



CentreSpoke

May/June 2015



R & S Series Valiants at Fighterworld during the 2015 National Rally

Motor Enthusiasts Club of Central Australia

Incorporating The Alice Springs Vintage & Veteran Car Club

PO Box 1506, Alice Springs. NT. 0871

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MECCA Committee 2014/2015

PRESIDENT:	Col Jarrett
VICE PRESIDENT:	Tim Schubert
TREASURER:	Ron Kern
SECRETARY:	Laurie Trimper
PUBLIC OFFICER:	Brian Eather
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:	Dieter Hentschel Heather Trimper, ,
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CRANKHANDLE:	Alvina Spears/ Heather Trimper
LIFE MEMBERS:	Dave Simpson, Tony Bullock



SHARE THE PASSION

PRESIDENTS REPORT

May/June 2015

Hello All

I have returned from holidays and will be at the next event.

Thank you to Tim, Laurie and Ron for organising the club meetings and runs for the last two months, while I have received good reports about the events I believe the attendance numbers were down. It takes a lot of effort to put these events together and when we are involved with other clubs and organisations, it would be nice to see members support the event and let everyone know the club is active. We should thank the Alice Springs Fire Brigade for showing us around the Fire Station for the March meeting and REPCO for supplying prizes for the Gymkana held in April.

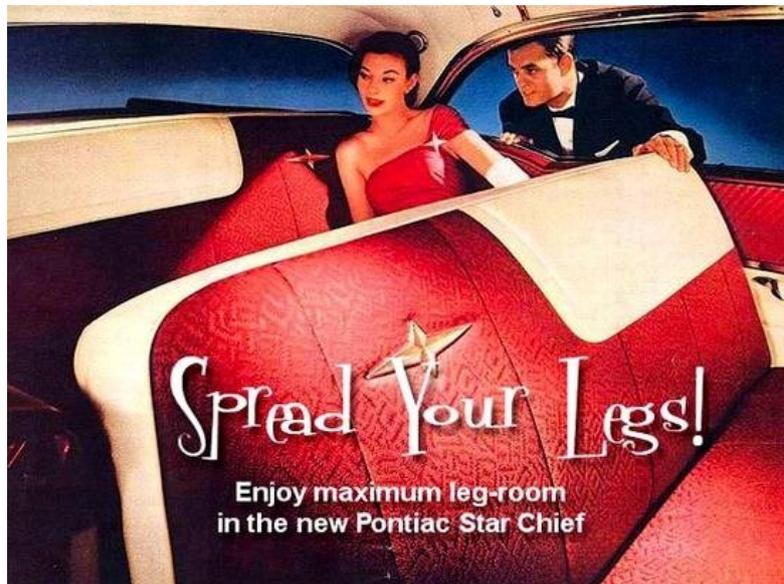
Alice Springs is gearing up for the Red Centre Nats that will be held on the 1st week of September. As I advised members previously, not all of the events will suit our vehicles or our own personal interest, however the event is meant for everyone and our members will be able to participate in a number of events, including the Show and Shine, vehicle parade and possibly the grass driving events. The Show and Shine is open to all vehicles and all of the vehicles from our club are welcome. The N.T. Government and the Summer Nat's group are putting a lot of effort into this event to promote the Territory and Alice Springs, this could become an annual event which will benefit motoring enthusiast's and local businesses. I have been representing MECCA on the event steering committee and in April a meeting was held with all of the Alice Springs Motoring club's and representatives from the Canberra based Summer Nat's organisers, Laurie and Ron attended the meeting for MECCA.

The cost to enter the Red Centre Nat's may seem expensive but if we get in early as a club the cost is reasonable considering what is on offer. So if you want the best deal, enter your vehicles early. If you need more details I encourage everyone to visit the Red Centre Nat's website or give me a call. **If you are considering entering the Red Centre Nats, there is a discount for Clubs. Fill out your details, put down MECCA as the club, do not pay until advised.**

As with every year, the month of May is the busiest for the Club, we have the Bangtail Muster Parade the first weekend, club meeting the second Sunday and National Motoring Day on the third Sunday of the Month.

