### **Presidente**

John Madigan Ph:0432 877 181

E: john.t.madigan05@gmail.com

Segretario
David Button

E: david button@hotmail.com

### **Tesoriere**

Allan Van Dullemen E: avandull@hotmail.com

### **Club Capitano**

Omar Hasan Ph: 0419366050

E: omar@technologycontracting.com.au

### Direttore/Editore

Philip Blake Ph: 0409803316

E: pblake@ozemail.com.au

### Membership

Robert Madigan Ph: 0402 628 652

E: robert.m.madigan@gmail.com

### Membri del Comitato

Graham Mitchell Peter Lowe Stewart Peacock Tristan Roberts Rob Madigan

### Segretario sociale

Graham Mitchell Ph: 0418 173 102

E: grahammitchell666@gmail.com

### **Enquiries**

For information on the club and general enquiries call any of the above members, or visit our Web Site: www.cmitas.org

Or Facebook page

www.facebook.com/clubmotoriitalia

Address general correspondence and enquiries to:

The Segretario

Club Motori Italia Inc

PO Box 514

North Hobart 7002

or email

clubmotoriitalia@gmail.com

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### Full yearly Membership fees:

1 January to 31 December Social \$45 Motorsport/Competition \$65

Family \$90

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(2 adults + kids under 18 - Family rate allows up to two competition members.)

Note: Applicants who wish to join part-way through the year will be charged a pro-rata membership fee based on the number of months left in the membership year. See the application form for details.

### **Meetings**

Southern members meet on the final Tuesday of each month, January through to November, at the Civic Club, 134
Davey Street, Hobart.
The committee meeting is held between 6.30-8.00 pm. Drop in any night.

CMI's AGM is generally held at 7 pm on the last Tuesday of November at the Civic Club, Hobart.

All contributions to Veloce

Nota are welcome.

Please send all letters and contributions to The Editor: pblake@ozemail.com.au

### **Disclaimer**

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David Mitchell
Steve Caplice
Rob Madigan
Tristan Roberts
Dave Button
Peter Lowe
Philip Blake
Allan Van Dullemen





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### Blakey's Bit

This first issue of 2025 is packed with different stuff: new committee, event reports, car builds, engine work ... At one stage I thought of cutting it back to 12 pages but stories and ideas kept coming in.

Mike Clark sent me a copy of a story on his Ansaldo that was published in *Classic and Sports Car* magazine, and after several attempts to scan it we 'assembled' it in the form you see opposite, which looks somewhat like the original. This version has the big advantage of being readable, unlike any of the scans we were able to do.

As we head into the New Year I have to say that I will be very glad to leave the old one behind.

2024 was a year in which I lost my brother Bart, a close friend, Mick Lawrence, and in the last month my remaining brother Sean and my dog Shotz. I'll miss them all.





### Presidential Patter

As we begin a new year, I would like to thank all club members for an enjoyable 2024. We had a good mix of social and competitive events, we had some members finding success in some rather big motorsport events, and a healthy dose of Italian machines in all our social get togethers.

Looking ahead, we have some new events to add to the mix for 2025. We have booked a car display on Parliament lawns for late November, and there have been talks of possibly holding another hill climb in the future.

Thanks,

John



## GOOD ENOUGH FOR NUVOLARI...

In 2019 I purchased a recently restored 1923 Italian racing car. This car is one of only a few racing versions worldwide. Torpedo tourers were the main products built by the Italian industrial giant. Indeed, Gio. Ansaldo and Co. had its headquarters in Genoa and manufactured ships, railway engines, submarines and armaments. After the end of World War 1 an Ansaldo aero engine factory in Turin switched to making cars. Production continued for about 10 years, but fewer than 100 Ansaldo cars in all forms remain today. Because of the company's background in armaments, it adopted a crossed cannon badge for its cars: 'a shot from the past'.

