50 years

AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION OF RHODESIA

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FOREWORD

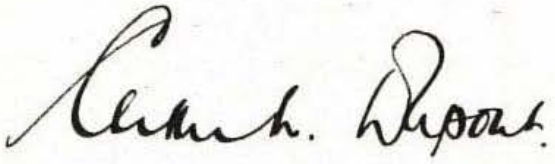
By His Excellency, The President of Rhodesia, The Honourable Clifford Dupont

THE A.A. of Rhodesia, of which I am privileged to be a Patron, is a service organisation dedicated to assist its members and to increase the enjoyment and safety of those who travel the roads of Rhodesia.

This booklet gives a brief history of the A.A. of Rhodesia from its formation in 1923 up to the present time, and provides an insight into some of the problems encountered by motorists in the early days of Rhodesia, long before the building of modern highways that now link the main centres.

No country can develop fully without an efficient road network and the A.A. of Rhodesia can be proud of the part it has played in helping to develop road travel in Rhodesia. As the founder of the Association said 50 years ago: "It was plainly evident that some co-operation of motorists was necessary to provide the funds for the preparation of road maps, description of routes and the erection of sign posts."

I congratulate the Association on 50 years of service to the country and it is my belief that the Association will continue to grow steadily in strength and in its ability to exert its influence in all matters affecting Rhodesian motorists.



President of Rhodesia

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Some members and alternate members of the 1972-73 Council of the Automobile Association of Rhodesia in the board room of Fanum House, Salisbury, March, 1973. From left: A. T. COWPER (alt.), T. H. EUSTACE, J. P. JACOBS, (Chairman), P. H. VALENTINE, MRS. W. J. CHAMPION (President), W. E. ALEXANDER, H. E. B. SMITH, L. E. G. COLEMAN, L. J. HOWE-ELY, K. LOCKE (alt.), MAJ.-GEN. S. GARLAKE, A. L. CALDERWOOD, F. C. MOORE (Deputy General Manager), G. WALMSLEY-MOSS, E. R. PHILPOTT (Accountant), R. BADEN-POWELL, W. C. WEAVER (alt.). Absent members of the Council were Lt. Col. H. B. Everard, P. Hodder, S. B. A. Longhurst, F. J. Wilson.

PRESIDENTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

SIR CRAWFORD DOUGLAS-JONES, C.M.G.	1923
SIR ERNEST MONTAGU	1924/1925
COL. F. JOHNSON, D.S.O.	1926/1930
W. BROWN, O.B.E.	1931/1937
D. HAWKSLEY	1938/1942
W. BROWN, O.B.E.	1943/1946
LT. COL. V. H. BUXTON, O.B.E.	1947/1956
C. W. HOWES	1957
O. B. BENNETT, O.B.E.	1958/1959
DR. C. A. GARFIELD ROOSE	1960
A. V. M. SIR CHARLES MEREDITH, K.B.E., C.B., A.F.C.	1961/1962
H. A. THOM, O.B.E., J.P.	1963
N. R. BERTRAM, C.M.G., M.B.E.	1964/1968
T. H. EUSTACE	1969
LT. COL. H. B. EVERARD, I.C.D., D.S.O., C.St.J., T.D.	1970/1972
MRS. W. J. CHAMPION, M.B.E.	1973

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The first A.A. of Rhodesia car badge, thought to have belonged to the Founder, Sir Crawford Douglas-Jones.

MOTORING PIONEERS

In the beginning ... roads were hard to find

ON the evening of 25 January, 1923 a group of about 30 motoring enthusiasts gathered for an historic meeting in a Salisbury church hall. The Automobile Association in Britain was then in its 18th year and battling with the Government over the recently introduced £1 per horsepower tax on private motor cars and planning the the introduction of the motor-cycle and sidecar road patrols that were to become such a familiar sight on British roads.

In the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, road patrols were unheard of; in fact, roads were almost non-existent and those that did exist were certainly not as sophisticated as those about to be patroled by the A.A. in Britain. It was this fact that had brought together the group of motorists meeting in the Salisbury church hall.

The group was anything but modest in its composition. The chairman was the Resident Commissioner of Southern Rhodesia, Crawford (later Sir Crawford) Douglas-Jones, who was to be elected first president of the Automobile Association of Rhodesia. Many others present were prominent men in the country. Their aims were simple but, so far as motorists of that time were concerned, urgent.

As Douglas-Jones, who was mainly responsible for calling the meeting, later explained: "When the motor car took the place of the Cape cart, wagonette and travelling wagon, Government officials, business and mining men, sportsmen and

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Country's first motor car

THE man credited with importing the first motor car into Rhodesia is Major Charles Duly, founder of the motor company of that name. He imported the car, a 6½ h.p. French "Gladiator" in 1902 and, although his main business in Bulawayo at that time was a cycle agency, the eventual growth of his company was based on the selling and servicing of cars.

The Gladiator was a single-cylinder, chain-driven vehicle with three forward speeds and reverse. It had a top speed of 20 m.p.h. which must have been pretty nippy in those days. An appraisal of this marvel in the Bulawayo Chronicle in November, 1902 had this to say: "The advent of the motor car is an event of great importance to Rhodesia because, if this mode of locomotion proves suitable to the country, it will effect an enormous saving of time, which is money, besides rendering the mining companies independent of muleflesh, at present ruling at the exorbitant price of £60 a head . . ."

Duly's wife, Edith, was the country's first woman driver. At the age of 80 she was still driving and had a "slight mishap" which caused a policeman to ask for her licence. Replied Mrs. Duly: "Don't be silly young man I've never had one." This was technically true because, in the days when she started driving, there were no such things—she simply had her name listed in the local register of motor car drivers.

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others who had to make long journeys about the country were able, mainly during the dry season, to make these journeys by motor car in a few hours or days instead of days and weeks. It was evident that the ancient methods of transport were rapidly being superseded by the modern.

"One of the chief difficulties experienced at that time by drivers of cars was that of keeping to the road they wished to follow. On leaving a town, the track would be distinct and easy to follow; but a few miles out, unless one were familiar with the road, it became difficult to decide which was the correct way—either the well-defined spoor, or the indistinct one often hidden in tall tambookie grass.

"How often did it happen that the motorist arrived at a farm house, mission station, trading store or some small mining camp, only to find that he was many miles out of his way? There was nothing for it but to accept proverbial Rhodesian hospitality and stay the night or retrace his steps. How often, too, did the distinct track lead into some impassable vlei where, without any warning, the car became bogged and impossible to move under its own power? It was plainly evident that some co-operation of motorists was necessary to provide the funds for the preparation of road maps, description of routes and the erection of signposts."

