

The Whitehouse 16 Speedster

Long time member and owner of the Vintage Factory, Peter Limon rescued the bones of the car from a paddock near Mudgee. It was near a falling down barn and had a tree growing through the chassis.

The bodywork was pretty much gone but the chassis motor gearbox and axles appeared to be from a single car.

Peter undertook a detailed restoration from the chassis up but the state of the bodywork meant a replacement brass radiator and aluminium bonnet. The rest of the body work was fabricated as a station hack come utility in beautifully finished timber with much of the work being done by Peter's father.

The 16 utility was used on some club runs and was known around the club.

During 1993 Peter had agreed to import a Rootlieb speedster kit for a customer who was unable to proceed with the order after it was on the water.

I had been researching the Greyhound Speedster Bodies and felt that with some modifications the Rootlieb parts could produce a reasonable version of the Greyhound Speedster.

Peter was pressing to sell me the Rootlieb kit and so as a compromise I said that I would be prepared to buy the kit if he sold me the 16 without the timber body and so the basics of the 16 speedster were born.

I had acquired a drop front axle and I modified the rear end to have the car ride lower in the fashion of the Greyhound speedster. I set up a cowl design using cardboard over a couple of formers so the shape could be fabricated from a single sheet of steel to match up with the modified fire wall but retain the curved design.

I had Mark Natoli fabricate this cowl as well as a couple of other modifications to further copy the lines of the Greyhound speedster. Mark also applied the two pack black finish to the metal body parts. My neighbour at the time Maurice Alexander, a master painter, put the black finish on the timber components.

Maurice also had a contact who was a specialist pin stripe painter in the truck industry who agreed to paint the gold pinstripes on the body.

We were rushing to finish the car to take on the 94 Adelaide to Alice Springs run so some additional bodywork was fabricated so we could carry a couple of carry bags on each side of the rear boxed shape boot.

As much of the planning for the car was done with the Adelaide to Alice Springs run in mind the layout of the steering column and seating position was compromised toward comfort and Dennis Collimore did a great job on the upholstery. The underfloor space has a number of lockers let into the floor under the seats and the rear lower boot. The car has proved to be a very comfortable touring vehicle.

Because of available time it was decided to run with the standard engine which proved reliable but struggled with the 3 to 1 rear end on long (upwards) hills even though we had fitted a large bore copper exhaust – sounded good, but did not add to the get up and go. The speed never taxed the Rocky Mountain Brakes and for additional safety, rear safety hubs were fitted.

We took the Hogshead off so we could bring out a wire from both ends of the alternator coils. This is fed to a bridge rectifier and I use visual/mechanical voltage regulator ie when the battery reaches 14 volts I switch off the alternator circuit until the battery reaches 12.5 volts.

After running in the Sydney to Melbourne 2 day event I was becoming shy of lifting the bonnet to show off the stock standard motor and therefore I acquired a RAJO 4 valve F head and had the motor rebuilt by Bob Croft. Bob fitted one of my race crankshafts; a B type fully counterweighted and balanced. The transmission was also balanced at the same time.

A water pump is needed with the RAJO head and we added a brass water make up tank that has worked really well. We also manufactured a special front plate for the coil box as we had trouble with water running down from the cowl shorting out the box internally in the timber piece; this has also proved very reliable.

The polished twin domes of the RAJO valve covers with the twin carburettors now make lifting the bonnet a pleasure. The bonnet needed 2 bulges formed in it to clear the twin carburettors.

The twin carburettors are set up with a large balance pipe and a compound throttle which because of the large rotating mass of the counterweighted crankshaft, allows the car to idle so slowly on the first carburettor that loudest noise is the suction hiss and the coil boxes vibrators, a lot of fun.

I had fitted a vintage style set of headers made from heavy wall hydraulic pipe and all though these help with the rorty sound they cause a lot of heat soak into the carburettors after the vehicle is stopped for a while. To solve this problem, I have fitted a heat shield and this

improved the situation, but the problem of hand cranking the motor when hot caused me to give in and fit an electric starter.

On runs it may seem I worry about reliability as Sue always follows me in a modern vehicle, but she says this is because there are always plenty of people who want to ride in the speedster, but when I press her to ride with me she complains I drive too fast and it is **too** windy on her side. Perhaps I will have to look at a move to a closed car.

Martin Whitehouse