

-GEARBOX-



JULY 2024

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.

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**** NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 9 JULY ****

- 40th Anniversary Dinner -

7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club

A big issue this month featuring Mark's latest project, his completion of a Revell kit 1:24 scale 'Routemaster' double decker bus.



SOME NICE OLD-TIMERS ON SHOW UP ON THE COMBOYNE NEAR TAREE MANY YEARS AGO.

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INCORPORATED

Minutes of Club Meeting Held at Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club on 11 June 2024

Meeting Opened: 7.30 pm.

Members Present: 20 **Apologies:** 4 **Visitors:** 2

Welcome to Club Visitors and Members: President Andrew Vile welcomed visitors Tim and Scott to the Club and welcomed the Club Members.

Previous Minutes: Moved: David Rosser Seconded: Brian Blyth "That the May 2024 Club Minutes be accepted".
Carried.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer reported that the Club funds stand at \$2,569.69 plus \$100.00 cash.

Moved: David Standen Seconded: Allan Evans "That the Treasurer's Report be accepted" Carried.

Correspondence:

Outwards:

- i) Members and Others – June 2024 Gearbox.
- ii) Members – June 2024 Model Competition and Meeting Reminders.
- iii) Barry Lloyd (Wessex) Comments on Wessex "Smalltalk" magazine June 2024.
- iv) Various Newcastle/Hunter Media Sites – Details for advertising 2024 Toy Fair.

Inwards:

- i) West Aust Model Collector's Club (WAMCC) – May 2024 "Showcase" magazine.
 - ii) P H Cheah (SMAC) – Comments on the Mustang article in June 2024 Gearbox.
 - iii) Jason Mitchell - Thanks for June Gearbox.
 - iv) Canadian Toy Collectors Society (CTCS) – May 2024 Magazine.
 - v) Des Barnes (CTCS) – Enjoyed the June 2024 Gearbox.
 - vi) Prospective Toy Fair Stallholders – Registrations received.
 - vii) Barry Lloyd (Wessex) – Comments on June 2024 Gearbox plus reference to an interesting motoring site "Driven to Write".
 - viii) Ian Hind (WAMCC) - Comments on June 2024 Gearbox.
 - ix) Barry Lloyd (Wessex) – Wessex "Smalltalk" magazine June 2024.
 - x) Mick Haven (South Hants Model Auto Club) – Thanks for June Gearbox.
- Moved: David Rosser Seconded: Brian Blyth "That the Correspondence be accepted". Carried.

Matters Arising:

- i) 40th Anniversary Models – There has been no interest in the Plinth Models for sale on the internet marketplace.
 - ii) Hunter Toy and Hobby Fair – We have sold 40 tables to date, which leaves one left. Scott is still after more models suitable for the raffle.
 - iii) 2NUR FM Radio Open Day – The Open Day is in the Language Building at Newcastle University and is on Saturday 27 July 2024 from 9.00am to 2.00pm. Volunteers are called for to participate with a small model display being 3-4 tables and to assist with the BBQ on the day. More details to be provided closer to the date.
 - iv) 40th Anniversary Dinner – This is to be held on our normal meeting night in July (next meeting) at the Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club.
- The normal model competitions will run on the night but there will be no business conducted. Member's wives, partners and guests are invited to celebrate this occasion.

General Business:

- i) William 4th Cruise – This is proposed for later in the year when the weather is warmer.
- ii) Newcastle Buses Open Day – Trevor reported on this recent event.

Model Competitions:

Results for June:

“Actual” Model Competition: “Open” – Any scale and up to five (5) models.

- 1st..... Mark Jenkins.....London Bus.....31 Points
- 2nd..... Andrew Vile.....Bower’s Drake Trucks.....24 Points
- 3rd.....Ken McGregor.....1950’s American Cars.....15 Points

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

- 1st..... Brian Blyth.....Accidental Motoring.....38 Points
- 2nd.....Bill Kenchington.....Holden Delivery.....34 Points
- 3rdPaul Campbell.....Dinky Lawn Care.....26 Points

Next “Actual” Model Category - July: “Christmas Vehicle” – Any scale and up to two (2) models.