Safe Motoring.

Col Jarrett.



I am sure he is referring to the huge amount of legroom in the new Pontiac?? ED!

Up-and-Coming Major Events

For the benefit of new members and members that missed the last newsletter or did not read it, I have repeated the next section of my report from last month.

Alice Springs and the whole of the Northern Territory will be filled with motoring events this year and MECCA will have the opportunity to participate, help out or just go as spectators.

May: 4th Bangtail Muster Parade Alice Springs.
May: 17th National Motoring Day. Held by individual Clubs across Australia.
June: 6-7-8th 40th year of the Finke desert Race.
June: 19-21st V8s Hidden Valley. (Darwin)
June: 23-26th Aussie Muscle Car Rally. Darwin event for the Leukemia Foundation.
June: 28th All Ford day Darwin.
August: 24-30th National Road Transport Hall of Fame Reunion. (20 years)
Sept: 3-6th Red Centre Nats. Alice Springs. **Check the Red Centre Nats web site.**

The Leukemia Foundation Muscle Car Rally has been running in South Australia for a number of years and is holding a rally in the Top End this year. This will coincide with the V8s and All Ford day so it will be a good three weeks of motoring events.

The National Road Transport Hall of Fame Museum is expecting a large contingent of Vehicles and visitors to the reunion in August this year.

If you need more information please contact a committee member or myself.

Regards,
Col Jarrett.
0457297271.



USE CAR'S EXHAUST TO CLEAN CUSHIONS

Using the exhaust gas of the automobile to clean the upholstery is the accomplishment of a recently invented device. An aluminum attachment is fastened to the exhaust pipe and the engine is allowed to idle. As the exhaust gas passes through this device suction is created at the inlet hole. Collected by a nozzle, the dust and dirt are drawn through the hose and expelled into the air at the rear of the car. It is made in three models, for cars of different size.

With the car's engine idling, gas from the exhaust creates a vacuum that cleans the cushions



Program Highlights

2015 Red CentreNATS Program Highlights

Thursday 3

Morning/Afternoon

Blatherskite Park
Scrutineering & Registrations

Restricted Hours

Alice Springs Township
Cruising Routes
Alice Springs Cruising

Friday 4

Morning/Afternoon

Blatherskite Park
Elite Show Cars Display
Scrutineering & Registrations

Alice Springs Township
Cruising Routes
Town Street Parade

Afternoon/Evening

Blatherskite Park
Rock N Rumble Concert
Restricted Hours

Alice Springs Township
Cruising Routes
Alice Springs Cruising

Saturday 5

Morning/Afternoon

Blatherskite Park
Elite Show Cars Display
Show n Shine
Grass Driving Events
Dyno Cell
Shows Cars Unveiling

Afternoon/Evening

Alice Springs Inland Dragway
Drag Racing Qualifying
Burnout Qualifying
Burnout Masters Mains

Restricted Hours

Alice Springs Township
Cruising Routes
Alice Springs Cruising

Sunday 6

Morning/Afternoon

Blatherskite Park
Elite Show Cars Display
Show n Shine
Grass Driving Events
Dyno Cell Finals

Afternoon

Alice Springs Inland Dragway
Drag Racing Finals
Burnout Competition Finals
Burnout Masters Finals

Evening

Presentation Night*

Restricted Hours

Alice Springs Township
Cruising Routes
Alice Springs Cruising

<http://www.redcentrenats.com.au/>

MECCA

MOTOR ENTHUSIASTS CLUB CENTRAL AUSTRALIA inc Calendar 2015

- May**
- Sunday 4th** Bangtail Muster Parade.
09.00 Meet at Memo Club carpark.
- Sunday 10th** 9am Meeting. No run (Mothers Day)
- Sunday 17th** National Motoring Day. Run and BBQ.
10.00 departure from Masonic Lodge for short run.
Then Sausage Sizzle at Aviation Museum.
- June**
- Sunday 14th** 9am Meeting. **Run to Stuarts Well for lunch.**
- 6th to 8th 40th year of the Finke Desert Race.
23rd to 26th Leukemia Foundation Rally in Darwin.
20th to 22nd V8s Hidden Valley.
28th All Ford day Darwin.
- July**
- Sunday 12th** 9am Meeting. **Run to Aileron for Lunch**
- August**
- Sunday 9th** 9am Meeting followed by **AGM.**
25th to 31st Road Transport Hall of Fame Reunion
- September**
- Sunday 13th** 9am Meeting. Run TBA.
3rd to 6th Red CentreNats

Very Important!!

