

MY 1957/58 BUCHANAN SPORTS CAR by Adrian Daniel



The Buchanan was not my first car which was a second hand 1952 10 hp Ford Anglia Tourer which used 1 gallon of oil in a 180 mile trip. I sold the Ford in June 1957. Having always tongued for a sports car which I couldn't then afford I saw these advertisements for the first fibre glass sports car bodies. These bodies were a direct copy of the Aston Martin DB3S of the competition car of Tom Sulman. Following some enquiries, on 2/11/1957 I placed my order direct with N.H.Buchanan Motor Company Pty. Ltd., at 6 Nelson St., Annandale, N.S.W., for a body to suit a 1949/50 Austin A40 sedan, paying a deposit of £25 (\$50) plus £7 ten shillings (\$15) for a pair of softer coil springs for the front suspension. Actually there was a Queensland Agent who was Swift Service Station, 753 Wynnum Rd., Morningside, Brisbane.

On 20 November 1957 I received the following telegram "Body ready awaiting forms advise Swift Service Station". The forms and the balance of payment of two hundred and thirty pounds (\$460) were forwarded on 21 November 1957. The Buchanan Body purchased by me was No.6 and I received it in mid December 1957. Following a suggestion from Buchanan my front spring saddles were forwarded to him for modification.

An article in Modern Motor of May 1957 said "you can convert your M.G. in 28 hours". Using an Austin A 40 takes a little longer so I found. There were many modifications necessary before the car was ready for registration. If today's regulations were in force then there is no way the car could have been registered. Then there were no engineering requirements. The "Buchanan Austin Special" was eventually registered on 15/5/1958 with a Tare weight of 13 cwt. 3 quarters. The weight reduction from the original sedan was 5 cwt. 2 quarters. It was registered without a windscreen or hood, which were ordered by me on 3/7/58 at a price of 100 pounds and 9 pence (\$200.10).

At the time the Buchanan was registered I was working as a junior clerk in the Court House where all registrations of motor vehicles were handled. So, armed with my knowledge of the procedure required and a weigh bridge certificate it was, I thought, duly registered. Then a letter dated 22/5/58 arrived from the Main Roads Department (now Queensland Transport) saying that an Austin A40 weighed 18.5 cwt., therefore I owed another 1 pound 16 shillings (\$3.60) before the certificate of registration would be issued. On 27/5/1958 I replied, pointing out "that this Austin had been fitted with a Buchanan Fibre Glass sports body and the total weight is 13 cwt.3 qrs. as shown on the weighbridge certificate." At that time the formula used to calculate the amount payable for registration was the rated horsepower plus the weight, i.e. 10.6 hp plus 13.5 cwt which equalled 24.1 units which in fact was then taken as 25 units @ 6 shillings (60cents) per unit therefore I still owed 6 shillings (60cents) which I paid.

The Buchanan was painted by a professional painter, a Mr. Doug. Miller then of Salt Water Creek Rd., Maryborough, with some assistance by yours truly in the rubbingback between coats. There was something like 13 coats. The main colour was black with gold (copper) air intake in the bonnet and gold on the hardtop. Between the black and gold on the bonnet was a white line with a narrower red line through the centre of the white. The under section of the front guards which was very open was initially painted gold however this was later painted black. The gold (copper) colour was made personally by Doug Miller and was unique to him. The car was very distinctive.

The upholstery (which also involved a complete new design for the seats) was done by a Mr. Roy Rickards then of Maryborough and later of Hervey Bay. Roy also upholstered, in 2000, a 1937 Dodge 4 door Tourer which I restored from the ground up. It was only last year (2004) that Roy retired at the age of 78.

An advert. in Modern Motor of December 1957 stated inter alia "within the first eight weeks of delivery, Buchanan M.G's gained 11 first places and many major placings. NSW Sprint Championship Buchanan bodied T.D., standing quarter mile 17.07 seconds NEW RECORD under 1500cc sports car class." This appears to have been Nat. Buchanan's own car which was claimed to be the lightest and fastest T.D. then racing.

More than 100 bodies were built and sold by 1958 when the moulds were sold to Jennens & Simmonds of Croydon. N.H.Buchanan Motor Co. was moved to Silverwater Rd., Lidcombe with a new vehicle, the Cobra model which had the mechanicals of the then Standard Ten, thus pre-empting Standard Triumph's Spitfire by several years and the Sprite by a few months.