Next “Virtual” Model Category - July: “Vehicle With Any Part Brown” - Any scale & one (1) model but ONE PHOTO ONLY.

Meeting Closed: 8.10 pm.



----- [Seven Years ago](#) - Two entries in the 2017 model competition that didn't receive a prize, but are still nice to see. Top pic is from the March entries that year and the bottom pic is from the November entries -----



--- PLACEGETTERS - JUNE 2024 'REAL' MODEL COMP - TOP TO BOTTOM ---

- 1ST - Marks London Bus
- 2ND - Andrews BBGs Drakes
- 3RD - Kens 1950s America

[** Category was 'OPEN' Any scale up to five models]



--- PLACEGETTERS - JUNE 2024 'VIRTUAL' MODEL COMP – TOP TO BOTTOM ---

- 1ST – Brian B – Accidental motoring [** Category was 'OPEN' Any scale up to five models, one photo only]
 2ND – Bill – Holden delivery
 3RD – Paul C – Vintage Dinky lawn care



accidental motoring



Entry E

Entry B



Vintage Dinky Lawncare

MARK'S 1/24 SCALE LONDON ROUTEMASTER BUS



This is an article about my latest model, a 1/24 scale London Routemaster bus. [Mark](#).

Anyone who has lived or visited London will have at some time had a ride on a London Routemaster bus. *(See above pic taken by Ed.)* It is like Buck House, a thing you must do. I lived in London for nearly two years with my wife Susan and we have fond memories of our time there. We used the public transport system all the time and particularly loved the buses. So with this touch of nostalgia I am going to build the Revell 1/24 kit of the Routemaster. *See next pic.* I should point out that at the time I lived in Greenford and Susan lived in Queensway, so I would travel in on the Central Line tube every night to see her.



The first part of the build was to make up the outside of the bus and hold it all together with masking tape.