All these things, added to a network of first-class roads, are taken for granted today by Rhodesian motorists, but it is probable that the standard of roads and motoring facilities in the country would have been a good deal less advanced were it not for the formation in 1923 of Rhodesia's first motoring body. Apart from Douglas-Jones, the new body enlisted an impressive array of support. The Administrator of the Colony, Sir Drummond Chaplin was the first Patron, and among the 21 men voted vice-presidents were Sir Charles Coghlan, Sir Clarkson Tredgold, Mr. J. Meikle and Mr. C. M. Fletcher. And, although it was to be some time before the A.A.R. set up offices in all the centres, the Mayors of Bulawayo, Salisbury, Gatooma, Gwelo and Umtali were also invited to become patrons.

At the end of its first year the A.A.R. had a membership of 973, which fell short of the target of 1 000. This total was made up of 16 Life Members, 39 "Lady Associate Members" (a designation later to be dropped), and 918 ordinary members. One of the Association's most active recruiting agents was a Capt. W. T. Breach of Que Que, one of 23 Consuls appointed throughout the Colony, who enrolled 105 members in the Que Que district alone. The first honorary secretary was Mr. B. C. Derry of the accounting firm, Derry Brothers (which, as Derry, Ellman-Brown and Fraser still audits the Association books), and the Association's first "headquarters" was a corner of the firm's Salisbury offices. However, the growth of the organisation was such that Mr. Derry could not cope on a spare-time basis and, during 1923, a Major G. J. Thornton took over and was appointed the Association's first full-time secretary at a salary of £300 a year.

The Association also rented its own office at a rental of £60 a year and the Council authorised the secretary to spend

Members and cars at Zimbabwe, July, 1923.

£25 on second-hand furniture. During 1923 the A.A.R. affiliated with the Royal Automobile Club of London and the R.A.C. South Africa. (Sir Alfred Hennessy, founder and president of the R.A.C. of South Africa, attended the A.A.R.'s first annual general meeting in Salisbury in February, 1924, and congratulated the organisation on being the strongest motoring association in Southern Africa—it then had just over 1 000 members).

Just how much the A.A.R. was concerned with the early development of Rhodesian roads can be gauged from an entry in the Committee minutes of May, 1923, in which it is stated that a member, Mr. N. Shaw, "had interested himself" in getting the Nyabira-Bluff Hill section of the Sinoia road repaired and an appeal was made to members to help pay for the work, the money to be given to the P.W.D. That same year the minutes record that the Salisbury-Shamva road was shortened by 30 miles as a result of the efforts of Shamva members of the Association who had raised money for the work through public subscription.

The first major event after the formation of the A.A.R. was a "run" to Zimbabwe for a meeting there on 11 July, 1923 at which members considered, among other matters, the fixing of the entrance fee; the resignation of Mr. Derry as honorary secretary; and the appointment of his successor. About 100 members and guests attended the meeting and had lunch in the open air near the Ruins. Some braved the chilly July night air and slept under canvas at the camp. At a meeting later that year it was pointed out that a Mr. Tully of Enkeldoorn had incurred certain expense in providing the camp at Zimbabwe, and the Committee voted a donation to him of £2 10s. "as part payment for his trouble".

By the end of 1923, Douglas-Jones had resigned because he was leaving Southern Rhodesia to return to England. At the A.G.M. of February, 1924, Sir Ernest Montagu was elected to replace him. At that same meeting, the emancipation of Rhodesian women—in a motoring sense—was advanced when it was agreed that lady members should be entitled to the same privileges as ordinary members except that they could not vote at meetings. They could, however, become ordinary or life members, with full privileges, by paying the corresponding subscriptions. (At that time, lady members paid an annual subscription of 5s., and ordinary members £1 1s. The entrance fee was 10s 6d and those members who wanted to gain the special insurance rebates negotiated by the Association, paid an extra £1 1s.) Members were also told at that meeting that a Northern Rhodesia branch had recently been formed, and it seemed the A.A.R. could look forward to increasing membership.

From the start, the A.A.R. made its presence felt in motoring affairs. Early in 1924, Mr. Wren, Consul at Bulawayo, told a Committee meeting that the Bulawayo branch had been able to persuade the Town Council to use the revenue from recently-doubled motor car licences for road improvements. The branch had also been successful in getting the Council to maintain the road speed limit within the town at

20 m.p.h. and not adopt a proposal to reduce it to 15 m.p.h.

Although considerable emphasis was placed on a rapid build-up of membership, the A.A.R. was mainly concerned in its early days with the development of roads and the improvement of road conditions. As soon as there was a reasonable amount of money in the kitty, the A.A.R. Council was making plans to produce signposts, and many of them were revenue-earners, carrying advertising for local companies. Despite this sponsorship, the development of this much-needed facility was relatively slow although the A.A.R. was able to persuade the Southern Rhodesia Government to contribute towards the scheme on a pound for pound basis. By the end of 1928 there were 568 "direction signs" and 36 "danger triangles" in Southern Rhodesia and 185 direction signs in Northern Rhodesia. At that time, the Royal East Africa Automobile Association had erected well over 1 400 signs in Kenya. However, for Rhodesian motorists used to starting journeys without being certain where they might end, this must have been welcome progress.

Lack of bridges was no barrier to early Rhodesian motorists. Above—a Mr. Adamson of Ndola crossing a Northern Rhodesian river by cable.

By the end of the third year, 1925, the A.A.R. had a membership of 1 357, of which 126 belonged to the Northern Rhodesia branch. Growth of Northern Rhodesian membership had not been as good as had been hoped, but there was a reason for this. According to the annual report for 1925: "The branch has not progressed as much as we could have wished, largely owing to the fact that Livingstone, the capital, is still entirely cut off from communication by road, not only from Southern Rhodesia, but also from the remainder of Northern Rhodesia, the two settled portions along the railway north-east of Livingstone and around Fort Jameson to the Nyasaland border being, at present, inaccessible to the ordinary motorist." However, it was added, the Northern Rhodesia Government was initiating "an extensive programme" of road-building which, it was hoped, would help develop motoring in the territory.

During 1925, membership of the Bulawayo branch (Bulawayo was then the largest town in the Colony) had risen by 100 to over 250. The Association had that year officially affiliated to the Automobile Association of Britain, the Royal Scottish Automobile Club and the Royal Irish Automobile Club. Further evidence of progress, but members must have been more impressed to learn that the Government of Southern Rhodesia had begun building nine steel and concrete bridges over important rivers throughout the country.