Could those of you intending to come along to the Bangtail Muster please advise Col on
cvjarrett@hotmail.com

Or 0457297271 as he needs to advise numbers.

Please note Entrants to Bangtail Muster Parade need to be aware of the following:

Parade theme: “Light up Alice – Light up Rotary”

Parade Start Information

- Parade starts 10am Monday 4th May 2015 from the Memorial Club car park, ending at Anzac Oval car park Wills Terrace.
- Floats and entrants are to assemble at the Memo Carpark from 9:00. Access to the carpark is from the Western end (RFDS side) of Sturt Tce only. There will be no access to the carpark from Gap Road. Please note that there will be no parking available in the carpark.
- Entries close CoB Friday 24th April 2015.

Alice Springs Police – Traffic Operations Information

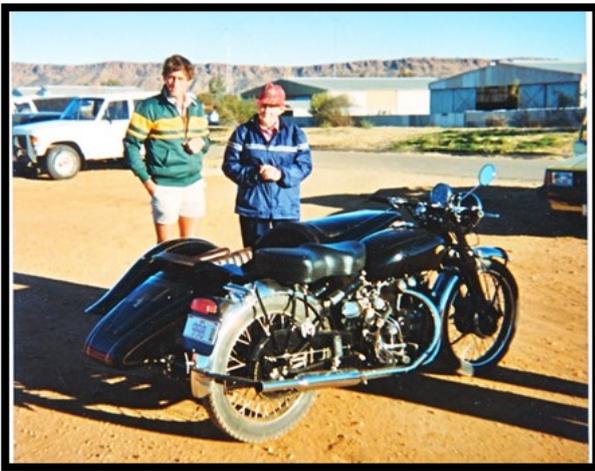
- Police Traffic Operations advise all entrants into the 2015 Bangtail Muster Parade that the transport of unrestrained passengers in open vehicles on public roads is an offence and prosecution can be enforced.
- The police will be enforcing this on vehicles transporting unrestrained passengers in transit to the parade assembly area and from the parade finish area.
- Passengers may be unrestrained and carried once inside the road closure areas.



Car Club Photos From Yesteryear by Club Historian



From left: The Cornock's Morris Minor, Merv Mathew's MGB, Mal Trull's Austin 7 Special, the Pfau's Austin A40, The Gear's MGA, and Jim Lawrence's Morris Minor.



Don McInnes and his mother with Don's beautiful Vincent Black Shadow & sidecar, August 1989



Trevor Jacobs in the early stages of restoration of his Chrysler, with Basil Zadow and Trevor Owen (Maybe Mike Thomas ED) standing.



Where were these ladies going in such a hurry? From left: Felicity Gear, Marie Gear, Lyn Zadow and Loraine Pfau.

The story of the **BANTAM JEEP**

(and how the standard WW2 jeep really came into being)



Despite over 50 years having passed, many people are still able to recognise a WW2 jeep, most referring to it simply as a 'Willys'. It is likely that they therefore also believe that the ubiquitous jeep with its unmistakable grille must have been conceived, designed and built by Willys Overland but the reality is somewhat different. It actually owes its existence to the American Bantam Car Company and the genius of Karl K Probst. The story goes like this:

In 1930 Austin of England founded the American Austin Car Company in the United States. Unfortunately, economical little cars never proved popular there and by 1934 the company was almost bankrupt. It was taken over by its Chairman, Roy Evans, who re-launched it as the American Bantam Car Company. He retained the small car concept based on the original Austin design but made improvements and increased the range of models available.