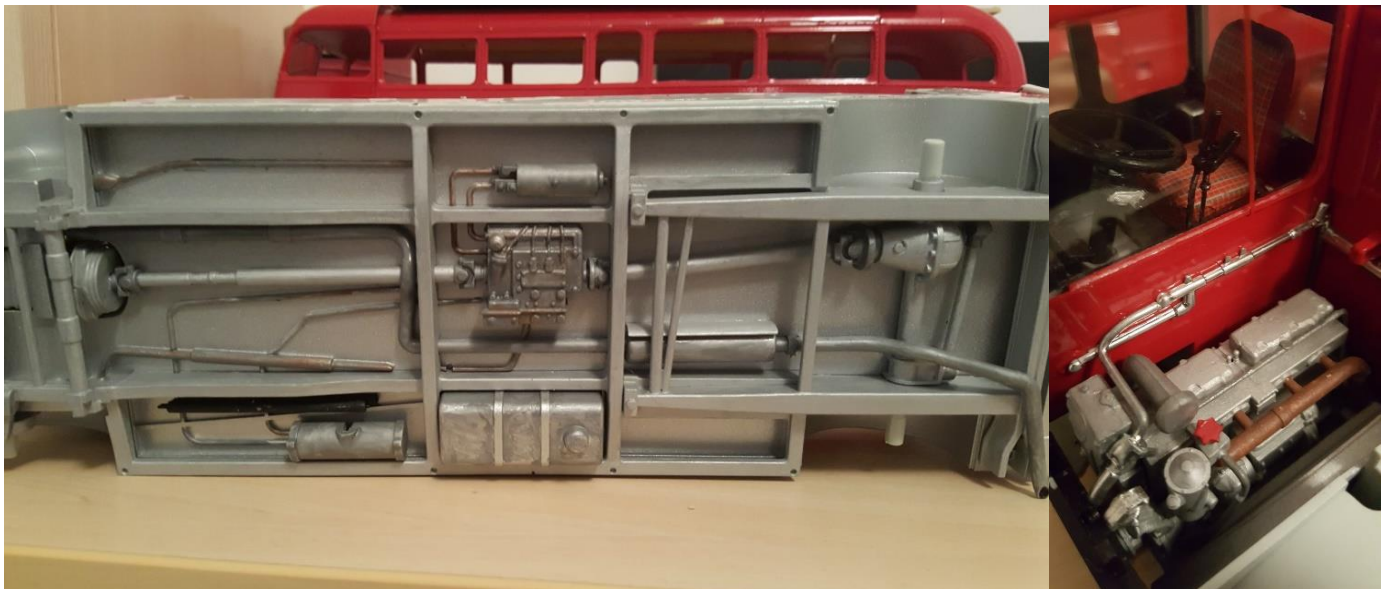


The bus was then spray painted in 2K London Transport red. This was done using my full size spray gun with Concept automotive 2 pack paint. This is the advantage of being a spray painter with a full tinting system at my disposal. The disadvantage is you can end up with a lot of friends when they find out what you do for a living.



The Revell kit comes with two versions, the older Leyland powered bus with route 76 Victoria and a 1965 number plate, or a 1968 Scania repowered route 38 Piccadilly Circus. I wish to make mine a route 12 from 1986/87 as this was the most common bus used by Susan and myself.

The Revell kit comes with a lot of detail and this includes the chassis which you will probably never see, but it doesn't stop you from adding it. *See next pic at left.*



Above right - Yet more detail is in the engine compartment. This is mine with the Leyland engine.

As you can see from these photos, the detail in this kit is second to none. *The next pics* - This is the rear panel and, not only is there a ticket bin and the number of passengers permitted on the bus plate, there is also the label telling you not to ride on the rear platform.

The staircase and luggage compartment are in place, and for those with a keen eye for detail, the advert in the frame is for Hornby Trains.

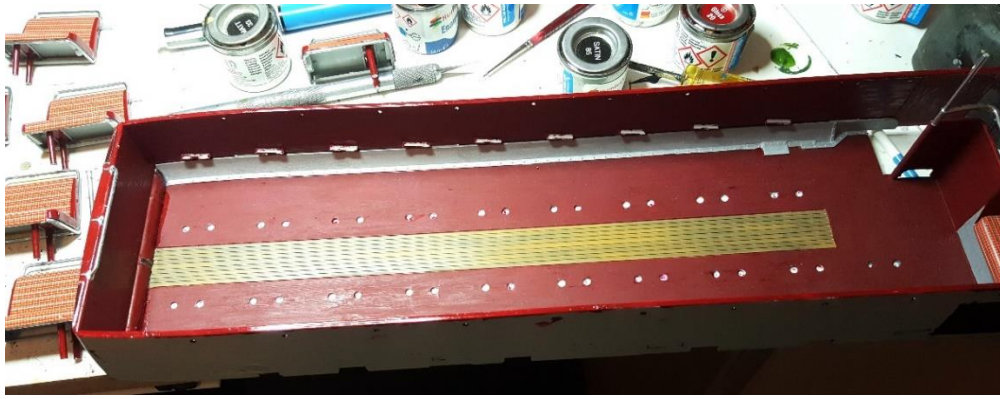


The next pic shows the lower deck and staircase finished and gives an idea of how the kit goes together.



Having finished the lower deck of the bus, I now have to repeat all the seating for the top deck. This is very time consuming, but as they say the devil is in the detail. Also on my decal sheet there was one set of seat covers missing so I will have to paint this in by hand. Had I noticed this earlier, I would have hidden that seat in the lower deck out of sight. My only quibble with this kit so far is that Revell did not chrome plate any parts. Using a Chrome marker pen is good, but once again takes a long time.





Below - The seats are now in the upper deck and, as you can see the kit comes with one spare right hand seat, but no mention is made about it in the instructions. Most kits will warn you if there are spare parts to make up even numbers on a sprue.