Some of the modifications necessary for the conversion of the Austin were:

1. The purchase of an MG steering column universal joint, a second Austin steering column as the original column had to be cut and lengthened with the universal joint fitted otherwise the steering wheel would have been at about the top of the windscreen of the Buchanan. As the MG uni. joint was made for a larger diameter column the cut ends of the Austin columns had to be expanded which was done by heating the end and driving a rod up the centre. Once the desired diameter was achieved then with the ends hot the universal was driven onto to ends to cut a matching spline - very scientific.

2. The centre sections of the front suspension saddles were removed followed by the welding of an extension piece into the saddles which lowered the front suspension by allowing the springs to sit lower in the saddles. Once the car was on the road I found that the Austin wishbone shockers were not good enough so a second hand pair of Customline telescopic shocks were bought and fitted externally with the welding done by my apprentice boilermaker friend. These worked very well - again very scientific.

3. The rear suspension - all but 5 leaves were discarded and the spring reset with a 2"(50.8mm) camber and a 2" spacer made and fitted between the springs and axle housing. No modifications were made to the shocks.

4. A completely new re-designed and reshaped radiator was necessary. This was designed and made by a Mr. Kev. Worth who conducted a radiator workshop in Maryborough. This radiator worked well and gave no trouble. Now this bit was scientific.

5. The Austin used was 7 years old and a wreck - it had been rolled, but the chassis was straight. Basically it had to be completely stripped. Initially I had hoped to use the steel floor pan and after cutting it away from the body with a cold chisel (I hadn't learnt to use a welding torch) I found the floor would not work as planned. Back to the drawing board. Also because of the age of the Austin there were lots of repairs to be done - e.g. recondition the complete steering including the box and kingpins; strip Check and repair gearbox and diff. - the planetary gears in the diff. had worn into the casing. Being a teenager short of funds, washers were used as packing or shims behind these gears. All the years I had the Buchanan there was no problem with the diff. other than a broken axle and a broken centre pin in a rear spring.

6. As the driving position in the Buchanan was going to be much further back and lower than the Austin it was necessary to design and make a lower and remote gearshift lever and linkage. The gearbox was a 4 speed floor change with reverse being engaged by lifting the gear lever. Whilst the box was stripped down I filed the top of the reverse selector shaft to allow reverse to be engaged simply by moving the lever sideways. One had to be careful though not to accidentally move the lever too far across while changing gears otherwise there was a terrible noise. The remote gearlever etc. was home made by me, fairly crude, but worked quite well as long as you were careful.

7. The motor appeared to run fairly well, however I decided to remove the head and do a de-coke and valve grind and check for wear. Lucky I did. Even though the inlet and exhaust valves were of different sizes in one cylinder they were reversed, so I don't know how the engine ran so well. I had the head shaved - I don't remember by how much - Austin 7 valve spring were inserted inside the original ones - in effect dual springs. This I believe was a great help to the performance of the Buchanan and never once experience valve bounce.

8. The floor was made from flat steel. The gearbox and tail shaft tunnel had to be stepped and had to accommodate the crude remote gear shift mechanism. It all took time. The floor of the boot was designed different to the one suggested by Buchanan. With my design the fuel tank was lowered and this gave room for the spare tyre and a couple of suit cases. The Buchanan design was more suited for a racing car.

9. All the lights, gauges, windscreen wipers steering wheel and road wheels were taken from the Austin and used. Plus the door locks which were made to operate internally within the doors by a wire therefore there were no external or internal handles.

10. Initially I used the car with the original carby and no air cleaner which was still too high and wouldn't allow the bonnet to close fully. Again due to the lack of finance I couldn't afford S U carbies so therefore I opted for motor bike ones. About this time Amal had just introduced its monoblock carby. Two monoblocks were purchased. My mate the apprentice boilermaker made up the new inlet manifolds which were two

separate brass tubes with a flange at each end - one to bolt the carby to and the other to bolt to the motor. Subsequently I found that a balance tube was necessary between the two inlet tubes. Without expert advice I again called on my apprentice mate and he brazed in between the inlet tubes a slightly smaller than the inlet tubes to act as a balance tube. Again not very scientific, but appeared to work quite well.

