

The Long Gestation of a Veteran Car.

39 years from start to finish.

Amended following new information 25, 1, 2014.

It all began back in 1962 over a beer, at the old original hotel at Lake Pukaki after the annual Veteran Rally to Mount Cook. Before the pub was shifted and the winding road to the Hermitage was still all shingle. Bill Miller a long friend of ours told me of the bones of what he thought was possibly an early Riley. Our everyday transport was a 1952 R.M.B. Riley and I had already been smitten by the *RILEY* bug. Enthusiasm quickened and Bill suggested that we have a look and see if it was still there on our way home. Bill lived in Ashburton at the time and we traveled a lot together, Bill with the 1905 Reo on the back of his truck, and our lot in our 1914 Unic not far behind, especially the time that he towed us all the way home from Fairlie on a previous Mt. Cook rally with a broken axial around 180miles.

We turned off the Moronan Road into a farm driveway. Bill got the O.K. from the owner and we walked across the paddock to an old shed and there outside it was a bent and twisted chassis. It had the diff (minus pinion and housing) and two rusting wire wheels and sitting down on the front springs. The owner told us that it had been there for several years. His father had acquired it from a nearby farm and had fixed corrugated iron to the top of the chassis. He used to put a wire rope through the front dumb irons, and using the front springs as sledge runners they towed it around the farm burning dead sheep on top of the corrugated iron. No wonder the chassis rails looked like a scenic railway. The big question, was it a Riley? it did have Riley style detachable wheels and Riley written on the hub nuts. We told him that we could be interested and could he hold it for us and we would be back later.

Before we even unpacked the Unic it was inside to look up “Birmingham’s” Riley book, and there it was, a 10/12 or 12/18 twin 1907—1914 model. The next week we were down there with the trailer and after a hand shake and the inevitable questions about its past and the possibility of further parts belonging to it, but apart from the correct windscreen brackets hanging on a nail in the shed, the result was zero It was now mine.

The next step was to write to the Riley Register in the U.K. with chassis number and photos, from whom I received the conformation that it was a 1909 12/18 short wheelbase, two seater chassis. This confirmed it was decided to start by having the chassis straightened etc, and we decided to build it as the Sportsman model as illustrated in Birmingham’s book. The specs were correct for this model, and plans were drawn up using line drawings and details that I had received from the Riley Register.

While on the 1964 International Rally, I met George Gilltrap who told me of a 12/18 motor that he had given to the Wanganui Museum for their motor display. He also had a round Riley radiator, which was with the motor when he took them both out of an old Wanganui river boat. I contacted the Museum and they were prepared to part with the motor in exchange for another twin, make unimportant. I found another non Riley twin motor and the swap was done. George was in the process of shifting his motor museum to

Australia and told me that I could have the radiator, but he wanted to take it with him to Australia as he said it would look good on the wall with all his other radiators. As I was a long way off actually needing it I was happy with this as he said that I could have it for no cost when I needed it, at as long as I paid for the freight.

I also found another motor that had been fitted to a saw bench in Little River, but it was not for sale. Several years went by and many visits to the property resulted in the same answer, but around 1969 while on a Riley Club run we stopped in and asked once again if I could buy his motor. To our surprise he said "O.K you can have it if it will get you out of my hair, but I want \$100.cash." To his surprise I produced the money on the spot, (we had that morning collected rent money on my father-in-laws flats that we were looking after) and he couldn't believe it. We paid him and said that we would be back later to pick it up. But no, he went straight into the shed and picked the motor up with the front end loader and just dropped it into the boot of the R.M. You can imagine what the weight did to the springs and with a much lighter front suspension road holding and steering, as a consequence we went straight home at a very slow pace. Getting it out was a hell of a job, we had to use a chain hoist as it is a very large and heavy motor, and it was jammed in. This R.M. now owned by Clifton Whall still has a large dint in the boot floor.

As luck would have it combining the two motors which had engine numbers only 80 apart gave me one complete engine, so in it went to Morrie Coombs to be reconditioned, Morrie found little wear in the bores but fitted new rings, the mains and big end set up was completely renewed, and he balanced the motor which has proved an asset as originally this was not done.

I now had a chassis with the basic timber body and seat frame sitting on it and a running motor sitting in it, and a front axial with one hub, which I found behind the Burkes Pass garage. This is the condition that most members will remember it; it also survived two house shifts during this period. A suitable non Riley gearbox was found being used as a secondary drive output on a lime spreading truck at Omaha. This was overhauled and fixed into the chassis but all the connections were missing and had to be made up. The Radiator in Australia was sold when George Giltrap died. The arrangement that we had over it was not recognized by his son, and he sold it, but more of that later.

At this point the project more or less died, just gathering dust as major components such as the radiator, pinion and housing, one front hub, wheels etc. were still missing.

Hopes were raised in the early 1980s when Alan Teeder came to see me; he owned a 1910 12/18 in England and had heard about my project. He was a great help with info and got me going again on things like the pipe work, and other smaller items, but not any great progress, although a Swap Meet did produce a set of likely looking mud-guards.