Above left - The bus is now at the stage of putting the outside skin on. This takes time because you have to allow the glue to dry as each panel is added. **Above right** - The bus is now together and I am starting to see light at the end of the tunnel. I still have the windows and wheels to do. Also the destination blinds have to be done these will take a bit of time as the number 12 route is not in the kit.

The next pics are of the finished model complete with the Route 12 destination blinds.



There are plenty of books out there for reference and I must say the people at the London Transport Museum have been very obliging in helping me to find more information on the subject. **Mark Jenkins.**

-LOOKING BACK – Early Aussie Chrysler Valiants -



The *lead-in pic*, and *the next pic* are of the **1960 model year American Valiant V-100** and there isn't much difference between it, and the Australian versions of the Chrysler Valiant released out here. Would you believe that was way back in January 1962 at Chryslers South Australian Mile End factory by the then South Australia Premier, Sir Thomas Playford. Having seen a couple of early model Valiants in my travels lately, I thought it is time to revisit the story of this great car. So here is a little snippet about a great Aussie car and some lines from a previous article in an old *H.M.A.C. Gearbox* newsletter with a few pics of the great **TRAX** models in my display cabinets.



The 1960 Valiant was an important new model for the Chrysler Corporation in the United States. In its design stage, Chrysler used IBM computers to test its suspension for loads and stress. This was a first for any car manufacturer to that point of time and Chrysler also used computer technology in reducing noise levels in various components and structures in the test vehicles. Though it would go on to be a specific model over four generations, upon release in October 1959 in the U.S., it only had the '*Valiant*' nameplate, not a Chrysler Corporation Division brand. However, it was sold through Plymouth dealerships as a four door sedan in two trim levels, a V-100 and a V-200. Two months later it was released in station wagon form as well. That is not a spare tyre cover on the boot lid, it is a simulation as the sedan's spare tyre was actually located under the floor of the boot.

The Valiant was powered initially by Chrysler's cast-iron 170 cubic inch (2,785cc) 101 hp (75kw) 'slant-six' engine (slanted over at 30 degrees) driving the rear wheels through a three speed manual gearbox with the shifter on the floor, or a three-speed push button automatic. An aluminium engine block would appear in 1961. The Valiant had thirteen inch rims with drum brakes all round, though power assistance was an option for the brakes and steering.

In 1961 the Valiant was sent out in North America branded as a *Plymouth Valiant* and now had a two door version added that came in both pillar post and pillarless type.

Then it was Australia's turn to have the Valiant, in this case branded as a Chrysler Australia product. The first Valiant to arrive in Australia was a single American Plymouth Valiant designated the QX1 and imported for evaluation. Since it had been an instant success after release for the 1960 model year in the United States, Chrysler hoped it would carry on with the same momentum out here in Australia.

The main problem with this Q series model was converting the American version to right-hand drive because the slant of the engine prohibited a simple steering box move. Eventually though, the first locally-assembled Valiant was released as the RV1 Series, or as we know it, the 'R' model. As mentioned above, it was officially released in January 1962 at Chryslers South Australian Mile End factory.

The 'R' series Valiant was an instant success even though, and understandably, not everyone appreciated its radical styling. You couldn't really call it 'conventional' in design, especially if compared to the Locally made Ford Falcon and Holden. However, with demand far exceeding availability, only 1000 odd models could be made creating a supply problem until the 'S' series was released. The Australian 'R' series Valiant's on road performance with a 145 brake horsepower (108 kW) 225 cubic inch (3.6 litre) slant six motor, was far superior to the Holden and Ford models whose engines were underpowered in comparison. The rest of the model was pretty much the same as in America with a floor mounted shifter on the three-speed manual gearbox with no synchromesh on first gear, though you could opt for the dash located pushbutton three-speed 'Torqueflite' automatic. Options included a heater-demister unit, as well as a deluxe pushbutton car radio. The R-series Valiant was the first Australian car to come with an alternator instead of a generator, and instead of coil springs, it came with a torsion bar suspension and hydraulic 9 inch (229 mm) drum brakes front and rear. As on the American version, it also had a simulated spare wheel outline on the boot lid. The base model Valiant sold for 1,299 Aussie Pounds.

