting and writing about its history, the ***Classic and Sports Car*** magazine called it a '*transatlantic triumvirate of enterprising minds.*' [More on that shortly.](#) Interestingly, they ran an article recently where they compared the 1954 Doretti to the then Triumph TR2 roadster which should have been its rival, even though the Doretti was actually based on the TR2. The Doretti was powered by the 90 hp (67kw) 1,991 cc (122 cubic inch) overhead valve straight four cylinder engine out of the TR2 and it had the same four speed gearbox and front suspension. The chassis was a different matter. Though based on the TR2 design, it had a more advanced layout, being similar to those being used in sports racing cars at the time and so provided a tauter frame. Overall and briefly, in the opinion of the magazine's journalist, the Doretti was the better little roadster.



***1954 Swallow Doretti [In right hand drive] – Courtesy of Sothebys Auctions.***

Why a '*transatlantic triumvirate*' and what did that mean? Firstly, Sir John Black was a major figure in the British Auto industry. After WW1, he joined the Hillman Motor Car Company becoming joint managing director with his brother-in-law, Spencer Wilks. Hillman amalgamated with Humber and Commer in 1928 and Black joined their boards. However, he resigned when Hillman was taken over by Rootes and he joined the ***Standard Motor Company***, later becoming their managing director.

The second player was Eric Sanders of the English engineering company **Helliwells**, which was by now a division of the Tube Investments Group or T.I. This British company manufactured and supplied tubing and a large range of components for the motor vehicle industry and produced the famous Raleigh brand bicycles. Helliwells originally made iron products in the late 1800's before launching into folded metalwork, specialising in car windscreen frames and then into full windscreens and aircraft cabin tops. The Swallow Sidecar Coachbuilding Company was a Division of Helliwells having purchased it from Jaguar's owner, William Lyons, in 1945.

Finally came Arthur Anderson, the owner of the large American company, **California Tubing**, previously known as the Rome Cable Company of Torrance, California. So, Arthur Andersen and Eric Sanders, though from either side of the Atlantic, were both involved in the manufacture of steel tubing. In 1952, Sanders met Andersen on a visit to the U.S. after Anderson's company had developed an improved manufacturing method employing the same American built machines that Helliwells was using in England.

The two became close friends and at one meeting, Anderson discussed with Sanders the idea of producing a sports car for the U.S. market, but having them manufactured locally. It would be aimed specifically for the West Coast Region and to compete against British imports. At that time, the Austin Healey 100 had become a real success story in the U.S. and Sanders believed the idea was feasible.

Coincidentally, Anderson's daughter, Dorothy Deen, who was a prominent figure in the American motor industry, was the importer and distributor of Triumph vehicles for the Western United States and this factor would have been a good starting point for the introduction of a locally made sports car. She also had a line of sports car accessories using the name 'Doretti' which was a slight 'Italianisation' of her name. In fact after the release of the Doretti, some believed that she had designed the car. She sold the 'Doretti' name to Swallow for a token amount.



*Dorothy Deen behind the wheel of a Swallow Doretti – Courtesy of Veloce Today.*

Sanders happened to be a good friend of Sir John Black and contacted Anderson in December 1952 asking him to come to the UK to talk about a potential deal involving all three parties to manufacture the proposed sports car. The end result was Sir John Black supplying the running gear with the Tube Investments Group (TI) supplying most of the materials for the chassis and body. TI's Swallow Coachbuilding Company Division would build it, and Frank Rainbow, a motor scooter designer for Swallow, would create the sleek Italian styled body. Anderson would sell it in the U.S. Finally, Sir Ivan Stedford, the Chairman of the T.I. Group, who believed that supplying the materials for the chassis and body was a good business deal, gave Sanders the ok to go ahead with the project.

In researching the Doretti, I also read that for the Tube Investments Group, they realised that the project enabled them to use up spare capacity at Swallow as well as creating excellent publicity for the group's various other activities. For Standard-Triumph, they believed that it offered the chance to steal sales from Austin-Healey with almost zero investment into the project.