There was a vital need for a bridge across the Limpopo river at Messina which would be important in developing two-way traffic between Central and South Africa. The Southern Rhodesia Government was willing to go ahead with a project, but the Union Government had refused to help bear the cost. Commented the A.A.R.: "This is an unreasonable attitude, and it is difficult to speak of it with restraint . . ." Until the matter was resolved, the S.R. Government

placed a large boat on the river at Main Drift to ferry cars. It was to be another three years before agreement was reached on a joint bridge project and work started on it.

The Southern Rhodesia Government, possibly because of A.A.R. activity, appeared fully aware of the need for as rapid an expansion of the country's roads network as funds would allow. In the report of the Council for 1925, the A.A.R. congratulated the Government on spending £58 000 on roads during the financial year just ended (compared with £46 000 spent by the B.S.A. Company "regime" the previous year—1923-24 was the last year of the B.S.A. Company's government of the Colony) and its plans to spend £129 000 during 1925-26.

Although total membership actually slipped back to 1 091, 1926 was another year of progress for the A.A.R. and motoring in Rhodesia. Three hundred miles of new road was opened up and seven high level and 21 low level bridges built. The Southern Rhodesia and Union governments finally agreed to go ahead with a Limpopo bridge, and the Northern Rhodesia Government was expected to open up "many more miles" of road. The A.A.R. had joined the Federated Automobile Clubs of Southern Africa and had produced its first handbook. Although overall membership was down, Bulawayo branch now had 357 members and

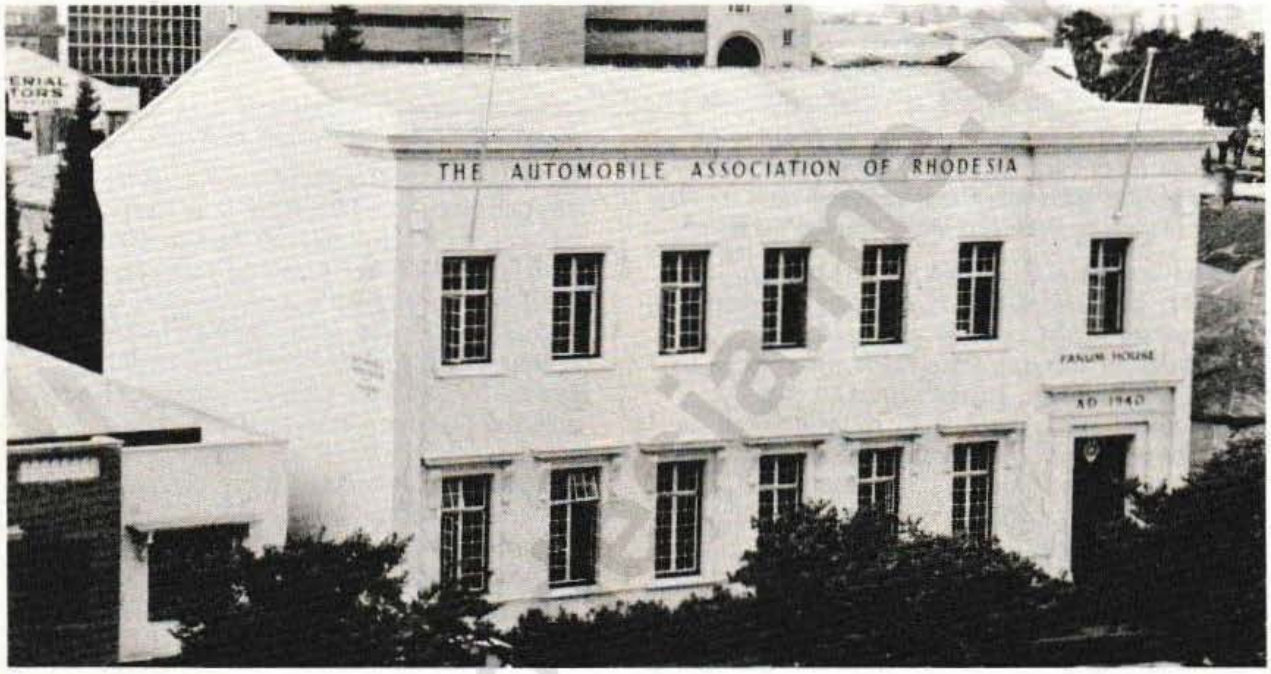
TOP: Crossing the Umniati River in the dry season—by oxen-power.

RIGHT: A group of members at the 1923 Zimbabwe meeting.

a new branch had been started at Fort Jameson. There was a change in the administration, Major Thornton resigning in April, 1926 to become secretary of the Salisbury Club, and being succeeded by another former military man, Lt. Col. A. J. Tomlinson.

By 1928, five years after its formation, the A.A.R. was beginning to see some results from its actions. Apart from actual motoring developments, there was a growing awareness of the needs of motorists and the importance of road communications. The Southern Rhodesia Government was pressing on with road and bridge development and, in addition, the Beit Trustees were spending £12 500 on bridges over the Tokwe, Lundi and Nuanetsi rivers on the Fort Victoria-Messina road. (The Beit Trust played an important role in the early development of the roads system in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia). The Salisbury-Tete road had been completed and the Tete-Blantyre section of the road was opened in May, 1928 as a "dry season" route.

There were still frustrations and setbacks for the A.A.R., but, generally, things were moving. By 1928 the Southern and Northern governments were meeting half the cost of erecting direction signs on roads in the two territories. In Southern Rhodesia, road travel was becoming even more sophisticated with the erection of mileage signs on "finished" roads. These were being put up by the Government and consisted of part-used sleepers with mileage plates fixed to them. By the end of 1928 all the important rivers on the Fort Victoria-Limpopo and Bulawayo-Limpopo roads had been bridged. The long-awaited Limpopo bridge was opened in mid-1929—"the township nearby being named Beitbridge." The opening of the Limpopo bridge was a considerable breakthrough and, with the development of the Salisbury-Sinoia-Kafue-Victoria Falls route, it would soon be possible to make a circular tour of the Rhodesias—at least in the dry season.



Old Fanum House, Jameson Avenue, Salisbury, soon after it was opened in 1940. The present headquarters were built on the same site.