Chrysler Australia, needing to have the follow up model SV1 series, or 'S' model, released onto the market as soon as possible, released the new model in March 1962. It had slight cosmetic changes from the 'R' model, such as the deletion of the simulated spare wheel cover on the boot lid and different rear tail lights. They went from the elongated 'cats eyes' on the slat style fin, to a circular lens type under the fin. *See next pic below.* There were small changes made to the radiator grille and exterior chrome trims as well. *See middle pic below.* As well, the three speed manual gearbox shift lever was moved to the steering column and there were minor changes to the suspension and starter motor. Interestingly, of the 10,000 odd 'S' series Valiant models sold, automatic gearbox versions accounted for about 60% of sales. The Valiant, with its ultra-modern styling cues, was certainly an amazing car for the times and the start of a long run of very popular Valiant models over time in Australia. The next two pics are excellent **TRAX** 1:43 scale diecast models of both the 'R' at left and the 'S' at right. The *third pic down* is another **TRAX** 'S' model in a nice dark green colour. As always, the **TRAX** Valiant models are well detailed, especially with the paintwork and the quality of the badging on each model. *Terry.*



--- FORD ESCORT MEXICO – a celebration model ---



Why was it a celebration model? In July 1966 at Wembley Stadium, England won the FIFA Soccer World cup for the first time with a win over West Germany and a final scoreline of 4-2. The English team was captained by the famous Bobby Moore and it went into extra time after the score was 2-2 at full time. England won and Geoff Hurst scored a hat-trick of goals in the match which is very rare feat. [Three goals] The next staging of the 1970 FIFA Soccer World Cup was to be held in Mexico which would make it the first time the event had been staged in North America.

After a restructured Ford Europe, both Ford UK and Ford Europe showcased the new compact Escort model in 1968 at the Brussels Motor Show. It was to replace the now almost archaic Anglia model and was a vehicle aimed at being distributed throughout Europe. But Ford had big aims for this little star and also directed it at motorsport, not only on the race track, but in the rallying world. As mentioned in a previous **Gearbox** article, Ford Britain's recently opened Advanced Vehicle Operations in South 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 end result was a highly tuned racing machine that dominated touring car racing almost immediately, not only in Britain, but worldwide. As well, and with their twin cam engined escorts, the Ford Factory rally team soon became virtually unbeatable.

With soccer being known as the world game, the World Cup would always lead to massive advertising campaigns and promotions. It was no different for the upcoming Mexico football spectacular which led to one of the most captivating motor vehicle endurance rally to this point in time. It would be the **1970 London to Mexico World Cup Rally** and was over 26,000 kms through of some of the harshest terrain from London through Europe and America.

Ford had intended to use the proven Lotus derived 1,558cc Twin-cam engined Escorts in the Rally, but after an analysis of the route they felt reliability would be the prime consideration in this rally, rather than power and speed. The Ford Factory Rally Escorts were now prepared with the 1,598cc Kent crossflow head engines bored out to 1,834cc instead. Of the 132 vehicles that started the rally, only 26 finished and the winner was a Ford Factory Escort crewed by Hannu Mikkola and Gunnar Palm, with four other Factory Ford Escorts finishing in the top ten.

As a result of the win, and having great success with the Factory Team Escorts overall, Ford decided to release the Ford Escort 'Mexico' as a stand-alone model to celebrate their success in the London to Mexico World Cup Rally.



1970 Ford Escort Mexico – Courtesy of La Escuderia.

The Ford Escort Mexico was introduced in November 1970 and it was quite special compared to the standard Escort models. Though Ford was looking at the Mexico as a model that could also be used in competition, they had recently released a slightly more expensive, but more powerful and quicker Escort, the RS1600 model. It was powered by a 1601cc Cosworth developed twin-cam engine, rather than the Lotus engine used in previous competition Escorts. The term 'RS' on these models stood for *Rallye Sport*. This model was very popular and was very likely to be tuned up for competition as soon as it left the sales room. On the other hand, the Mexico was aimed at the driver who wanted a sporty sedan with great handling on both bitumen and gravel, but was less expensive and easier to maintain than the RS.