As the Amals were cable operated it was necessary to design and make a rocker type fitting above the carbies to operate the cables and then connect to the original steel rods which were activated by the accelerator pedal. This was a fairly crude mechanism but worked. The only problem was (as it was not perfect) that every so often a cable would fray and break. This would become obvious whilst driving as performance would fall off considerably as it would be operating on one carby only. The bonnet could now be fully closed and locked.

11. In July 1958 the windscreen and hardtop were received and after painting in the gold colour by Doug Miller were fitted plus side curtains by Roy Rickards.

I have no idea of how many hours I worked on the car except to say that I worked on it every night and every weekend until it was registered. Actually there were a couple of weekends I didn't. A couple of mates of mine were going to Hervey Bay one Sunday so being a bit fed up I went with them and this was when I met a very attractive and wonderful girl named Joy to whom I have been very happily married for the last 42 years. So after meeting Joy I took off a few more Sundays.

I retained the car until 1964 when our first child arrived necessitating a larger vehicle. I really enjoyed this car and believe its top speed increased to possibly 100 mph (161 kph). If not, it was not far short of that. No doubt the improved performance was as a result of the aerodynamics of the body and the weight reduction of over 5.5 cwt. The body was very tough and must have been well attached to the chassis as both were tested on two occasions - both occasions in the main street of Bundaberg where I was living at the time. One was when a motor bike ran into a door - the only damage was crazed or cracked paint. The fibre glass had flexed in and back out again. The other was when a VW in front changed lanes suddenly and then stopped suddenly immediately in front of me. The left front guard of the Buchanan speared into the right rear guard to the VW immobilising the VW with only a couple of small cracks in the wheel arch of the guard of the Buchanan.

There was one time when I had this "brilliant idea" for better traction by fitting a couple of winter tread tyres to the rear. Didn't that make the back end skittish. Had to shift them to the front. Another time on a trip to the Lowood Motor Racing Circuit outside Brisbane the motor blew up so I had to leave the car at the very small community of Marberg for repairs. No doubt the higher compression and the higher revving caused the standard Austin bearing to eventually fail. On another occasion the only way I could forde a flooded creek was to have 3 guys sit on the boot so the rear end wouldn't float. The Buchanan got through alright however my rear end got very wet as the water was higher than the driver's seat. A spot light was mounted behind the grill. This spot light came from a Rolls Royce of the 30's vintage. The grill was fashioned from expanded metal.

I have a copy of a brochure about the Buchanan which details the various components available and their respective costs. I still have, if not all, most of the correspondence relating to the purchase including letters signed personally by "N.H.Buchanan".

I just remembered an occasion where I was hauled before the local Magistrate, not the Court but the Magistrate personally. The Court House in Maryborough where I was then working was situated beside another government building and for shade I parked the Buchanan between these two buildings. On this particular occasion I forgot Court was still in session on the upper floor when I went for lunch. Without thinking I gave the accelerator pedal a couple of good tickles and the exhaust note must have gone loudly into the Court Room. When I returned from lunch I was told the Magistrate (our Boss) wanted to see me asap. I didn't then realise why, however as soon as I fronted him I found out why, and was given a good talking to. I didn't make that mistake again.

I hope that the members find the above informative because it has brought back a lot of memories both good and otherwise to reflect on the Buchanan.



PRICE LIST

AS AT 1st MARCH, 1958.

Body , complete with mounting brackets bonnet, doors and boot lid hinged and 2 wide locks, bulkhead and battery box.	£287, 16, 0.
ns , full width curved, with mounting pillars, including laminated glass and chrome frame	45, 0, 0.
Hardtop , including rear window (lined) including rear window (unlined)	40, 0, 0. 45, 2, 0.
Wing , upholstered (see note A) each	20, 0, 0.
Wing , less upholstery each	10, 5, 0.
Wing , at adjustable runners each	3, 10, 0.
Wing , six brackets for T. C., Singer, etc. (see note B)	2, 12, 6.
Wing , material and brackets	20, 10, 0.
Wing , (see note C) per pair	17, 9, 0.
Wing , ring lights (see note D) per pair	2, 15, 6.
Wing , ring and stop or flasher lights (see note D) per pair	3, 10, 6.
Wing , per plate light (see note D)	1, 12, 6.
Wing , adaptor units (see note E) per pair	14, 1, 0.
Wing , rt (optional fitting)	8, 3, 0. 6, 10, 6. £30 to £40.
Wing , including new cable	20, 0, 0.
Wing , fly to your chassis including wiring, floorboards, radiator adaptors, chassis brackets, fenders fitted, etc. Car ready to drive but not including painting or upholstery.	100, 0, 0.