The future shape of Southern African motoring organisations was also becoming clear. The Federated Automobile Clubs of Southern Africa, to which the A.A.R. had affiliated in 1926, had changed its name to the South African Federated Automobile Association and was about to amalgamate with the new Automobile Association of South Africa. The A.A.R. was invited to become a branch of the A.A. of South Africa, but preferred to retain its own identity.

By January, 1931, A.A.R. membership had reached 1 637 and a new Fort Victoria branch had been formed. Although road conditions

were, generally, still primitive by today's standards, the Bulawayo-Beitbridge road was obviously good enough to force the Bulawayo branch of the A.A.R. to protest to the Government about "the danger occasioned to the travelling public by motor record-breaking tests" taking place on that stretch of road. There was, by then, 1 740 miles of gravelled roads in Southern Rhodesia and, after years of pressure from the A.A.R., the Victoria Falls bridge was at last open to motor traffic.

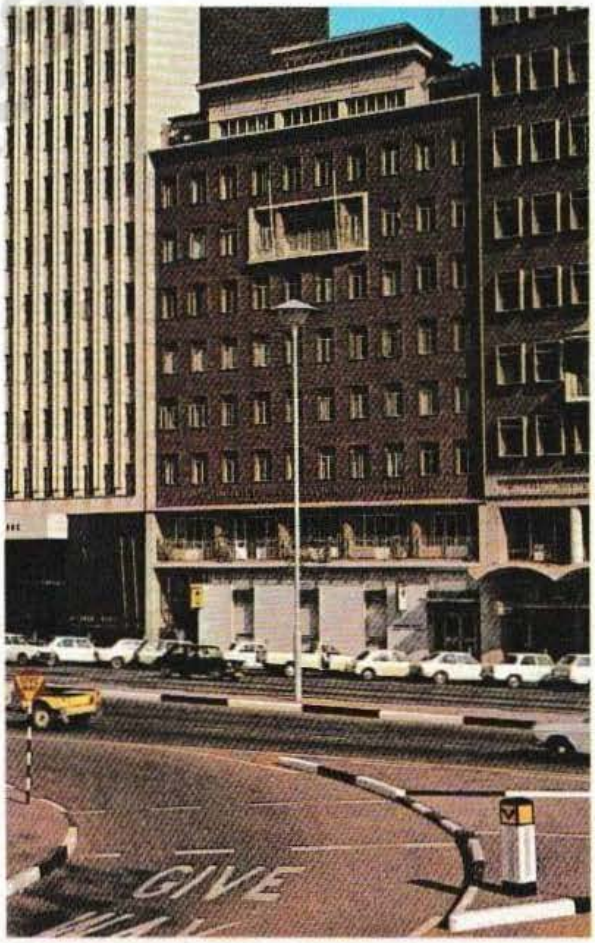
Roads development was gathering considerable momentum. In the A.A.R. Annual Report for 1931 the Government Roads Engineer wrote that every river inside Southern Rhodesia on the Salisbury-Tete route was now bridged and that: "It is now possible to reach Lake Nyasa from Salisbury in 2½ days' fairly comfortable travelling." Not only that— " . . . provided one is well-equipped, it is a fairly simple matter to travel from Cape Town to Nyasaland in practically all weathers." Meanwhile, the A.A.R. was consolidating its position as a national motoring organisation. In January, 1932 Rhodesia was admitted to the International Motor Traffic Convention. This meant, in effect, that A.A.R. members were saved the trouble of going through a series of licensing and registration formalities in many countries, particularly in Continental Europe, through being able to take out International Driving Permits and International Motor Vehicle Certificates in Rhodesia.

The year 1932 was significant for giving birth to an innovation that was to become familiar to Rhodesian motorists for many years to come—tarmac strip roads! Announcing tests with this type of surface in the 1932 A.A.R. report, the Government Roads Engineer said: " Experiments are being carried out in the construction of tar macadam strips and if these are successful, it is anticipated that their use will gradually be extended throughout the country". He added: "Many experiments have been carried out during the year to prevent corrugations on roads, the most successful of which has been the mixing of antheap with gravel. To date, some hundreds of miles have thus been treated and, in most cases, it has been successful; but it is found that each type of gravel requires a different type of antheap suitable for the purpose. The experiments are, however, being continued . . ."

During 1932 it was decided by the A.A.R. Council to divide Southern Rhodesia into districts with the headquarters in Salisbury and district offices at Bulawayo, Gwelo and Umtali. Northern Rhodesia was not then similarly divided. The A.A.R. was also approached by the A.A. in Britain to adopt the triptyque system for cars travelling to other countries. This idea was eventually put into practice in 1935 replacing the deposit system then in force for cars moving between Central and South Africa.