Design work commenced in January 1953 with Rainbow being given just nine months to produce a prototype. Body styling was very much early 50's Italian with Ferrari 'looks' and purposely 'unlike' the Triumph TR2 body shell design. The prototype was slightly larger overall than the TR2 and had a hood that was designed to be erected in around 30 seconds which was miles quicker than on most soft-top roadsters.

Of note, the Prototype's body was built in Birmingham, UK., by Panelcraft who, ironically, made specially ordered bodies for Healey vehicles as well as others, and would go on to produce all the bodies supplied for the Doretti. Upon completion, the prototype was sent to Los Angeles for evaluation and feedback from Standard Triumph dealers. It was well received with only a little criticism, which being that it should have had wind up windows rather than perspex side screens and perhaps a larger boot.

Though the proposed Swallow Doretti would go up against the TR2 which, released a year earlier, was being distributed in the U.S. by Dorothy Deen and the Anderson family, it was also envisaged that it would compete against Jaguar's XK120 and this would cause a big problem down the track.

Motoring writers liked the flowing and slightly exotic Italian shape, and this was so different to the TR2 body design. It had the same instruments as fitted to the TR2, but the dash board and the interior was considered very classy for the era. Little things were considered better designed than in the TR2 such as having the hand brake on top of the transmission tunnel, rather than on the side of it, which could rub against the ankle. (U.S. was left hand drive) Doretti's in-house designed stiffer chassis, as well as a longer wheelbase and the position of the engine, meant that the Doretti proved to be a better handling sports car. Sir John Black was a passenger in one of the first production models on a high speed test when a truck pulled out in front of them. He was severely injured to the point that he soon had to retire, but he always believed that he survived due to the strength of the vehicle.



***A 1955 version of the Swallow Doretti registered in Australia - Courtesy of Rainsfords Collectable Cars.***

Why did the ***Swallow Doretti*** cease production? Perhaps it was a little too good for what else was around in that era. Rainbow had already commenced design for an improved Mark 2 version and even Sir John Black may have been considering it to be a replacement for the TR2 according to some motoring historians. The fact is that the Doretti was considered a more modern sports car than the TR2 as far as styling went, and was a far more sophisticated little roadster on the open road. It was hardly used competitively in Britain, but was raced in the U.S. where tuning kits became widely available. In fact, there were some Dorettis fitted with Buick engines and one even had a Cadillac engine fitted. On the other hand, the TR2 ended up with an impressive competition record.

I wrote in the previous Gearbox article that by 1955 the Jaguar hierarchy believed the Doretti had become a rival for their XK 120, and Jaguar sourced a sizeable amount of components from the Tube Investment Group. So, due to pressure exerted by William Lyons, which was really a threat to source products from other companies, Doretti production was closed down. Production ceased in 1955 with only 274 Doretti roadsters manufactured, not counting prototypes and special models and just over half of those exported to the United States. It was also reported that around 12 of the roadsters had not been fully completed at the time of the shutdown and were quickly on-sold to enthusiasts, still in kit form.

I finished off with the following: ***For the Collector:*** I did some research to see if the Doretti had been modelled and found the following. After his retirement, a fellow called Trevor Wright, and as a hobby, cast a small number of the Doretti roadsters in 1:43 scale white metal. These, as well as some other unusual vehicles, were actually supplied in kit form under the ***'TW'*** brand name. They came out in the late 80's to early 90's apparently. There was another white metal kit manufacturer, ***'Mikansue'*** owned by Mike and Sue Richardson, which ran from 1973 to 1989 and Wright may have used their moulds for some of his kits. However, there doesn't appear to be much known about that brand other than they produced 154 model kits over that period. Another modeller was Geoff Sear, who, under the ***'Sear'*** brand manufactured resin models of British sports cars not produced by the bigger model makers. ***Terry.***