The new Mexico model retained the regular 1598cc Kent cross-flow engine as a tribute to the Rally winning Escorts, though slightly detuned with an eight valve head rather than the 16 valve set up in the London to Mexico Rally versions. But overall, with the same RS1600 exterior styling and sports interior, it wasn't that much different to the specs attributed to the new RS model. The Escort Mexico also had the same bodysheet strengthening panels in any high stress area to make it more suitable for motor sport as on the RS1600. The Kent engine had a twin choke Webber carburettor and produced 86 bhp or 64 kw of power and had top speed of 103 mph or 165 kph through a four-speed manual gearbox. As well, they were both built at Ford's Advanced Vehicle Operations factory.

There were just over 10,000 of the Mark 1 Mexico models produced and the 'Mexico' moniker was carried over into the Mark II Ford Escorts that commenced in late 1974, though the Mark 2 Escort Mexico began production in late 1975 and was turned out in West Germany. These became an entry level type in the RS range of Escorts, and was known as the 'RS Mexico.' Overall, the **Ford Escort Mexico** Mark 1 became an era defining product for Ford Britain and Europe due to its extremely successful track and rally competition achievements.

From the '*Best of British Police Cars*' series made by Atlas, this is my 1:43 scale model of the Ford Escort Mexico and is advertised as being in the livery of the U.K. Sussex Police Force. **See next pic.** Interestingly, in researching the Escort Mexico Mark 1, I read that there were six factory-built special **four-door** Escort Mexico prototypes turned out with four of these being used in the U.K.'s Channel Islands by the Jersey Police Force, after being trialled by the Merseyside Police. Merseyside also used the two-door Mexico, as did many other UK Constabularies, according to the well-known motoring and TV celebrity **Ant Anstead**, who is a former Police Officer himself. He stated that they were revered by those lucky enough to have driven them on patrol, though the large Police sign box on the roof may have taken around five mph off their just over 100 mph top speed. Some Constabularies, including Merseyside, changed over to the Mark 2 versions and the large box sign was soon replaced by a single revolving blue light. **Terry.**



--- THE TRAGEDY OF THE CHRYSLER NORSEMAN ---



You would have realised by now that I have an affinity for concept or show cars, especially from the Italian coachbuilders and a few of my favourites have been featured in the Gearbox over the years. I read an article recently about one of the Chrysler and Ghia co-creations known as the *Chrysler Norseman*, a name I had heard of occasionally, but it's history was a bit of a mystery to me till now.

From the 1950s and well into the 1970's, American automakers showcased their own V8 powered concept vehicles with bodies, sometimes designed in house, but also by the Italian automobile design and coachbuilding firms. As well, the bodies were often built in Italy before being sent back to America for completion. Of course, concept and show cars were not the sole domain of the Americans. The European automakers were real pioneers in this regard and produced many beautiful examples even using American V8 engines sometimes. Occasionally, these concept or show cars were so well accepted by the critics that they became limited production models available to the public.

Chrysler had an excellent collaboration with the Carrozzeria Ghia after both they and Carrozzeria Pinin Farina produced a special bodied 1950 Plymouth show car as a project for Chrysler. Chrysler executives were impressed with the quality of work from the Italian coachbuilders and chose Ghia as their preferred partner in this specialised area of the automotive industry. Virgil Exner had a big influence on this decision and would form a lengthy working partnership with Ghia who were soon engaged on a number of concept cars for Chrysler. One example that left Ghia's Turin factory is the one I felt was a bit of a mystery car, the ill-fated *Chrysler Norseman*.