The next great leap was in 1997 when Alan and New Zealander Raymond Farmer who owns a 1907 model in England, found a heap of Riley Twin bits and Alan sent me the list and asked me to indicate what I would like.

Luck would have it that the bits (except for a gearbox) that I wanted were available.

A price was negotiated and the bits arrived in a big packing case on the day that I was leaving to go to a Riley Rally in Australia, so I didn't even have time to open it and had no idea what treasures it held.. On my return I found a front hub, steering arm assembly

and other bits that unfortunately turned out to be for the 10/12 model and would not fit. However there was a pinion housing with pinion and matching crown wheel, steering box, torque rods (for the rear suspension), and other minor bits, all for my car.

There was no excuse now and after my wife Brenda's sudden death in 1996, the family got at me telling me that they wanted to see me finish it, and to spend my retirement money on getting it finished. Brenda's death also made me realize that if I didn't do it now I might not live to have the joy of using it. So it was all on and go for broke and get things done.

The diff was the first thing. A complete rebuild was required with a new bearing set up etc. unfortunately the pinion and crown wheel from England were in a poor condition and were a very low ratio. So the decision was made to make a new pinion to match my original crown wheel which was a much higher ratio and in good order. Parts of the rear hubs had been lost in the shifts and these had to be made up as well. New guards were made, the swap meet ones were to far gone, new drag link made from Alan's drawings, fuel tank built, scuttle / dashboard built out of an old Kauri counter top and oiling equipment and the complex pipe-work completed. New king pins, bushes were made and fitted and the broken steering arm welded.

Five new wheels were manufactured using Brian Black's B.E.rims. Mark Richardson made up new wheel centers machining them from solid. G.T Restorations drilled and spoked with spokes specially imported from Wales. Mark also machined up one new front hub and converted the existing one to modern bearings. He also made five new Riley wheel locking hub nuts. These are a Riley Patent and have a locking device built into them. His workmanship was outstanding and costs were reasonable considering the precision work required. Five 815 x 105 B.E. tyres were purchased from Paterson's Tyres and fitted.

The main part missing was still the radiator. I had spent many hours writing and contacting various people in Australia, over several years chasing the radiator but always I was that one step behind. My last contact was Kurt Schlitz but I had been unable to get hold of him. A club member Gary Turner who was going to the Australian International Rally said that he would try to contact him for me. At the 1997 swap meet 'surprise' it appeared on Garry's stand. He had bought it from Kurt Schulz and brought it back, and it was now for sale at a much inflated price.

After 12 months of negotiation and phone calls I eventually acquired it at half the swap meet asking price. It was in need of major repair and was sent down to National Radiators in Dunedin, but after they had pulled it all to bits they closed up shop and I had to go down to Dunedin and retrieve one radiator in many bits. Fortunately Auto Restorations were able to rebuild it for me and did a great job. The purchasing and rebuilding of the radiator has proved the most costly single item of the whole restoration, (\$ 6000.00.) but you have to have one don't you, and I know I should not have any future radiator problems, and haven't.

In July 2000, I went to England as part of my around the world trip, on my big O.E. While in England I made Alan Teeders place my base and was under, over, in, took measurements, and lots of photos of Alan's 12/18. All of which, proved to be extremely

helpful, and went for a ride. Alan also loaded me up with info most of it on computer disk etc and I arrived back in September rearing to get it finished in time for my dead line the Veteran Car Clubs Edwardian Weekend in February 2001.

The pace was now full on, body seat and guards were painted to color samples supplied by Alan "Napier Green "and Black It turned out that a pot of paint mixed up for me by Harry Sachett back in the 1980s and still unopened was a perfect match. New paint to match was however used. Once the seat was painted it was off to the upholsterer. The body, seat, petrol tank, guards, finished seat, all took up residence in the spare bedroom, where else would you put them? A windshield was made up and attached to adjustable brackets found on the farm where the car chassis was located. With the arrival of the restored diff, it was quickly fitted and we had a real thrill wheeling it out of the shed on Oct 25th 2000. What a day! In the past when it needed to be moved it took two garage jacks or 5 people just to move the front end of the car. The rolling chassis was then delivered to Auto Restoration to have a bonnet made and fitted. While it was there I worked on getting the two wheel brakes set up finished. The steel drums had been turned true, and new shoes cast and machined to take modern linings, replacing the original cast iron shoes on steel drums, When it arrived back, on went the body, tank, and seat. Next were the guards, the front ones fitted, but the rear ones were a real challenge. I lost count of how many times I bent, re-bent and finally ended up making completely new mounting brackets, getting the running boards lined up was also difficult job, Riley have a simple but very different system of supporting them. Typical.

I had obtained a complete matching set of four , correct period C.A.V. Electric headlights that long ago that I can't remember where I got them from. They required extensive restoration, which had been done some years before. Also years ago Alan Baker gave me a set of C.A.V instruments and nameplate, A switch box as per the original one was built and the lights were fitted and wiring done. The only tail light that I had was an oil lamp and I mounted a modern tail-light inside it. I had looked at buying the correct divers helmet type at the Beaulie Auto Jumble in the UK when I was there, but not at around \$600nz each. The 1909 12/18 model was the first Riley to have the listed option of electric or gas lights.