As early as 1938 Bantam had spotted the potential of a light reconnaissance vehicle for military use and lent the National Guard three of its Austin based Roadsters to evaluate. The company continued to press the case for such a vehicle until a meeting with the Military was finally arranged at the Bantam factory on June 19th 1940. Worried by the mobility and ease with which the German Army had taken France and intelligence reports that the Germans were about to convert the Volkswagen for military use, they at last showed a real interest in Bantam's proposal.

A series of meetings developed Bantam's original car based proposal into a military specification for a 4 x 4 hybrid car / truck type vehicle weighing not more than 590kg. Aware of Bantam's limited design and production facilities and the fact that the company was not financially sound it was decided to offer other manufacturers the opportunity to tender as well. The overall task was to design and submit 70 finished vehicles for evaluation (including 8 with 4 x 4). A prototype had to be delivered within 49 days, the rest within 75 days. The rather unrealistic weight limit resulted in no interest being shown by traditional truck manufacturers like Dodge or GMC and initially only Bantam and Willys responded to be joined later by Ford in submitting designs and prototype vehicles for evaluation.



Bantam GPV prototype delivered on time in September 1940

Bantam persuaded Karl Probst, a freelance engineer, to head their project and when the drawings for the tenders were examined by the Military on July 22, Probst's vehicle came closest to matching the specification though Bantam did conceal the fact that their vehicle was likely to be a little over the weight limit. An order was placed and by the end of September Probst had completed the drawings, sourced the parts and the Bantam prototype was delivered. Having tested it to destruction and being satisfied with its performance, the army commissioned 70 more to be built. Despite Willys failing to submit a prototype by the deadline and Ford showing little interest in the project at all at this time, both manufacturers were allowed access to the trials of the Bantam prototype and subsequently to Probst's drawings. Willys and Ford prototype models, the Quad and the Pygmy, were to follow in that order but clearly outside both the time and weight limits.

Trials continued into the Winter of 1940 and should have resulted in an outright winner. The Bantam GPV (General Purpose Vehicle) had been delivered on time and met the specification in most respects. It performed well bearing in mind the nature of prototypes and minor defects were soon corrected. It also had many recognisable features of the later standardised jeep. However, the Military identified strengths and weaknesses in each vehicle. The Bantam was considered too high off the ground and under powered. The Willys Quad had a more powerful engine but was far too heavy. The Ford Pygmy had the best steering (though linkages were easily damaged) but its tractor engine had insufficient power.

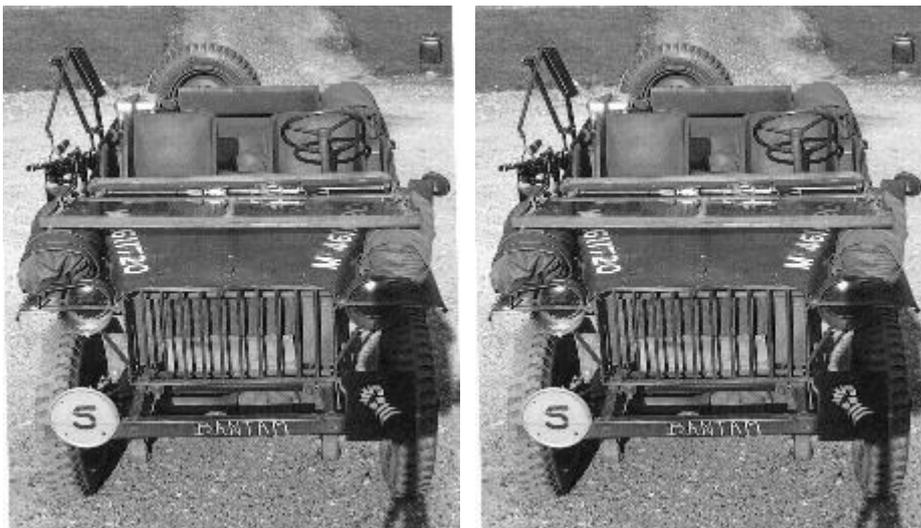
There was also concern about Bantam's limited production capability and that even Willys Overland might not cope given the imminent need for a very large number of these vehicles. All of this resulted in a political decision in March 1941 that all three companies would receive an initial order for 1500 vehicles each, provided that they met the original specification though the permitted weight had now been increased.