Late in the night of the 26 July 1956, the luxury liner *SS Andrea Doria* collided with another ship in heavy fog off the coast of Massachusetts as it was close to arriving in New York from Italy. Though it stayed afloat for nearly twelve hours, it eventually sank in very deep water. One piece of cargo that lies rotting away on the ocean floor today, is an extraordinary Chrysler Corporation concept car that came out of the Carrozzeria Ghia's Italian factory. It was known as the *Chrysler Norseman* and the result of a very interesting, but expensive collaboration with Ghia. Over 50,000 man hours went into designing and finally turning out the completed car. The loss of the *Norseman* cost Chrysler, in today's terms, well over two million US dollars. **But what made it so special?**

The *Chrysler Norseman* was in fact an extraordinary experimental concept car in the style of a two door coupe, but very different. It was the result of a project between Chrysler and the Carrozzeria Ghia that had commenced in late 1954. In essence, it was to be a pillarless car, that is, it would not have any pillars or posts to support the roof and was designed to showcase Chrysler's 1957 North American automotive displays. As a result, the final design had the roofline cantilevered and curved up from the rear of the vehicle and flowed over the whole of the passenger cell. The overall effect was to give the impression of a continuous glass area under the roof. **See lead-in pic.**

As I have written before, when researching automotive topics, you often find conflicting answers to a particular question and in this case, it was about my interest in determining who actually designed the Norseman. Some sources suggested that it was designed in the Ghia studios, however, Chrysler's on-line history records show that it was designed within their own engineering division, not in the Ghia studios. William Brownlie was then an assistant manager in one of Chrysler's styling studios and it was his idea to have a show car with a unique feature, and that was to have a roof over the cabin structure made without the 'A' pillars. Hence that final cantilevered roof design.

Though Brownlie's idea was well supported by Chrysler executives, Virgil Exner and other Chrysler designers could see a problem with his suggestion. They believed that with a pillarless roofline, there would be no protection provided to occupants in a vehicle rollover that would usually be offered by a traditional rigid roof structure.

To alleviate this problem, there were quarter inch steel rods in place of the two front corner `A' pillars which were almost `invisible' together with a crush resistant windscreen that was developed between Chrysler and a specialty glass maker. Chrysler publicly stated that the cantilever roof would support eight times the vehicle weight, but that was considered unlikely by some engineers.

A modified and lengthened 1955 Chrysler 300 chassis made from high strength steel was used for the Norseman. It was powered by a warmed up V8 engine through Chrysler's two-speed press-button Powerflite automatic gearbox. Suspension wise, the Norseman had torsion bars up front and leaf springs at the rear and also had a full length belly pan under the chassis to lower wind resistance at speed. Most of the body used aluminium panels after Chrysler and Ghia had researched the latest advances in structural design to reduce weight. As well, the finished product, as with most of the Chrysler and Ghia products, was to be a completely functional automobile.

More conflicting versions of the story came to light as, though Chrysler had made a scaled down `mock-up' model of the Norseman, some say it was sent to Ghia with the styling design plans, yet others say they retained the mock-up. In any case Ghia quickly went ahead and commenced the construction of the full size coupe after receiving the plans.



All pics in this article are courtesy of Chrysler archives.

The overall design of the Norseman was one of smoothness with very few external protrusions to the bodyline as can be seen in *the above pic*. This meant concealed headlights and door handles as well as a body that tapered down to the rear, giving it a very aerodynamic appearance. Strangely, the actual colour of the finished coupe is not known with most believing it had a two tone green colour scheme as per Chrysler documents regarding its design. Very few photographs were taken before the car left Italy as arrangements had been made for testing and photoshoots to take place upon its arrival in the United States. There were Italian journalists who saw the finished car before it was placed in a crate for shipping and reported it as being two-tone blue. Existing photographs, as in the *previous pics*, are in black and white. Interestingly, when being interviewed about the Norseman many years later, William Brownlie stated that from his memory, Virgil Exner had specified it be painted silver with a red leather interior.



It was an impressive futuristic vehicle for its time due to its cutting edge design and engineering, though Chrysler would never use the pillarless cantilever roof design again. It still remains very much a mystery concept car. *Terry.*