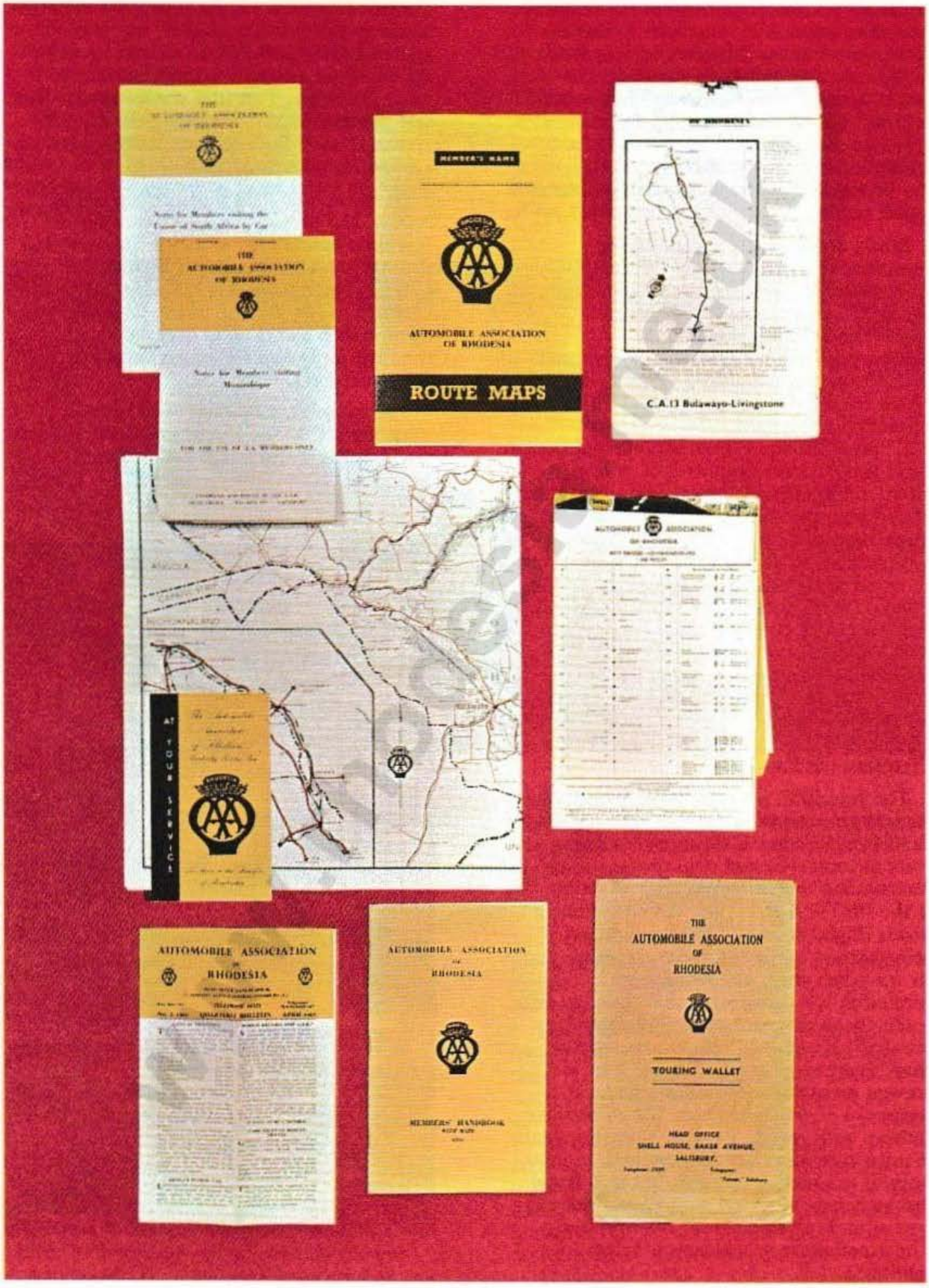
By the end of 1933 membership of the A.A.R. had topped the 2 000 mark for the first time with a total of 2 192. Salisbury led the way with 928 members, Bulawayo had 673, Northern Rhodesia 223, Gwelo 187 and Umtali 114. By the end of the following year membership had risen to over 3 000, with both Salisbury and Bulawayo having over 1 000 members.

The major development of 1934 was the start of work on the Birchenough Bridge over the Sabi River. Although not as strategic



The A.A. of Rhodesia's impressive Salisbury headquarters, officially opened by Lord Malvern in December, 1959.

Old-style A.A. of Rhodesia publications.



Some recent A.A. publications.

as the recent completion of the Limpopo bridge, this was, at the time, considered a very important development. (The bridge was the third largest suspension bridge in the world at that time, designed and built by the same team that built the Sydney Harbour Bridge). On the A.A.R. "domestic" scene, there were two important developments during the year. Probably the most important was the introduction of a legal aid scheme to be used at the discretion of the Council when it was felt desirable to aid a member "in the general motoring interest." The second move was the introduction of a car attendant scheme in Salisbury and Bulawayo. Two attendants were employed to look after vehicles parked in the evenings outside theatres, agricultural shows and similar functions to prevent petty thefts from vehicles. Their brief was to guard all vehicles, not just those of A.A.R. members, and so the A.A.R. could, justifiably, appeal again to the public for more support in view of its work on behalf of all motorists.

Probably the most significant event of 1935 for the A.A.R. was the appointment of Mr. T. W. Seymour-Smith as the first manager of the Association—he had previously been secretary of the Pretoria branch of the A.A. of South Africa. He was to hold his new office—apart from two years during World War Two when he was seconded to the Government as Regional Transport Controller—until February, 1955. For about six months after his departure, his deputy, Mr. R. G. D. Grabham, held the post before retiring for domestic reasons when the present general manager, Mr. J. R. Sorrie, took over.

The highlights of 1936 were the introduction of a breakdown service for members and the opening of new offices at Fort Victoria, Lusaka and Nkana (Kitwe). A "long overdue" Roads and Road Traffic Act was passed by the Southern Rhodesia Parliament, and the opinion of the A.A.R. Council was that, although it might annoy many motorists "accustomed to the somewhat happy-go-lucky legislation of the past" it was a much-needed set of regulations. During the year the Salisbury headquarters moved from Manica Road to Shell House in Baker Avenue, but a move to buy the City Club premises with a view to turning them into new headquarters was defeated. The following year (1937), however, the Association completed a deal that was to prove extremely beneficial in later years—it bought a stand in Jameson Avenue at a cost of £1 300. It is on this stand that the present Salisbury Fanum House now stands, and its current market value is far in excess of anything those members who negotiated the purchase could have dreamed of in 1937. In 1937 also the A.A.R., jointly with the A.A. of South Africa, opened an office at Beitbridge to cater for the increasing motor traffic using the route. The following year with membership now 7 756, the A.A.R. opened area offices at Gatooma and Ndola.

With the opening of the Otto Beit Bridge over the Zambezi at Chirundu in May, 1939, and the completion of a new road from the bridge to Lusaka, motoring in Central Africa was becoming less hazardous and unpredictable. Commenting on these developments in his report for 1939, the chairman of the A.A.R. Council, Mr. D. Hawkesley, said: "Colonel Stephenson, who was here a few days ago, told me that it is now quite easy to travel from Lusaka to Salisbury in 10 hours. This makes Lusaka practically our next-door neighbour." Underlining this progess was the opening of a new area office at Livingstone in September, 1939 (there were 91 members in the area). The year was significant also for the first mention in A.A.R. reports of a hazard common to motorists of today—speed traps! Some members, apparently, complained about unfair treatment but, after investigation, the Association found the system used by the police a fair one.

Not even the outbreak of World War Two halted the progress of the A.A.R. Although it inevitably caused a shrinkage of membership and new enrolments, the Council went ahead with plans to build a new headquarters building on the Jameson Avenue site acquired in 1937. The cost of building was £4 789, and headquarters staff moved into the two-storey building in June, 1941.

