



Tributes to the late Bill Haverly

We are proposing to publish a series of Bill Haverly's Roadster articles by way of a tribute to him, and thought it would be rather appropriate to preface each article with an extract from Sandra Pullen's excellent funeral oration, given on 15th July 2015. For those not aware, Sandra was Bill's very supportive partner who was invariably by his side at the Beaulieu Autojumble, ready to take over the sale of spares when Bill went out on his sorties, seeking out that elusive Singer spare part. Here is the first extract,

followed by an informative article covering Roadster top speeds and dashboards:

"In 1976, ASCO, the Association of Singer Car Owners, was formed as an alternative car club to the Singer Owners' Club. Bill staunchly supported Dave True in his effort to form the new club, and was a founder member. He soon became Roadster Registrar and Spares Coordinator. Graced with a laid back attitude to his paid work, Bill started to research into the Singer Marque and Roadster production, seeking out and interviewing ex-employees of the Singer factory and analysing the Singer Sales register. He enjoyed writing technical and general articles and recording the results of his researches in the club magazine. But his real pleasure lay in helping other Singer owners with their problems and queries. These initial contacts developed into real friendships, and Bill always loved to take the opportunity to wine and dine Singer people and invite them into his garage when they visited us in Teddington. Many of the visits from overseas members were reciprocated when our holiday plans took us to Canada, US & South Africa.

A Singer owner said of Bill that: "He was a lovely gentleman in every sense of the word, a person who had my admiration and respect. He had every reason to take centre stage but didn't - a very modest and wonderful person. The Singer world is vastly poorer today."

Sandra Pullen - July 2015

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'Roadster Notes' by Bill Haverly, from the MASCOT Jan - Feb 1994 **'And the dashboard's genuine leather!'**

Deep in the mists of Roadster folklore are a number of legends which have been passed down to us over the years. One old chestnut says that the 9 Roadster in standard form is capable of a top speed in excess of 70mph. Though it's true that the maximum power of the 1074cc engine at 5,000 rpm gives a theoretical 'output' of 69.5 mph, few of the cars road tested during the production period went faster than 65 mph when speedometer error was taken into account. Of course there is always a marked difference between bench tested figures and the engine in the car on the road, and it is possible that confusion between these figures and 'go fast' speedometer readings have contributed to claims of exaggerated top speed.

Another long standing belief is that the wooden instrument panel fitted to all production cars was originally made of mahogany. This seems to stem from the fact that panels on cars up to 1952 were stained dark brown and varnished before leaving the factory, giving an appearance superficially of a dark close-grained hardwood like mahogany. Though I have long doubted this theory on grounds of availability and cost of this expensive hardwood at a time of austerity in the British car industry, it was only after examining the many cast off original dashboards collected for my article on instrument panel layouts

that things became clearer. When stripped, all of them were a very light coloured short grained wood, broken up occasionally by long streaky markings. It is a bit softer and noticeably far more lightweight than the quality West African hardwoods. All the 4AB dashboards I've seen have used it.

The wood on these panels proved to be obeche, or 'o-bee-chi' as the dictionary pronounces: 'A large, very common West African tree, found in lowland rain forests, which grows to a height of 150' and is noted for its light coloured timber. Obeche is nearly white to pale straw, with no clear distinction between sapwood and heartwood. When first used for motor bodywork and cabinet making in the mid-thirties it was often called satinwood.'

Roadster instrument panels had two distinct phases. The stained wood and varnish period lasted until 1952, when a change in panel layout brought about a new appearance, the beige vynide covered dashboard. This development using leathercloth,



**Bill in his element - helping another Roadster Owner.
(At Tilford Rural Life Centre.)**

was dictated more by economy than design, and came about in the following way. All post-war Roadsters had virtually the same panel outline, though on the board some of the smaller instruments moved positions between series. Changes for 1951 Series 4AB

needed a new hole for a hand dipper switch to the right of the speedometer. This feature continued on the early 4ADs, but in late 1952 a decision was made to revert to the floor mounted dipper, and relocate the horn button from over the ignition switch to the scuttle rim near the speedometer. These moves left two unsightly holes in stocks of unused panels sitting on the shelf, so a cover up operation was devised. The holes were plugged with wood and leathercloth glued over the top surface. At a stroke, panels were salvaged and the appearance of the wood no longer mattered with this neat solution, which served until the end of production.

Though obeche was used on many dashboards, there's little doubt that other woods were used throughout the years. With shortages of raw materials often affecting production, there were occasions when Singers could hardly be choosers. My thanks go to Dave Wordsworth for identifying obeche, 'the light hardwood', via the Watford timberyards. In replacing his 4AB's instrument panel, he has decided to give mahogany, walnut and teak a miss, having tracked down a large plank of obeche at a very reasonable price. The suggestion is that originality is not necessarily expensive.

Bill Haverly.

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Our thanks to Sandra for granting consent for ASCO to publish extracts from her funeral oration. Sandra tells us that Bill was constantly gathering/finding more information as the years rolled by, and that some of the information in his earlier articles may have been superseded. I have had a look through the above article and it all looks pretty good to me. However, if anybody can shed any further light on the saga of the Singer Roadster dashboards, we would love to hear from you.

Barry Paine.