THE ABOVE PRICES INCLUDE SALES TAX AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE



lights may also be from old car providing they are Lucas led beam or other similar type.

ring lights, etc. from old car may also be used if suitable.

radiator adaptors are required for most cars except T. F.

NOTES

A Seats from old body may be used in many instances, but fibreglass bucket seats are lighter and more modern.

B Body fits directly to existing mounting brackets on T. C. and T. F. On other cars, chassis brackets are required for mounting and are listed above.



I. BUCHANAN MOTOR CO. PTY. LTD.
 6 Nelson Street, Annandale, N.S.W.

BANE: Swift Service Station, 753 Wynam Road. XL2258

ART: Max Stephens, 108 Sandy Bay Road.

BOURNE: Monaro Motors, 506 Spencer Street. FY3464

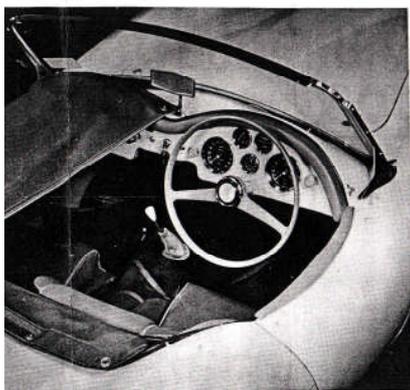
how this body can add £100's to your car



Now you can convert your old-type roadster, or medium-sized saloon into a handsome, aerodynamic sports-car with all the grace and speed of an expensive continental model.

It costs surprisingly little to fit a Buchanan-Fibreglass-Body, and the increase in value of your car is more than your total outlay. The resale value of a Buchanan-bodied car can be hundreds of pounds more than the same model with the original body.

In addition, the lower weight and more efficient aerodynamic shape improve all-round road performance, without any modifications to the engine-turbo



light, rustproof, durable BUCHANAN **FIBRE-GLASS** BODY

A Buchanan Fibreglass Body will improve the performance of any car to which it is fitted:-

- The weight of an M.G. TD is reduced by 4 cwt., and an M.G. Y type saloon loses 6 cwt. The advantages of this great increase in power-to-weight ratio are obvious.
- The efficient, aerodynamic shape of the Buchanan Body makes a big difference to older-type sports cars which normally lose many miles-an-hour top speed from their square, wind-catching front styling.
- You will get improved acceleration, top-speed, hill-climbing, petrol consumption, and road-holding from any car fitted with a Buchanan Body.

Buchanan Bodies are not just semi-completed shells, but are ready to drop straight on to your chassis. You can do your own fitting quickly and easily. Or, if you prefer, Buchanan Motors can carry out the complete fitting to your chassis.

BUCHANAN BODIES WILL FIT THE FOLLOWING CARS:-

MG:- TA, TB, TC, TF, TD and Y type.	SINGER: 9 and 1500	TRIUMPH: TR2 and TR3
AUSTIN:- Hesley, A 40	VAUXHALL:	MORRIS: 12 and some others.
STANDARD: Vanguard	RILEY: 1½ litre.	
HOLDEN: All models (chassis available)	FORD: Anglia and Prefect.	and other medium sized cars.

Lines of the modern sports car are most difficult to achieve in anything but alloy or fibre-glass. Of these, fibre-glass is much more economical and every-day use...

It is easy to repair. Any handyman, with a little patience, can do a perfect bad smash.

It will not rust. Rust condemns more cars to the scrap-heap each year than accidents. With Fibre-glass you need never worry.

It can take hard knocks. Its inherent resilience absorbs bumps, hard enough to damage a metal body, without showing a trace.

It is light. A body of fibre-glass is far lighter than the equivalent steel pipes and much less supporting framework.

It will last for years. No other material can stand the continual stresses of high speed cornering and rough roads so well as Fibre-glass.

It is the ideal material for custom-built car bodies. The body of the luxurious English "Jensen" Sports Saloon is now made entirely of Fibre-glass. The Berkeley Sports is another production car with a Fibre-glass body, as is also the latest "Lotus" saloon.



Buchanan Body fitted to M. G. "Y" type (above) and Holden (below)