My interest in this car was stimulated by the fascination I have with mechanical design. The Ansaldo was quite advanced for its time. A 2-litre engine with a single overhead cam, driven by a vertical shaft connected by skew gears to the crankshaft. A detachable cross-flow, essentially hemispherical head contains valves that are inclined and are timed to have an overlap. This is unusual for its time as many contemporary cars had sidevalve engines.

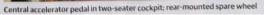
Mike Clark

Giulietta Sprint Zagato

1971 Volvo 1800E 1960 Alfa Romeo

The other cars in my collection reflect a diversity of engine design and fuel supply. These include a 1937 Riley TT Sprite racer (twin high cam, running on four periodcorrect Amal carburettors), a 1958 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Veloce Spider (twin overhead cam with twin sand-cast Weber DC03 carburettors), a '65 Mercedes-Benz 230SL (high pressure mechanical fuel injection), a 1971 Volvo P1800É (Bosch D-Jetronic electronic fuel injection) and a 1979 Lotus Esprit (twin Dellorto carburettors in a car with typical Colin Chapman design features).





The Ansaldo Corsa is truly exciting to drive and I recently demonstrated its speed at a local hill climb. As with many cars of this period, the pedals are arranged with the accelerator in the middle. Also, the brakes are only on the rear wheels, although there is a transmission brake. It accelerates quite quickly developing approximately 50bhp in a body that weighs only 700kg. Indeed, a car very similar to this was the first car raced by Tazio Nuvolari in 1921, where he came second in the Circuit of Garda, beaten by another Ansaldo driven by Corrado Lotti. He is thought to have purchased a new chassis from the factory and aided by his cousin, added a basic racing structure including the two seater driver/passenger compartment, a horizontal fuel drum and spare wheels fastened at the rear. There exist a few photos online that show Nuvolari and his cousin in the car. However, Tazio soon moved on to more exotic machines including Chiribiri, Bianchi, Bugatti and Alfa

Romeo. Indeed, Nuvolari went on to become one of the greatest racing drivers of all time. Thre are also several photos that provide evidence that in the early 1920s Ansaldos very similar to the Nuvolari car were raced in the UK in hillclimbs and at Brooklands.

I have always had an interest in classic cars and bought the Volvo P1800E 40 years ago. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, my wife and I frequently travelled to the UK and Europe to attend as many classic car events that we could fit in. Unfortunately we have had to leave our cars behind at home in Tasmania, where we now live. The historic races at Monaco and the Mille Miglia re-enactment were our favourites, but the hill climbs at Shelsley Walsh and Prescott are next on our list. In Tasmania I have campaigned the Riley in Targa Tasmania and local hillclimbs with some success. The Volvo has also had some track work, and the Ansaldo is next.

### My life with the Bambino



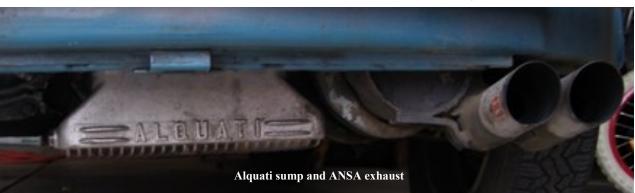
### The Beginning

My father, brother and I have always been interested in cars and always liked British and European rather than American, Australian or Japanese cars. I was brought home from hospital in an Austin 1800 and that was replaced by a Citroen GS then various Citroen CXs, so my late father probably had a lot to do with my tastes.

I grew up in Brisbane and every Saturday as a teenager I would read through the car classified advertisements in the Courier Mail newspaper to see if there was anything interesting. I usually started by looking for Fiat and Lancia and then scanned through the rest. I can remember convincing dad to have a look at a surprisingly cheap Fiat 2300S with hen's-teeth-rare full Nardi tuning kit (triple DCOE Webers, extractors, sportier cam, better flowing cylinder head ...). It was an incredible piece of kit and sounded amazing. However, after a bit of further digging my dad discovered that the car had been fully submerged in brackish/salt water for up to a week during the 1974 Brisbane floods so we walked away. We looked at a few Lancias including a brilliant Fulvia coupe 1600 HF

Fanalone, Fulvia Zagato Sport 1600 and Flavia Zagato - but unfortunately dad always chickened out. He did eventually buy a 1973 Lancia 2000 HF coupe. This, due to difficulties finding any parts, he replaced with a one-previous-owner (who had brought his pride and joy with him from England) genuine 1973 BMW 3.0 CSL - but that is another story.

