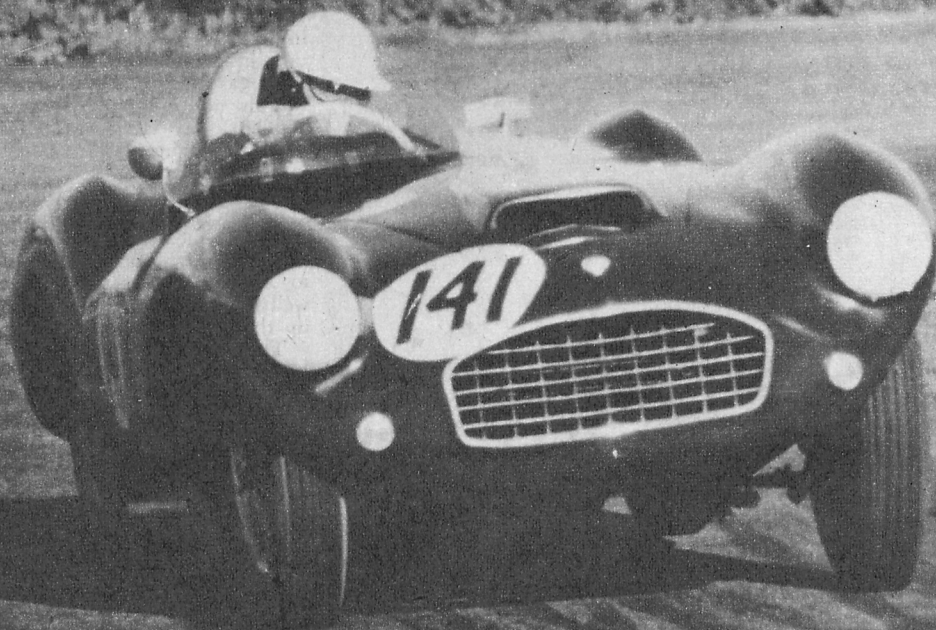


AUSTRALIA'S



FASTEST

SLEEK fibreglass-bodied Dorcas shows its cornering ability at Bathurst; a locked brake beat it that day.

UNBLOWN MG

**Using pump petrol,
Tom Corcoran's
revised Dorcas/MG
has run the fastest
standing quarter
ever recorded here
by an unblown Gee.
Keep your eye on it,
says Steve Simpson**

SPECULATION was rife about the small, trim red car crouching on the starting line.

"It's a Maserati," said one on-looker. "Rats — it's a Buchanan 'Gee,'" said another.

"You blind? Anybody can see it's an Aston Martin," said a third.

Meanwhile, its engine blipping, the small red car sat pat.

Suddenly a flag flashed. There was a scream of power, a flurried scramble as the rear wheels spun, gripped, and gripped again; a brief eee-yooo as Tom Corcoran snicked second gear, and the red car ripped away westward, accelerating wildly down the A.R.D.C. quarter-mile.

Another flag dropped. Times were

noted, electronically-stopped watches were compared—and a low whistle went around. The red car's average speed over the two-way dash—16.25 seconds — was the fastest ever recorded in Australia by an unsuper-charged MG, running on pump petrol.

For, yes—this car IS an MG, an MG TC, in fact, despite its Buchanan fibreglass body, Aston-like front, and its nameplate with the unfamiliar tag, "Dorcas." So we cornered owner Tom Corcoran and asked him frankly what made the thing go. His answer came back in just one word: "Money!"

However, Tom's attitude isn't as millionaire-ish as it seems. We learned, after talking to him for a while, that

he's a sales executive with a Sydney motor company; and, although Tom's a bachelor, he's still in the same income bracket as you or I—so we delved a little deeper, and here's the secret:

You take one stock TC, get lots of weight off it, give it a fibreglass body, two-leading-shoe front brakes and 16in. rear wheels. Then you work the engine over—and there you are!

A Real "Bitza"

The story of Tom's Dorcas really started more than two years ago, when Corcoran bought Barry Taylor's old TC No. 114—a car which had earned a redoubtable reputation around Sydney over years of racing.

Its engine, though carefully prepared, was getting rather frayed around the edges; so Corcoran and his mechanic, Geoff Surtees, pulled the "donk" out and gave the car to Tom's brother. But at home, on the bench, they stripped 114's original engine, bored it out to 1350 c.c., raised the compression to $9\frac{1}{2}$ to 1, ported and carefully polished the head, added a free-flow exhaust system, and generally made it over into something thoroughly worthwhile.

Then they cast around for a car into which they could lower it.

One day a Buchanan-bodied TC came on the market. As Tom Corcoran puts it, "It wasn't much of a car—it was a TC, but that's about all you could say for it." So they discarded its engine, put in the reworked

unit, went over the chassis with a fine-tooth comb, and one day last January Corcoran fronted up with the composite car at Orange.