1941 trials from left to right: Bantam, Willys MA and the Ford GP

Vehicles that looked remarkably similar during the trials became even more alike as each company adapted their design and copied the better ideas from each other or from Probst's plans ready for the first production runs. However, in July 1941 the military decided that standardisation was needed, it being impractical to operate and maintain three different designs. All three vehicles now performed well but it was decided that the Willys design represented the best overall value for money at \$739 (compared with \$1166 for a Bantam) and it was adopted as the standard army vehicle. Willys secured the contract to provide the next 16,000 vehicles.

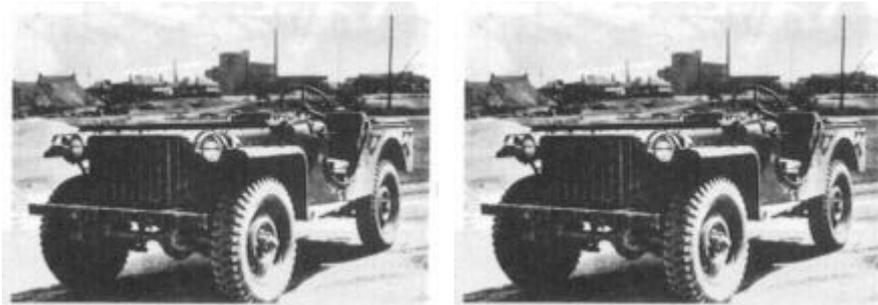
In awarding Willys the contract, the army produced a list of improvements and alterations that were required. Apart from general improvements to the battery, generator, air filter and fuel tank, the standard jeep was now to have blackout lights, sealed beam headlights, pioneer tools (axe and shovel), double bow canvas tilt, trailer socket, centre dash handbrake control and radio suppression. The classic standard jeep design was about to emerge.



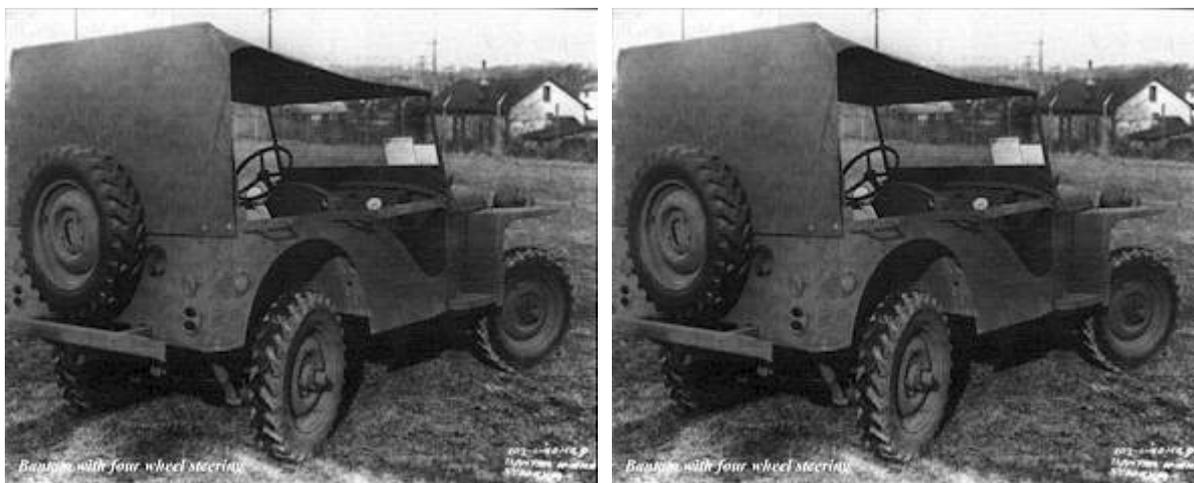
The 40 BRC (the production version of the Bantam) was now no longer required by the US Army as it was 'non-standard'. The Bantams already in service with the army together with the continued output from the factory were passed to the British and Russian armies under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act. Interestingly, having observed the trials, the Russian Purchasing Commission wanted the Bantam by choice.