Then one Saturday morning in 1982 (I was 14 at the time), there was the ad for a small, underpowered, impractical piece of Italy. I convinced dad that we should have a look; after a test drive, \$800 was handed over and



dad got the keys to a blu turchese 1969 Fiat 500F to drive home. The Bambino. It was in very good condition. More importantly for me, we were told that it had bigger inlet valves, Koni red shock absorbers and it sported Cromodora magnesium alloy wheels, an ANSA sports twin pipe exhaust and a largecapacity Alquati finned alloy sump (4.5 L as opposed to the standard 2.4 L sump). It went pretty well for a Fiat 500. The only problem was that I had to wait years before I could get my licence! My older brother used it as his everyday car for a couple of years while I waited.

### Discovering special features

While I waited, my mechanical knowledge grew and I realised

dos didn't know what it was from but all agreed that it wasn't an Abarth head (which, as far as was known, was the only twinport head). Remember, there was no internet in the 1980s, so no quick Google searching.

Further tinkering with the car revealed that it had a lightened flywheel weighing around 4 kg as opposed to 7.5 kg for the standard item. It also had front Abarth 695 disc brakes, lowered and stiffened front transverse leaf spring and similarly lowered rear coil springs.

Then I found the people who built the engine – John McLean and Peter Clydesdale. John ran John McLean Motors, specialising in servicing and competition preparation of Italian cars. John also drove and Peter navigated

V8 Supercars in the early 2000s. They told me that they built this engine for their club gymkhana car. The head was a more recent upgrade from a Fiat Panda 30 that John sourced from Italy in 1980.

I was also told that the engine had VW Type 1 (Beetle) 1300 cylinder barrels, modified to fit, and oversize pistons with a 78 mm bore giving 669 cc (standard Fiat 500 is 67.4 mm bore and 499 cc) and a 'very special crankshaft' to balance the extra weight of the pistons. Peter also gave me a modified Fiat 500 crankshaft that was their first attempt at balancing by using heavy metal (depleted uranium!) plugs pressed into the central counterweight. This was balanced by Tim Harlock, a very well-known mechanical engineer in Brisbane who





LEFT: Fiat 126 / Niki 650 cc engine showing counterweight clearing between cylinder barrels that have a factory cut out to clear the counterweight (see inset for a closer look at left hand cylinder next to the counterweight).

RIGHT: modified factory crankshaft showing counterweight machined thinner to clear the VW big bore barrels, and uranium plugs inserted to rebalance.

that the claimed bigger valve head was not the standard single Siamese-inlet-port head but in fact a twin-port head which was virtually unheard of at the time in Brisbane. Local Fiat aficionain the Qld Rally Championship during the 1970s in a Lancia β 1800 coupe. John is the father of Cameron McLean who won the 1995 Australian Sports Sedan Championship and competed in



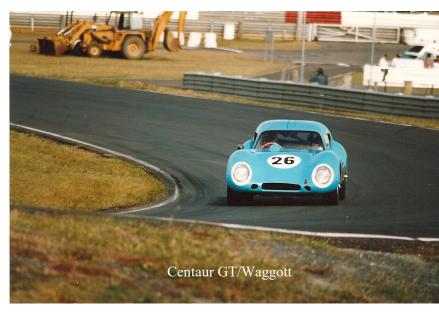
### My life with he Bambino (cont'd)



Factory crankshaft was designed for a 4700 red line, suffers from whipping at 6000 rpm and likely catastrophic failure if sustained above that.



One-off billet prototype crankshaft that is in the Bambino. Was said to be good for sustained 8000 rpm.