## Some things will never go away – Austin J40 pedal Car



In a recent [Gearbox](#) article I wrote that Austin introduced a pedal car in 1949 and they stayed in production till 1971. I also mentioned that some of us had pedal cars in Oz way back and my brother and I had one to share. It was second-hand and my Father had done a re-paint on it. **BUT the J40 pedal car is being built again today.**

The Austin pedal cars were manufactured in a specially built factory located in Bargoed, South Wales, about 20 minutes' drive North of Cardiff. It was opened in July 1949 and called the *Austin Junior Car factory*. The factory, together with the whole of the manufacturing infrastructure, was paid for by the British Government and operated as a not-for-profit enterprise for the employment of disabled coal miners. The workers operated under the guidance of experienced rehabilitation officers and a medical team. The factory employed around 250 men and it would prove beneficial to their well-being, especially as the factory was always a very pleasant and welcoming workplace.

There were two pedal car models made, commencing with the 'Pathfinder' that was based on a pre WW2 Austin Seven special racing car. It was not a big seller, so was dropped and replaced in 1950 by the 'Junior Forty' or J40, which was based on the 1948 A40 Devon and Dorset. Each pedal car was made from scrap metal offcuts brought up from the Longbridge Austin motor car factory and were put together in a similar way to the full size sedans and painted similar colours.



***This J40 pedal car factory ad shows the size of this toy.***

Each pedal car was well equipped for a toy, and were considered the best pedal car on the market world-wide. They had working headlights, a working horn, a small realistic dashboard, leather cloth seats and Dunlop pneumatic tyres on wheels that could be removed as well as an opening bonnet and boot and good quality chrome trimmings. Though aimed at the American market at first, they gradually became garaged in homes around the world. I read that just over 32,000 J40 pedal cars were manufactured world-wide till production ceased in 1971.

Then there is a company called **'BURLIN Fuel Systems Limited'** in Salisbury, England, who make the Skinners Union or SU, Amal and Zenith carburettors, and **Austin Pedal Cars**. Their **'J40 Motor Company'** was launched in 2020 as a division of Burlin and it is the only dedicated J40 pedal car sales, service and restoration specialists in the world. They say their philosophy is to *'make junior motoring accessible to all, with a range of cars to suit everyone.'* They have also developed a *'continuation'* model of the **J40 pedal car**. **Burlin** has stated that *'The J40 Continuation has been created using the finest materials, lovingly hand-crafted by automotive artisans, blending traditional style with modern engineering to create a new generation of pedal car.'*

So, Burlin, as the **J40 Motor Company**, can sell you a fully restored original J40, a new continuation model or you can commission a continuation model to be built to your specifications. The company has supplied J40 pedal car parts around the world and have a large range of restored and ready-to-restore J40 cars for sale as well as an increasing spare parts and accessories range. They now have brand new bodyshells built to factory specifications on hand and advertise that clients can also send their own cars in for service or race preparation as required.



*An example of Burlin's continuation model of the J40 pedal car.*

Importantly, especially for Australia, there was another pedal car maker worth mentioning here, and that was **'Mobo Toys.'** *The next pic at left* shows one of their models representing a police car from around the 1960's. *But I think many members will be surprised about how this story will end, as it concerns a very famous name.*



In 1912, David Sebel arrived in London from Russia and subsequently formed a partnership in a company as a Wheelwright in 1921. Historically, a wheelwright made and repaired wheels for horse-drawn vehicles.

In 1928, that Company moved to the larger London premises of *Hazeldine & Norton, Wheelwright's & Motor Body and Van Builders*, having bought them out. By the early 1930's they had grown larger and were involved in many engineering ventures including architectural metalwork. David's Son, Harry, joined the company in 1931 and started on the bottom rung initially, before working his way up the company ladder over time.

During World War 2, the company, like most British manufacturing industries, swung over to war material production, mainly aircraft and tank components. As well, they produced bailey bridge parts and steel structural riggings such as radar station tower parts. After the conflict ended, Harry knew they would have to expand in order to maintain the company's current workforce as well as wanting to employ returning veterans.