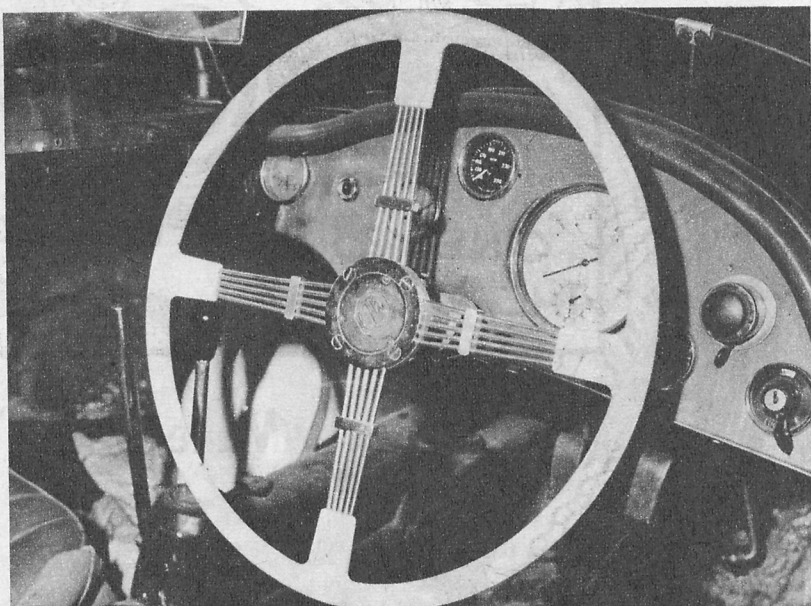
It went well enough. Nothing spectacular, but enough to give Tom a 5th and a 7th in the two sports-car races against all-comers. So he tyred the line at Bathurst shortly afterwards.

Result: the car, which had developed an intermittent miss in the engine, came precisely nowhere over

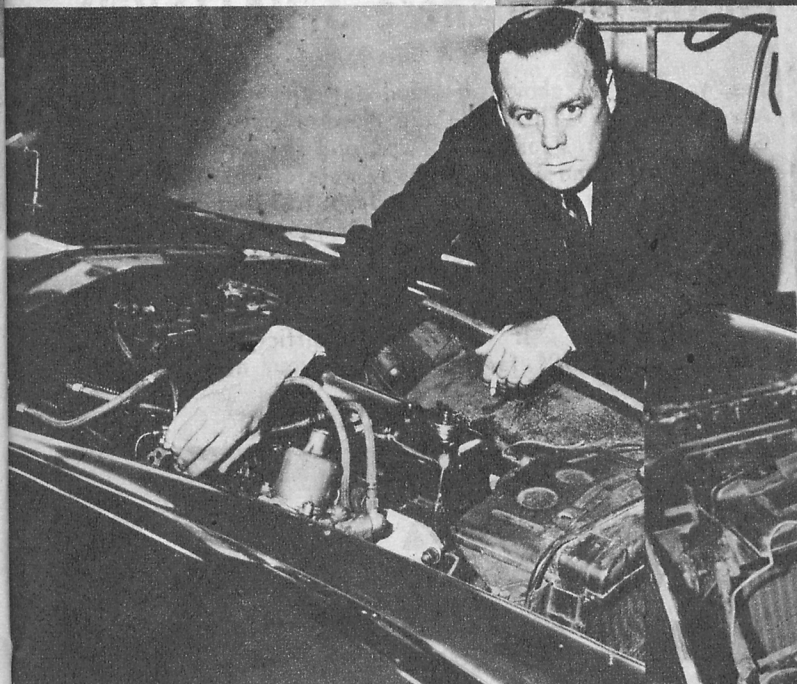
the long haul. Tom decided there and then to stick to hillclimbs and sprint events until he could give the engine a bit more attention.

The red, distinctive-looking sports car—it then had an unusual front grille, contrived rather hurriedly out of one that had belonged to a Ford Prefect—acquitted itself well enough in these events, scoring a third place in a sports-car scratch race at Schofields, third in a sedan and sports-car

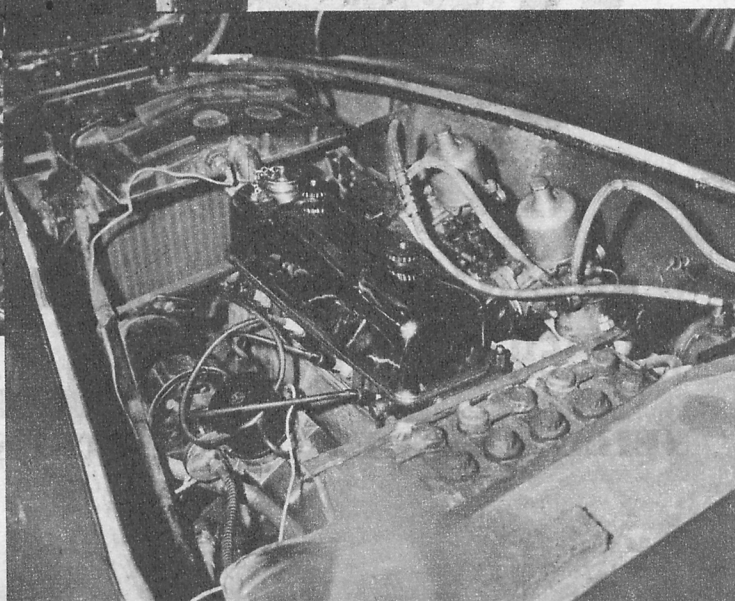
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COCKPIT is plain and businesslike. Cowl over passenger's seat can be removed if required, but Corcoran mostly runs car as a monoposto.