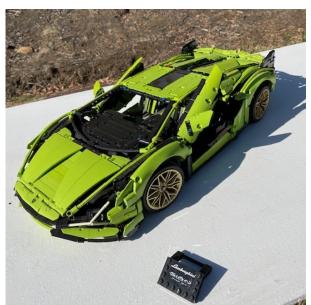


among many things designed and handmade Centaur race cars in the early 1960s (look up the Centaur GT/Waggott).

The counterweight in the factory Fiat crankshaft passes between the cylinder barrels. If the bore is increased, then the counterweight must be made narrower to clear. You can see in the picture of their first crankshaft for the big-bore motor that close to 7 mm was machined off each side of the counterweight, and why uranium plugs were used to regain balance.

The crankshaft turned out to be very special indeed. It is a oneoff handmade steel billet item that was made by the late Ivan Tighe (Ivan Tighe Engineering still exists in Brisbane, trading as Tighe Cams – manufacturers of billet camshafts). The story that I was told is that Ivan knew a retired Abarth engineer who was living in Melbourne who passed on drawings of a crankshaft. It was a design for a better counterweighted crankshaft to go into the Abarth 695 SS Assetto Corsa Radiale engine but never went into production. Some time in the 1970s, Ivan made a prototype - which is the crankshaft in my car.

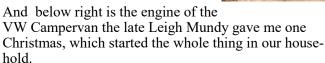
One of the design features of this crankshaft is that the counterweights are on either side of the big ends and they pass under the cylinder barrels. Not only was the prototype design a lot stiffer and stronger, it enabled different engine geometries to be experimented with to safely rev the engine higher. It allowed much larger bores and shorter strokes to be used to stay under 700 cc for the class in which the Abarth 695 raced in Europe. (To be continued)





I didn't realise when I put the pictures of my Lego Technic Ford GT in the last issue that it would bring Mike Clark out of the Lego closet to send me the pictures above of his 1/8 scale Lego Lamborghini Sian and Ferrari Daytona sp3, which I have now seen in the plastic.

The picture on the right (can you guess what it is?) is the latest gift from my kids, which only has 900 pieces compared to the 1400 of the Ford GT and the 3000-odd of Mike's two gorgeous models. Finished model will be in the next issue.

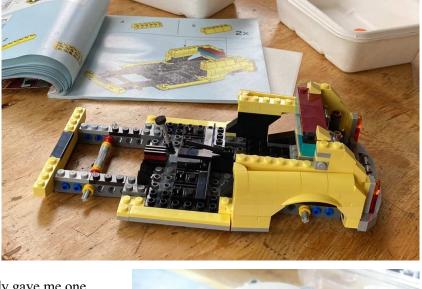


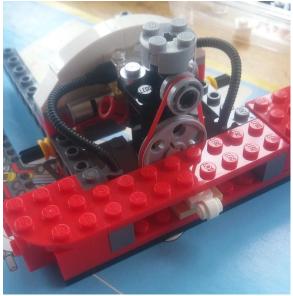
(My daughter Alice's first model was the one I'm currently building, and she and Michael bought me this one to stop me dismantling and reassembling hers.)

So I've been wondering what to call a group of Lego enthusiasts, and quite quickly decided on 'Legotists.' I'd be surprised if somebody hasn't already thought of that, but I was pleased with it.

If you have a better name, let me know. And if you have a Lego Technic model on the shelf, send me a picture or two. I'm betting there are some out there.

And as you can see, I've translated the collective name into Italian for future use.





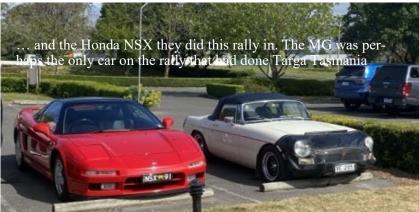
### A very different rally



With tarmac rallying in a state of limbo for the last couple of years, some competitors are selling their cars or moving into other forms of motor sport. Some have given up hope, and some are holding on in the hope that good sense will prevail, as it has in yacht racing — 'We all know this is dangerous, but it's also thrilling and we want to continue to do it'.