By the end of 1945, when life was returning to normal, and war controls were being lifted, membership was down to 5 548. It was agreed to allow ex-servicemen and women to join without paying an entrance fee provided they did so within 12 months of their discharge and many people took advantage of this concession. The basic strength of the organisation was shown in the relatively quick recovery it made from the depressions of the war years. In 1946 the Beitbridge joint office was re-opened, and membership jumped by almost 3 000 to 7 155. By 1947 head office staff totalled 20, compared with only seven employed in 1939, and the Annual Report for that year said it was "evident that further staff will soon be required to meet the expanding activities of the Association." At this time, the question of increasing the annual subscription was raised but, after being discussed by all areas,

it was felt that membership should first be increased. However, despite a rise in membership of almost 3 000, it was decided that extra revenue had to be generated if the Association's progress was not to be stifled and so, on January 1, 1949, subscriptions were increased from one to two guineas—it was to be another 23 years before they were raised again.

One tangible result of the increased income was the introduction of road patrols in 1948. Three motor-cycle side-car combinations, similar to those used by the A.A. in Britain, were imported and patrols put into operation based on Salisbury, Bulawayo and Umtali. Cost of the equipment was £750, with an estimated maintenance cost of £3 000 a year. Sadly, it was a short lived service, for the patrols were withdrawn the following year because "the assistance rendered to members did not justify the expenditure involved." A sub-committee formed to look into the matter felt the money would be better spent on establishing a greater number of area offices with full-time staff.

Following this recommendation, the Que Que and Fort Victoria areas were abolished and a Midlands Area set up with headquarters in Gwelo and a full-time Area secretary. Local representatives were appointed at Que Que and Fort Victoria. In 1949 the Umtali office was upgraded to full-time status with a staff of three, a move "completely justified by results." Despite continual campaigning by the A.A.R. for an end to the petrol rationing, this inhibiting influence on motoring had continued (with the exception of temporary relaxations) after the war years, mainly due to a shortage of railway rolling stock and storage facilities within Southern Rhodesia. But the end finally came in 1952, with rationing being lifted in Southern Rhodesia in April and in Northern Rhodesia in May.

By 1953 a new motoring "facility" had arrived on the scene—the parking meter! The A.A.R. agreed to give qualified support to the installation of parking meters in Salisbury on an experimental basis, but indicated it would not necessarily support their installation elsewhere in what was now the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland until the results of the Salisbury experiment were known. In 1955, traffic control in Salisbury was causing the A.A.R. concern and a deputation met the Minister of Justice to argue the case for a special police traffic force in the city. Although the Minister agreed with the Association that traffic control in Salisbury was "inadequate" he said the Government did not have the money to increase the police force as suggested.

The year 1955 was the Golden Jubilee of the Automobile Association in Britain and the A.A.R. was represented at the Jubilee celebrations by its President, Lt. Col. Buxton, who was then in Britain on holiday. The following year, 1956, was a sad one for the A.A.R. The founder, Sir Crawford Douglas-Jones died in Britain in March and, four months later, Lt. Col. Buxton also died. Buxton had served on the A.A.R. Council

A new car for £235

MOTORING costs in Rhodesia in the 1920's make interesting reading compared with the expense involved in motoring today, although the value of money was then considerably more than it is today.

Taking 1927 as an example there were then established several motor car sales agencies, some of them having started business life as bicycle shops, others as general trade agencies. There was a fairly wide range of American, British and some Continental cars available. You could buy an Austin Seven saloon for £235, or a Trojan "Utility Car" built by Leyland Motors for £210. An Austin Twelve saloon would have cost you £515.

There were no filling stations strung along main routes as we have today. Petrol was available in towns and most villages and could also be bought at country stores. The cost varied according to where you bought it. In most Southern Rhodesian centres it cost about 3s 9d a gallon, but the price went up the more remote the area in which you bought it, and the further you travelled along the supply routes. In Abercorn, Northern Rhodesia, for instance, it cost 7s a gallon in 1927.

There was no general motor law in either Colony, and car and driving licence costs varied according to whichever municipality you lived in. Car licences cost about £4, and driving licences from 5s to 10s. In Southern Rhodesia there was a vehicle tax of £2 a year on cars and 10s on motor cycles for country owners who did not have to pay a municipal licence. If a country car owner regularly drove within a municipality then he had to take out a municipal driving licence—and for some people still motoring this is the only licence they have ever had.

since 1928 and had been president since 1947.

Had the Suez Crisis of 1956 gone differently, the Association might now have been occupying headquarters other than those in Jameson Avenue, Salisbury. It had been agreed in 1955 to build a new headquarters on the site but, with the uncertainty surrounding the Suez affair, added to fears of devaluation, the Council asked the Executive Committee to look for a site outside the city centre for the new headquarters. Fortunately, the Council's fears were ill-founded, and it was later decided to go ahead with plans to build in Jameson Avenue "to take full advantage of the remarkable increase in the market value of the site . . ."

In 1957, the Association introduced a new and generous Assisted Legal Defence Scheme to cover members not only in the Federation but, with certain limits, in South Africa and Britain. That same year the A.A.R. became affiliated to the Union of Commonwealth Associations, making available to members free membership for six months in any one year in 45 motoring bodies throughout the Commonwealth.

New Fanum House in Salisbury was officially opened by Lord Malvern in December, 1959. Among the guests at the opening ceremony were the Governor-Designate of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Humphrey Gibbs and the Prime Minister, Sir Edgar Whitehead. The Association took occupation of the eight-floors building in September, 1959, and it has proved a valuable source of income since. Membership had by now topped the 40 000 mark. With the continuing increase in staff the Association introduced in 1960 a contributory pension fund for staff coupled with a group life assurance scheme.

Dr. C. A. Garfield-Roose. President of the Association and chairman of the Council died in March, 1961, but the year was notable for the re-introduction of road patrols in the form of four, radio-controlled motor units based on Salisbury, Bulawayo, Lusaka and Kitwe. The patrolmen covered 45 000 miles in their first year of operations, assisting over 200 members, bringing in 322 new members, and collecting over 200 overdue subscriptions. The following year, 1962, the Association introduced another new service for members—Emergency Travel Vouchers which were complementary to the Letters of Credit scheme introduced earlier. The vouchers were designed to enable members to meet payments in motoring emergencies within the Federation.

The break-up of the Central African Federation at the end of 1963 created certain problems for motorists with the re-introduction of customs and immigration checks at border posts between the three territories, but did little to check the development of the A.A.R. The technical service was expanding, and the Association now had a chief technical officer, an area technical officer based in Salisbury, and six road patrol/technical officers—three in Southern Rhodesia and three in Northern Rhodesia, soon to become Zambia. (By 1966, the Road Patrol duties formed only a small part of the road patrol technical service. The service was then converted to the technical service without patrol duties). An hotel bookings service was introduced at Salisbury Area Office, and has continued to assist members since. On a sadder note, yet another Association pioneer died. This was Mr. D. Hawkesley, one of the first three Life Members of the Association, and President from 1938-1942.