The Complete car saw the light of day on the 10.Dec. 2000. (my birthday, what a present). WHAT A DAY TO REMEMBER. It was then off to get the registration etc. There were no problems with the V.I.C. and warrant, a talk with the tester before you go to find out what he required, works wonders. However there was a problem getting home as it had developed a hole in the float and ran rich, we only just made it home.

Many more frustrating hours were taken up with those teething problems, but eventually all were cured. Its first public appearance was 8 Jan at a Veteran Car Club run and it went well, and much admired by those there. We did make it to The Veteran Car Clubs Edwardian Weekend, in February, followed by the National Veteran Rally in Ashburton. It has now been on numerous rallies, and in true Riley tradition holds the Veteran Record for the Ashley Forest Hill climb. It has exceeded all my expectations of performance; ask

the Vintage car owners I have passed. 65 kph is a comfortable speed but it can cruise depending on conditions, between 70 and 75 kph.

It had been almost non- stop work since August 2000. But the end product is worth more than I can say. The restoration has been long and very expensive but it was worth it

I would like to thank all those people who over the 39 years have helped me in many ways I couldn't have done it without your help. In particular Alan Teeder, without whose help and encouragement my incomplete 12/18 would still be sitting forlornly in the shed gathering dust.

Ivan D. Taylor.

10.1. 2000

Up-dated 25.4.2014.



Photo show the completed car with Victor Riley grand son of the original Victor Riley driving with me beside him. Also the chassis as found on the Ashburton farm.

MY CARS KNOWN HISTORY.

A lot of what I know is only hearsay, but I have put together the following as it has been told to me from several sources, not all can be substantiated.

Around 1905 the original owner, a wealthy Ashburton farmer, Company owner and Racing horse breeder, Harry Nicoll of Dunbar Lodge following a trip to England brought back into N.Z. a 9hp Riley twin. He had four sons who were continually using it so he decided to import another Riley in 1909 for his own exclusive use. When the car arrived it turned out to be a 12/18 two seater, not the 10/12 that he had ordered. He didn't use it, leaving it in the packing case; he then contacted the Riley Company in the U.K. informing them of their error. Communication was slow in those days, but he eventually heard from them advising him that there had been a mistake and that the 12/18 he had should have gone to South Africa. Because of transport costs he was told to keep the car at no extra cost. What the customer in South Africa eventually got is not known.

The following story is told about the owner. He was a staunch Church of England man, and on his way to church one very wet Sunday morning, he came across the local Catholic priest on the side of the road with a wheel broken on his gig. Despite a strong dislike for each others religions, he offered the priest a ride. He then proceeded to find the worst road and the biggest pot holes, duly delivering the priest to the waiting congregation outside the front door of the church covered in mud and very wet. It is presumed that Harry Nicoll had a cover over himself, but not over the priest. He was also well known for travelling at high speed around the district in this car. Over the years he owned several vehicles including an early White and a Prince Henry 40/50 hp tourer. What happened to the 1905 9hp is not know but both the 12/18 Riley and the Prince Henry were put up for auction in 1913, The Riley was bought by a Mr. Richards for 220 pounds. There is no record of what happened to the Prince Henry. . The 12/18 was said to have been taken down to the river in the late 20's and progressively dismantled, with bits going all over the district. The chassis was taken from here and eventually acquired by the father of the person I bought it off around 1930. The motor I acquired from Little River is the actual motor belonging to this car according to the Riley Register's records ,which gave the date of April 1909 as its "Birth Date" it had been bought as a working saw bench from a clearing sale in Ashburton. I know of at least three other 12/18's that came into N.Z. from various old photos I have located, one in Christchurch 1907/8, one on the West Coast a 1912/13, and another in Wanganui a 1909, going by the engine and radiator that came from there.

Only 7 12/18 twins are known to have survived, Ramon Farmer's. 1907, Coventry Museum 1907, Chris Gillian 1908, P.Knight's 1910, all in England Alan Tedder's 1911, is now in Portugal. And a recently discovered one in Spain (now in Germany) and my 1909.Sportsman.

Ivan Taylor. .

Veteran Riley's Known To Exist. In Running Order, Stored, Or In Museums.

According to Allan Teeders records the sum total of complete Veteran Rileys is:-

MotoBi,	3 ½ , 2 ¾, h.p. Motorcycles.	3,
Tcycle.	2 ¼, h.p.	1,
Forcar,	3. h.p.	1,
Forcar.	4 ½, h.p.	4,
Tricar.	5. h.p.	1,
Tricar.	6. h.p	1,
Tricar	9. h.p.	4,
Car.	9. h.p.	6.
Car.	10/12.. h.p.	2.
Car.	12/18. h.p.	7 (4 UK, 1 Germany, 1 Portugal, & mine).
Car.	4 cly Nero	0