I'm one of the last group, so when I was invited to take part in a reunion rally for retired rallyists to remember 'the old days', I told them to speak for themselves, as I was still active and keen to go on with it.

But as the people asking were Lorraine and Neville Smith of Devonport, who campaigned a Holden FR for many years in Targa Tasmania, and were the first to stop at the scene of our nasty accident in Devonport in 2009, I reconsidered.



The course was from Devonport to St Helens, St Helens to Hobart, Hobart to Strahan and Strahan back to Devonport, with a cocktail party to start and a major dinner every night. About 20 cars signed up, some of the owners well known to me either personally or by reputation.

I was keen to take the OT1600, as almost nobody was bringing a rally car and I thought that was unfortunate. However, that plan was kyboshed by the car itself letting me down at Baskerville –

or maybe I let *it* down. I also wanted to go with one of my previous co-drivers, but for various reasons none could do it. In the end I asked John King to do the first two days and Franklin Trouw to do the second two. The enticement was that everything was already paid for, and the catch was that each had to bring a car! John brought his BA Falcon, Franklin his Mazda MX5.

On the rally route you could go wherever you wanted as long as



'The needle we threaded at 140 ks. Over a ditch, between a tree and a telegraph pole.' John Blake

you were there for the dinner. Most people were doing the tourist thing, but I chose to go by as many Targa stages as possible, taking pace notes with me for all the ones we were likely to encounter.

I introduced John to pace notes on the Cethana stage, so he had 37 km to get used to them. He said it didn't matter anyway, as he would only drive for what he could see. This resolution lasted as long as it took him to work out what the various numbers meant, and then I got the feeling that we were definitely working together. At the end of the stage – which had very little traffic on it – John said 'Well, that was amazing – a real eye-opener.'

Leaving Devonport the next day we went over the (improved and faster) Sideling stage and stopped off to visit my brother Sean, who was in palliative care with cancer in Scottsdale Hospital. This would be the last time I saw him, although I didn't know that.

The journey to St Helens took us through all the famous Northeast stages, John driving again, and during dinner I sat beside Vic Spiteri of Jaguar fame, who advised me, among other things, to get softer springs in the back of the Fiat.

Next day we did the Elephant Pass stage and turned off for Rossarden, which I wanted John to see. It's probably the most dangerous of all Targa stages, and I like it despite the big crash we had there in 2011 in the Lancia. We stopped at the crash site. It's a long way from where we lost it to where we ended up, and it took us a while to walk it. (We had already covered about 100 metres sideways before leaving the road.) Driver John Blake's caption for the picture: 'The needle we threaded at 140 ks. Over a ditch, between a tree and a telegraph pole.' It's now quite overgrown, so if we went off there today it would be a shorter story.

Down the East Coast then, and Franklin took over from Sorell for the leg to Strahan and Devonport. Once again, he was the driver and I was the navigator. Our first Targa stage was Rinadeena, on the way into Strahan. We then did this one in reverse on the way out, and took in the spectacular Reece Dam/ Pieman stage, Murchison, Gunns Plains and Riana on the way to Devonport. Franklin would repeat John King's words almost exactly: 'Well, that's been a real eye-opener for me.'

After a lavish dinner and a few speeches at Verona's in Devonport, we set off for home via the Mt Roland Targa stage.

A great trip, and lots of wonderful stories from old Targa hands; a memorable one for me was John Potter describing how he was heading over the top of Cethana in his MG Metro 6R4 when the steering wheel came off in his hands ...











The Baskerville Historic meeting in early November was the usual feast of eye candy and classic action, with everything from F1 cars to pedal cars.

Franklin Trouw and I took my OT 1600 along despite it having started to crunch on the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> change. I figured that as I was doing the Classic Sprints I could double-declutch on that change and as long as I took the same length of time on each change it would make no difference.

If only it had been that simple ...