Two major events, one political, the other motoring, made 1965 a significant year in the history of the A.A.R. Rhodesia's Declaration of Independence created new challenges for the staff of the Association and its members (now totalling almost 50 000), the main challenge being to try and maintain normal motoring conditions while being subjected to strict petrol rationing. Late in the year, Lloyd's of London was forced to stop underwriting A.A.R. insurance policies and the Association staff had to move swiftly to provide satisfactory alternative cover for members. The other significant, but sad, event that year was the close-down of the R.A.C. of South Africa after 64 years of operations. The A.A.R. gladly complied with an R.A.C. request to offer its facilities to paid-up members of the R.A.C. in Central Africa.

UDI and its consequences also hastened the end of a relationship that had lasted 45 years. Since the break-up of the Federation, it had become increasingly difficult for the A.A.R. to maintain operations in Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia), and UDI did little to ease the problems. In November, 1968, the A.A.R. was forced to raise subscriptions in Zambia to £3 10s (those in Rhodesia and Malawi remained pegged at two guineas) because of currency restrictions and the increasing costs of operations there. But the crunch came in 1969 when "after protracted, but fruitless negotiations with the Bank of Zambia, the Bank stopped the movement of essential funds." The Council of the A.A.R. was left with no choice: regretfully, it was decided to end Zambian

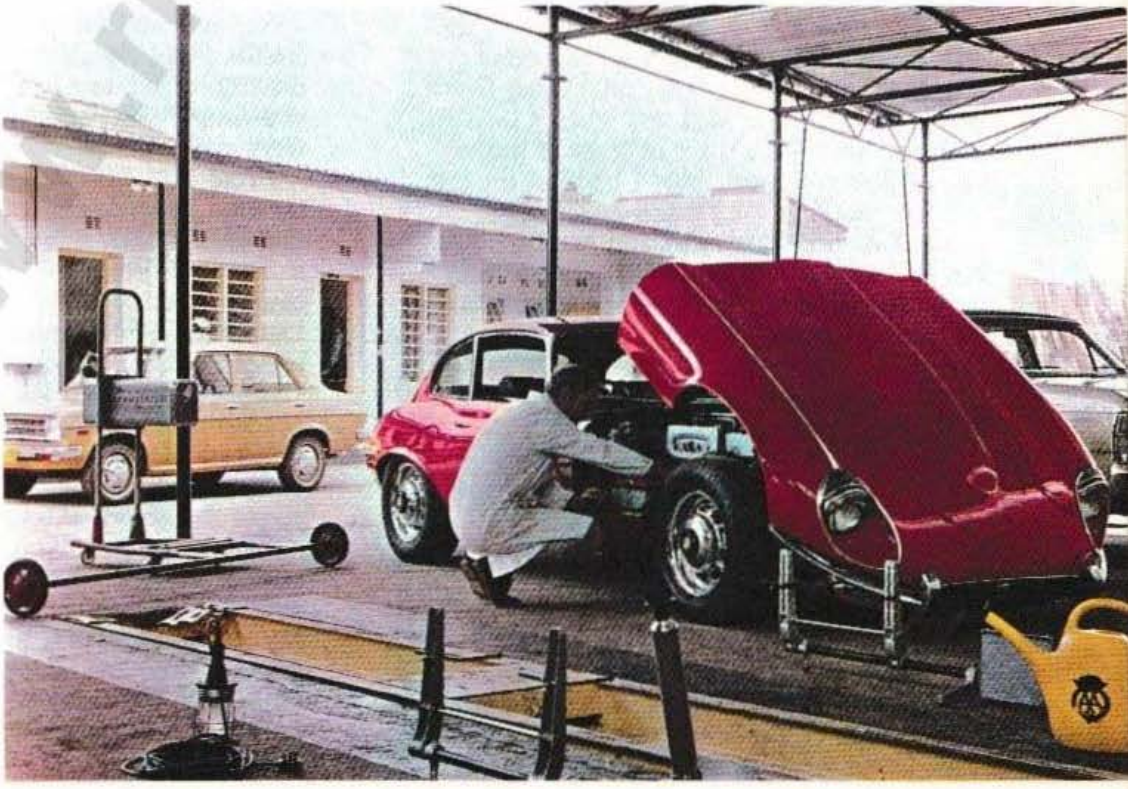
operations. Several Zambian members went ahead with the establishment of an A.A. of Zambia (there were then just over 16 000 Zambian members) and the A.A.R. agreed to donate all its working equipment, including vehicles, office equipment and membership records to the new body. Negotiations were also entered into for the sale to the new body of the A.A.R.'s property in Zambia which included flats and houses.

In 1968 (with the inclusion of the 17 204 Zambian members the A.A.R. then had) membership had topped 60 000. The Association had to promote some vigorous recruiting to try and make up the loss of members in Zambia. By 1970 it was beginning to recover, and membership stood at 45 775 at the end of the year, helped by the enrolment of the 5 000th Gwelo area member.

Came 1971, and another milestone—although a regretful one—in the A.A.R. history. Membership had now climbed to 49 453, but increasing costs were again putting a strain on natural development. Reluctantly the Council agreed, with effect from 1 April, 1972, to raise anunal subscriptions for the first time in 23 years from $4,20 to $6. More encouraging were the enrolment figures for 1971—a record 6 000, with Salisbury recruiting 3 656 and the Midlands 710. But Malawi membership dropped by 598 to 1 827 and the Council was looking hard at the question of carrying on operations there. More progressively, in July, 1971, the Bulawayo Area staff moved into a new Fanum House in the city and the A.A.R. acquired properties in Umtali and Gwelo with the aim of establishing new offices in those centres and providing improved services for members.

Rhodesia "went metric" in 1972, and the A.A.R. was commended by both the Government and the Metrication Council for its help in preparing the motoring public for the changeover by providing members with a series of pamphlets and a bulletin on metric motoring. Fanum House, Umtali—a former hotel—was opened during the year, and the Association re-named its four Area offices. Salisbury became Mashonaland Area, Bulawayo changed to Matabeleland, Gwelo to Midlands/Victoria, and Umtali officially became Manicaland Area, although it had been known as such for some time.

An Umtali motorist became, in 1972, the 50 000th member of the A.A.R., but it was not until January, 1973, that the Association's membership in Rhodesia alone topped the 50 000 mark for the first time—a fitting event to celebrate in the Association's 50th year, and a tribute to the enterprise of the small group of men who started it all with the aim of making it easier for Rhodesian motorists to find their way about the country.