The photograph (opposite) shows a typical British marked Bantam 40 BRC in the colours of the 6th Armoured Division complete with .303 Bren gun mount on the passenger side. The vehicle's light weight also made it particularly suited for use by British airborne units in North Africa.

By the end of October 1941 the army were keen to find a second source of supply for two reasons; Willys could no longer keep up with the growing demand for jeeps and there was the need to safeguard the supply of jeeps against the Willys plant being bombed or sabotaged.



In early November Ford were awarded their first contract to build 15,000 jeeps to the Willys design specification from Willys drawings. The Willys MB and Ford GPW varied in minor detail only as the Military insisted that the parts be interchangeable. With the increased supply it was now possible to supply the standard MB/GPW vehicles under Lend-Lease arrangements and production of the Bantam 40 BRC was phased out. Interestingly, it was Ford who designed the pressed radiator grille to replace the heavier and more costly slat grille of the early Willys MA design. Willys then incorporated this into their definitive MB model.



In all, 2675 Bantam 40 BRC vehicles were built, 62 of which had four-wheel steer as requested by the US Cavalry (photo right). Sadly, the company never again produced vehicles. Having been first to suggest and build a 'jeep', Bantam was made to share Probst's plans with competitors then lost out in securing any work under contracts for the universal jeep and spent the rest of the war building trailers, aircraft parts and torpedo motors.

The following additional information on four-wheel steer Bantams was provided by Kevin T. Graham of Elkhorn, WI:

Several years ago I went to Grand Rapids, MI to visit a former Design Engineer from the Checker Car Co. He told my father & me how Checker almost collaborated with Bantam

to make jeeps for the gov't. Checker actually produced three jeeps to the BRC40 design with 4-wheel steer & Checker logo on the dash instrument panel. Only one complete Checker jeep remains and was observed & photographed by me at the Hickory Corners Auto Museum in Michigan. As luck would have it the photos turned out poorly. The old designer, Jim Stout, said he still had remnants of a Checker in an outbuilding on his property but did not want to show us. The Checker jeep also had a spotlight mounted on the side of the windshield assembly.

This resulted in the following response from Bill Spear in the U.S. who believes that these vehicles were not built by Checker but were shipped to Kalamazoo by Bantam or possibly by some other non QM corps Army unit in an attempt to find some production capacity and to try to head off the railroad job going on at the Quartermasters Corps.

The Checker story which is now just unfolding with this car I am beginning to believe (but am not willing to be quoted on as yet) is still another attempt by a larger company to try to take credit for Bantam's accomplishments. Until now it has been loudly proclaimed that Checker Motors (they built Checker cabs and had very substantial production capacity, badly needed by Bantam to head off the Quartermaster Corps, Ford and Willys from stealing their product). In fact these three "Checker" cars are Bantams built in Butler PA as far as I can tell, or anyone else...however I am willing to stand corrected if someone can show me anything at all done by Checker to these cars before they were sent to the Army for testing. (They may have disassembled and assembled them to try to figure out a bid price...)

Bill also wrote the following which I have decided to use as an epilogue on this page:

The thing we are all fighting is the constant disregard for the fact that Bantam and in particular Karl Probst did indeed develop the "jeep" and were delivering actual product to the Army almost before Willys had even developed an approved prototype. Moreover, the Army made the Bantam plans available to both Willys and Ford almost as soon as they were drawn, and in addition gave them complete access to the actual car once a prototype was delivered (in an incredible 49 days)...I am still researching it but I think it could possibly be shown that Bantams may be said to be the first jeeps to actually be employed in hostile action in that many were sent to Russia and England as part of the lend lease program (of the three versions the Russians, who were actually fighting the Wehrmacht chose the Bantam over the Willys and Ford!...).