Another little issue was that I had recently changed the fuel pump switching so that if the engine stopped, so did the fuel pump. This may have been an error.

Practice was fine, and I put in plenty of laps. We had four classic sprints over the weekend, and here's how they went: Qualifying: The only two Fiats in the event collided with each other! We'd been told to hold our lines, and if overtaking, not to 'dive bomb'. As I went through the left-hander of the esses, I saw Pat Reid (Torana) swooping in for a dive-bomb. Knowing Pat as I do, I stayed wide and through he went. I turned in, felt a bang like a vast sledgehammer and the OT jumped about a metre sideways. (Chris Wiggins was right behind Pat, and had tried unsuccessfully to brake.)

Event 1 was fairly unexciting, although I did have trouble with the brakes (which I discovered at 155 km/h at the end of the straight). This we traced to a leaky rear booster, and Alastair Watson volunteered to do a run into town to buy a new booster and various bits and pieces. In the end we blanked off the vacuum pipe to the booster.

Event 2 was OK until I had completed one lap, at which point I had a sudden power loss and pulled into the pits to investigate. We diagnosed a tired Facet fuel pump. No problem – I had a spare, which we fitted.

Event  $3 - 1\frac{1}{2}$  laps this time. Lost power going through the esses and got stuck at the bottom of the hill. Had to be rescued by the recovery vehicle. Back in the pits, I went off on the scrounge to look for a third fuel pump, which I finally managed to borrow from mini driver Jack Perry. (He said its history was an unknown.)

Event 4 we expected to be trouble-free – but again I made only one lap. This time I was ready for it, and pulled off behind the marshals' post at the bottom of the hill so that racing could continue. I knew by then that if I took it easy I wouldn't need a tow at the end of the race. There was enough fuel to cruise along, but not enough for 6000 rpm.

And that was it for us. Disappointing, but it's like that sometimes.



There were two Brabham BT58 F1 cars there, which gathered a crowd every time their Judd V8s were started up, and a couple of F5000 cars — which had the capacity to scare the crowds away!

I've added a montage of pictures I took when I wasn't bent over the car.

Post-script: I suspect, but so far have no proof, that the Peel CP30 fuel cutout I put in may be causing the fuel problem. Three pump failures in a row is nearly too much of a coincidence. And the brand-new Facet pump I bought has just shut down on a test run. So it's either 'the gadget', as I call it, or something sneaky like a flap in a rubber hose. Investigations continue, and as soon as the gearbox mounting is re-welded (it broke), I will start testing.

Pics Philp Blake and Matthew Keating

Thanks to James Kirkland, Franklin Trouw, Dave Anderson, Ian Smith and Alastair Watson.





### 'Hindsight is a wonderful thing' - everyone ever

At the end of November, I was preparing for the final round of the Tasmanian Circuit Racing Championship at Symmons Plains. The car handles well, but it doesn't do straight lines very well. However, a couple of months before, I came across some Autodelta race camshafts from a Sprint used in the onemake Alfasud Trofeo race series. Those cams, I thought, should up the power from a claimed 105hp to 140!

With less than three weeks until the last round of the Tasmanian Circuit Racing Championship, and on a confidence high from my recent success overhauling the suspension before the Baskerville Historics, I decided to bolt the cams on, thinking it would be a simple enough process.

Before I took the stock cams off, Dad warned me to make sure the engine was on TDC, but in the moment, I completely forgot, took the cams off, and then bolted the new cams on. With it all out of time, I was struggling to get it to tighten down. Thinking it was just stuck on the locating pins, I proceeded to torque down the head. There was a sudden

snap sound, and it went on! Again, I thought it was just an issue with the locating pins, and that noise was it locating properly.

Once they were bolted on, I realised my error, whipped the cam off, and tried to put the motor on TDC, but for what ever reason, it was now seized. My heart then sank, as I realised I had broken the engine. I proceeded to remove the whole cylinder head, and to my horror, there was half a valve lying on top of the piston! Not what you want to see at 9pm, but luckily, no piston damage, so it wasn't a serious problem.