Plenty of research took place resulting in the company going into metal furniture and toy product manufacturing. Their furniture went under the 'Stak-a-Bye' name and commenced production in 1946. As far as toys went, Harry wanted to make something different so he decided on a rocking horse that could be propelled along by the rider pushing down on the stirrups, then releasing them for the horse to move along. He then decided on the '**MOBO**' company name having knocked back many suggestions, though one came close to acceptance being 'Mobile Toys.'

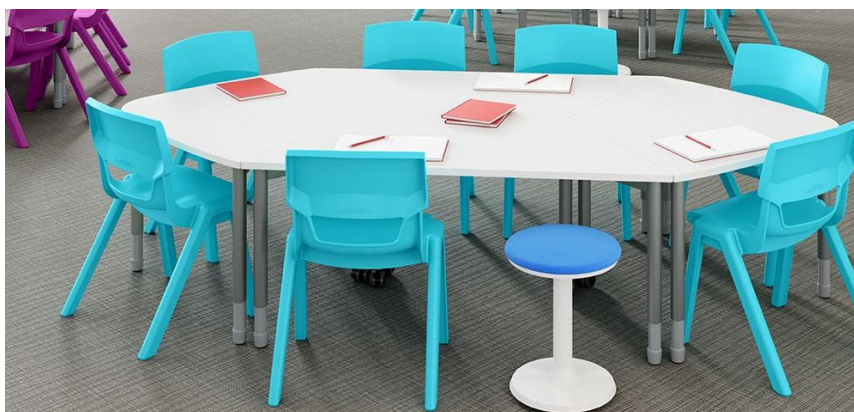
After development of a prototype and a patent being taken out, it was released in 1948 as the *Mobo Bronco*. **See previous pic at right.** Though it steered straight ahead initially, by 1950 a so-called 'magic steering' mechanism had been introduced whereby the rider could push down on a stirrup to move the horse in that direction. The body pressings would also be used on many different applications of rocking horse type toys including a small merry-go-round. The Mobo 'Bronco' continued in production till 1971.

As an aside, Mobo toys became massively popular on the North American Market. As mentioned in previous Gearbox articles, for Britain, there was a necessity to export products to reduce the debt incurred as a result of WW2. The British Government rationed steel predominantly for exported products and Mobo Toys were always guaranteed a good supply for their toys going to the American market. Within a short time, just over half of the Mobo toys were being exported to America. Mobo would also produce other toys such as Prams, Bicycles, Desks, Wheelbarrows, Rockers, Swings, Scooters and their famous Pedal Cars that came onto the market in 1956.

The Mobo Toy company was bought out in 1970, but the result of overhead cost increases and Asian imports would eventually lead to a re-organisation of the new company in 1972 and their closing down of Toy production.

**But here is the other side of the story.** In 1951, *Harry Sebel* migrated to Australia and continued making the Mobo toy products. He also started to produce furniture locally and, based on his 'Stak-a-bye' chairs, was soon making a name for himself out here. He was always a prolific inventor in the furniture industry and was soon pioneering the plastic chair. He had wanted to produce a chair that was not only fashionable, but functional and affordable.

The *Sebel website* stated, '*Harry was an engineering genius, and in 1974, he transformed seating by becoming the first manufacturer in the world to produce a monobloc plastic moulded chair known as the Integra. ... it won the Australian Design Award in 1977 and has been hugely popular ever since due to its classic design, strength, and durability. This total classic is still widely used today in behavioural institutions, healthcare, hospitality, leisure centres, construction, and mining sites all over the world, and has never been out of production.*'



Harry Sebel became the first furniture maker to replace wooden chairs in our schools with those iconic Polypropylene chairs becoming the most copied school chair in the world today. So, with his products becoming popular worldwide and selling in their millions, Harry ceased manufacturing toys in the late 60's to concentrate on his growing furniture manufacturing business. **An example in the above pic. Terry.**