Bill has an excellent site where you can find out more about the Bantam Car Company, Bantam jeeps and the Checker jeep saga. If you have any information to offer regarding the Bantam / Checker connection Bill would also like to hear from you. His e-mail address is: **bill@wmspear.com**

MOTOR ENTHUSIASTS CLUB OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA (MECCA)

Incorporating the Alice Springs Vintage & Veteran Car Club Inc

Postal Address: PO Box 1506, Alice Springs NT 0871

Email: mecca@mecca.asn.au Web Site: www.mecca.asn.au

Overlander Badge History & Particulars

The members of the **Alice Springs Vintage & Veteran Car Club** originally created this very special and much sought after award in the mid 1970s in recognition of the many Veteran, Vintage and Classic motor vehicles whose drivers took up the challenge to travel from interstate to visit Alice Springs. Back in those days the roads to Alice were not the wide, smooth roads we have today but were narrow, undulating strips of bitumen with rough shoulders and causeways where we now have all weather bridges. The Stuart Highway from Port Augusta to the Northern Territory border was still a rough boulder strewn, bull dust and corrugated dirt track which tested the endurance of man and his machine. The sealing of this part of the Stuart Highway was not completed until 1987. The award was appropriately named the **OVERLANDER BADGE** to commemorate the vast distances covered on these roads, the confidence or blind faith the owners had in their vehicles, and the courage of the drivers and passengers who travelled in them to reach Alice Springs. In July 1996 when the **Motor Enthusiasts Club of Central Australia** was formed and incorporated the **Alice Springs Vintage & Veteran Car Club** it was decided that a new category be established to award vehicles from 1947 to a rolling date of 30 years old that make the journey to Alice Springs. This is called the **Special Interest** category.

Today the **OVERLANDER BADGE** is available to anyone who is confident enough to take up the challenge to drive their Veteran, Vintage, Classic or Special Interest vehicle or motor cycle either to or from Alice Springs over an approved distance. The Badge can only be awarded to the nominated driver and vehicle which must arrive at or depart from Alice Springs and cover the specified distance under the vehicles own power.

THE APPROVED DISTANCES FOR THE FOUR CATEGORIES ARE:

Veteran:	Up to 1919	500 kilometres
Vintage:	1920 to 1930	1500 kilometres
Classic:	1931 to 1946	3000 kilometres
Special Interest:	1947 to 30 years old	3000 kilometres



The badges differ in design to distinguish the different categories:

Veteran Badge:	White tyre, red spokes, silver grey background and yellow scroll.
Vintage Badge:	Black tyre, green spokes. Silver grey background and yellow scroll.
Classic:	Black tyre, orange spokes. Silver grey background and yellow scroll.
Special Interest:	Black tyre, blue spokes. Silver grey background and yellow scroll.

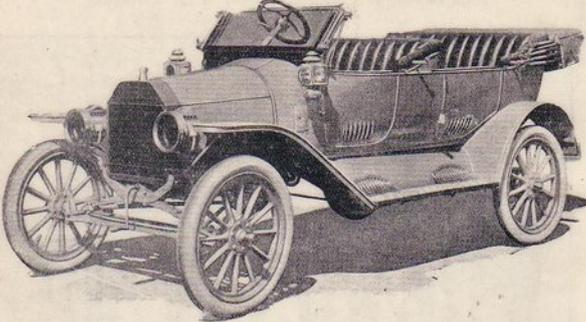
TO APPLY for the badge, contact your club secretary, or apply directly to the MECCA Club secretary. An application form will be sent to you or your club secretary, as required. This form is self-explanatory and must be returned to the MECCA club secretary on completion of the road kilometre requirements. Fee for the badge and engraving is \$75.00. We recommend payment in advance, ie., upon application, to ensure engraving is completed in time for presentation at the completion of your trip.

ALL APPLICANTS, whether arriving from interstate or originating in Alice Springs, must submit reasonable proof of their completion of the qualifying road kilometres in order to be awarded the Overland Badge. This is typically in the form of fuel receipts from the service stations along the route.

AFTER APPROVAL by the Overlander Badge committee, the badge applicable to your vehicle will be duly inscribed with the applicants name and vehicle and registered in our files. The badge will then be posted to you or your club secretary's postal address, as specified. If you have completed your required kilometres upon arrival in Alice Springs, MECCA can present the badge to the applicant in person.

For further inquiries email us, or drop us a line at the above addresses.

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Wally Spears's Buick at 2014 Bangtail Muster



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