The next day, with the cylinder head off the car, I bolted the cams onto the head. This is when things got strange: the cams would not turn over, which made no sense!

After a lot of time troubleshooting, I concluded that Alfasud camshafts are not compatible with Alfa 33 valves. For context, I have a 105hp 33 engine in the car; the heads are a 33-specific part, with a slightly larger intake valve compared the Alfasud valves. Turns out 33 valves are a bit longer than Sud valves, and that the cam was pushing the valves too far out and the valve



spring couldn't compress any further. This then brought up the question: do I have any heads and valves I can use? I didn't have any twin-carb Alfasud heads around, and there is no chance of going back to a single-carb setup, so I experimented with putting Alfasud valves into a 95hp 33 head, and thankfully, those two things go together!

1½ weeks out from the event, I began putting my Frankenstein cylinder head onto the motor,

and it was going well, right up until it came time to put the timing belts on. I had great difficulty getting the passenger side camshaft timed correctly, but it was pretty close, so I thought it was probably fine.

Now, hindsight: It was a day out from the dyno tune, it was late at night, I was tired, really should have cancelled the Dyno and given myself more time.



Later that night, I fired the car up, and it worked! I had set the tappet clearance before starting, but there was a deafening ticking sound. Convinced it was a tappet, I didn't worry. The next morning, I drove the car, and it seemed fine - good amount of power, very noisy, but driving. I then re-did the tappet clearance, and drove out to the dyno in Cambridge. (It drove out there, no problem.) I was feeling quite happy as I dropped the car off to the dyno people, but an hour later, I got a call from the dyno, telling me there is something very wrong with the car. Fair enough, the ticking was very loud, but I've been told race cams make a fair racket, so I didn't know what to think. As I was driving back to Kingston, just after crossing the Tasman Bridge, something seemed to explode in the motor.

I quickly shut it off and rolled a few hundred metres into the Regatta car park. Something in the head had destroyed itself. Fortunately, Mum was in the city, so came to pick me up and take me home. After picking up the car trailer and a friend, we set about rescuing the broken Sud. After getting it home, and borrowing Graham Mitchell and his 4x4 VW to tow the car up our steep, slippery driveway, I set about pulling the car apart. Once it was apart, I discovered my issue - snapped valve (again!). But this time the valve snapped while the motor was running, destroying both a piston and the cylinder head. Diagnosis – valve hitting piston.

### Hindsight: time your engine properly!

Later investigation found that both pistons had valves hitting, which broke the piston rings, but luckily didn't damage the bores! Two replacement pistons (courtesy of Warwick Hughes), initially seized the engine due to some unknown issue with the different conrods but after swapping the replacement pistons onto the old conrods, we had a working bottom end. I borrowed working cylinder heads off dad's Sud, and I was back in action!

# Hindsight: don't do anything major two weeks out from an event!

After using the car to do my shopping a couple of days out from the event, I was happy that the car was in one piece, and set about preparing for the event.

I was feeling very relieved once I got to Symmons. There was only one thing needed to put the engine back to how I had it before all this started, and that was to advance the ignition timing. But after making that change, I began limping around on three cylinders, overheating and showing general signs of an unhappy motor. Thinking it was a

head gasket, I put the car back on the trailer. I was about to head home when fellow competitor and good mate Danny Spain came over, and reckoned we should investigate further before giving up. Turned out to be the right decision: the advanced timing seemed to destroy the spark plugs (which it didn't do on the old heads). A trip to Supercheap Auto for some new plugs and I was back in action!

Hindsight: don't fix what's not broken!

Despite the traumatic lead-up, It all seemed worth it at the end of the weekend, as I came away with 3<sup>rd</sup> place! I was able to keep Darryl's Suzuki at bay, and pulled off a Bradbury as others ahead struck mechanical issues, allowing the Sud to surge up into podium placings! CMI Member Mary White also benifited from the misfortune of others, with 2<sup>nd</sup> for the weekend!



### An extra pic of the Bambino engine





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