READY for the big test, Tom Corcoran gives engine a last-minute check before leaving for the A.R.D.C. standing quarter-mile trials, where he clocked 16.25 seconds. **RIGHT:** In its latest form, Dorcas' engine boasts EX-type cylinder-head, big twin SU carbies, vertical magneto, and runs on $10\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 compression.



event at the same venue, and a first in an A.S.C.C. A Grade sports-car handicap (under 1500 c.c.). It ran at virtually all the hillclimbs in the State during that season, and regularly achieved either first or second in its class.

It was improving.

Tom ran several times against his old opponent, Leon Thomas, who at that stage was driving an extremely hot 1500 c.c. MG, and on two occasions managed to get within two-fifths of a second of Thomas' time. Obviously, the Dorcas/MG had possibilities. It remained for Corcoran to exploit them to best effect.

The Full Treatment

He began, in one concerted effort, a few weeks before the Bathurst meeting of 1958. Out came the engine, and the boring bar went through it yet again—this time to 1487 c.c. Negotiations with Gordon Stewart (of Stewart MG fame) produced at undisclosed cost a special "EX" cylinder-head, alleged to be identical with that used in record-breaking works cars.

A revised exhaust manifold and tractor system went on, as did a Scintilla magneto and, big, hungry twin SU carbs of 1½ in. diameter.

More attention was given to porting, polishing and aligning, and a full race cam was installed.

At the same time the bodywork's front end was revised, and the new Aston-like front was contrived and blended into the existing cowl. Then it was the brakes' turn; and the original TC front brakes were replaced with a two-leading-shoe set-up from a Morris Major.

More Bad Luck

Again the car was almost ready to race—and at 1 a.m. on the morning of Bathurst's opening day it emerged puffing proudly, if stiffly, through its brand-new compression ratio of 10½ to 1, the highest compression of any MG. Corcoran could possibly use and still comply with A.R.D.C./F.I.A. regulations, which called (in theory, anyway) for pump fuel.

The rejuvenated Dorcas received its running-in on the day of the race; so, perhaps, it wasn't very surprising that after eight laps in the sports-car event those big new Morris brakes suddenly developed a marked disinclination to come off! Corcoran did two more laps, during which he was timed at 108.43 m.p.h. down the straight, and reduced his lap time to

that of Johnny Martin's old MG record; then, suddenly—whoosh!

Tom refers to the next few moments as "embarrassing." It seems that one wheel, unaccustomed to the new brakes, just locked solid; following which the Dorcas performed a number of intriguing antics, Corcoran sawing at the wheel meanwhile, before coming to rest at the trackside, happily undamaged. That meant another all-night session, relining, machining and assembling. But the car was there on the line again the following day, with Tom, rather red-eyed, at its wheel.

The second day also started well. Corcoran got the Dorcas rolling nicely and sat in behind Derek Jolly's new 1500 c.c. Decca II for several laps. But then came more trouble—a plug lead fell off, and once again the Dorcas was out of the race!

However, Corcoran reports that at one stage, while all four cylinders were working, his rev-counter was reading 6700 down the straight—the equivalent of 112-114 m.p.h., allowing for tyre growth and wheelspin! So the meeting wasn't a bad one in terms of knowledge gained, after all.

Since then, Tom has taken a third in his class in the N.S.W. Hillclimb Championship. He's actually a bit sore about that one, claiming that, if the club had stuck to their previous edict about competitors having to use pump petrol, his time of 47.35 sec-

onds would have won him the jug easily. However, it seems that the rules were modified at the last moment, enabling a 13-to-1 and a 14-to-1 car to compete on equal grounds, and thereby shaking the Corcoran equilibrium more than somewhat.

Success at Last

But satisfaction came not long ago with the A.R.D.C.'s N.S.W. Standing Quarter-mile Sprint. As we said in the beginning, Corcoran's time of 16.25 seconds was the best ever recorded in Australia by an unsupervised MG. The 13-to-1 compression MG of Evans trailed him with 16.295, and a brace of MG A's, with Smythe and Lyons driving, turned in 18.9 and 19.8 respectively.

Running again in the racing-car class, but with Brian Muir driving, the Dorcas did 16.307—which shows that there's rather more to this sprint stuff than just owning an accelerative car!

And so our story closes for a while, with the Dorcas (now nearing the top of its form) awaiting with relish the battles of the 1959 season.

Whence came the name Dorcas? Tom says it's the brainchild of Geoff Surtees; is taken from the Greek, means "Lady of Good Works."

And that, as everyone will agree, describes Tom Corcoran's Dorcas/MG admirably. ● ● ●