The A.A.'s modern technical depot in Salisbury.

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Beira-Salisbury 1930-style

TO motor 250 miles and actually be only 65 miles from your starting point must be very frustrating: to do it in hot weather, nursing a new car over primitive roads, must be exhausting. This was the experience of a Salisbury member, Mr. R. N. Tomlinson, in October, 1930.

He had collected a new Ford Model A "Sports Roadster" from the docks at Beira and was forced, through circumstances, to attempt to drive from the Mozambique port to Salisbury in one day. He achieved his object, and believes—although he cannot confirm it—that this was the first time it had been done. He left Beira at 3 a.m. and arrived, a very weary young man, in Salisbury at 9 p.m.

Three hours after leaving Beira he encountered a bull elephant, a cow and their calf and had to reverse back down the road in the misty early morning light to get away from the ear-flapping bull and his family. He got out of the car, hoping they would not get curious and examine it, and climbed a mound to keep an eye on them. Eventually they ambled off the road and he continued his journey.

"I was now travelling through much of the area which today forms the Gorongosa National Park and, in the early hours of the day, it was possible to see a great variety of game," he recalled. "My only other brush with a dangerous animal was when a leopard bounded across the track in front of me, so close that I wondered how I had not hit him.

"After leaving the Dondo-Inhaminga route, I turned westwards and had no option but to follow a very indistinct track. I shall never forget having to drive over native lands for some 15 miles—lands which had been ridged for growing crops. It was a matter of going very slowly, from hump to hump, hoping they would not damage the springs."

Mr. Tomlinson reached the Pungwe River and took his car across on the pontoon. "On leaving the Pungwe behind I well remember my relief as I felt I was now heading towards more civilised areas and travelling on defined roads again as opposed to little-used tracks. I must have reached Vila Machado about mid-day and my reaction was to realise that, after about nine hours of travelling, covering roughly 250 miles, I was at a point only about 65 miles from Beira as the line of rail went (and as today's road exists).

"The journey to Umtali took roughly three hours, covering about 110 miles, and in sections the road was very corrugated. But motorists never expected anything else in those days, and accepted them as a matter of course.

"After a short stop at Umtali round about 4 p.m., I was on my last lap to Salisbury. But how different was the road compared with today's modern highway! Many parts of the road were heavy sand, and the firmer sections extremely corrugated. Being pretty tired by nightfall, my senses probably exaggerated the poor state of the surface, but speeding was out of the question. Thus it was, some five hours later, that the lights of Salisbury came into view, which meant I had been on the move from 3 a.m. to 9 p.m. during which time I had covered something over 500 miles."

Trans-continental motoring

A reminder of more leisurely, and certainly less restricted (so far as borders are concerned) days is contained in the A.A.R. Route Book for 1937. The book contains, among its domestic and Southern African route maps, an England to India and Cape Town map, reprinted by courtesy of the A.A. in Britain.

Should you have purchased a new car in England and decided to test it out by driving it back to Southern Rhodesia, then you simply shipped it on the Dover-Calais ferry and you were on your way.

From Calais, the indicated route was through Brussels and Cologne to Vienna and then on through Budapest, Belgrade and Sofia to Istanbul. From the Turkish capital you set course for Aleppo in Syria, then on to Damascus. Should you, in fact, be heading back to colonial service in India, then Damascus was your turn-off point and you headed East via Baghdad and Teheran. However, for Rhodesians, the road south took you through Jerusalem and Cairo and then across the desert to Khartoum.

From Khartoum you drove to Juba in southern Sudan, then striking slightly eastwards to Lira in Uganda and then onto Nairobi. After that it was virtually home ground, the route taking you through Dodoma in Tanganyika, Abercorn and Livingstone to Bulawayo, total distance—9 296 miles.

First female taxi-driver

MANY women can recall the early days of motoring in Rhodesia, but it is doubtful if many can match the experience of Mrs. Winifred Tolbutt. She was almost certainly the first woman to run a taxi service, probably the first woman (if not the first person) to drive a car from Salisbury to Zimbabwe, and most likely the first to drive a car from Bulawayo to Salisbury.

Mrs. Tolbutt, who joined the Automobile Association (to her the A.A. is the A.A. whether you join it in Salisbury or Timbuctoo) 50 years ago in what was then British East Africa, started driving in her teens. She was born in Marylebone, London, and was, for a while, apprenticed to a Court dressmaker. Lucille of Hanover Square. However, she decided she wanted to drive motor cars and, not being the sort of person to pussyfoot around, she went straight to a car manufacturer.

"In a mews called Marylebone Lane, Siddeley Deasy cars (later to become Armstrong Siddeley) had a maintenance workshop for putting final touches to cars coming down from the factory at Coventry," she recalled. "So I trotted into this lot and said, 'Can I become a car driver?' They were a bit taken aback, but very pleased to see me and, after a bit of thinking they said I could help out. I kept pestering the works foreman to let me drive and finally he softened his heart and said he would take me around the inner circle in Regent's Park—he said there was less chance of me doing any damage there. I got on fine because, with cars, you can either drive them or you can't—the mechanics comes later."

Came World War One and Siddeley won the contract to supply ambulances for the Front and so, in 1916, Winifred Goodliffe (as she was then) was driving—seated on a soapbox—the chassis of Siddeley ambulances from the Coventry factory to Kempton Park near London where they were finished off. She became personal driver to Siddeley himself (later Lord Kenilworth) who was given an important Government post.

However, she soon tired of the routine of that job and joined the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps—the F.A.N.Y's as they were called—a body of women who did anything from nursing to driving ambulances. Winifred Goodliffe became an ambulance driver in France.

At the end of the war she was invited to return to Siddeley as a demonstrator at their new Bond Street, London, showroom, but the war had given her a taste for adventure and she instead took up a colleague's invitation to accompany her to Rhodesia—a place she had never heard of. Again, although she had some capital, she did not sit around drinking tea and making small talk. "I decided I would buy a car and make it work for me. I bought a Buick from Faths (then the Buick agents) in Bulawayo. It cost £750, and I put a deposit on it. In those days you could only really drive around for about five months in the year, but I did very well out of it and, at the end of that year (1920), I sold it."

She used to take people all round the country, and on Sundays usually took families to the Matopos for picnics—at £5 a head for a party of four, she was doing rather well, even though petrol was then 7s 6d a gallon. She did good business during Bulawayo Show week and, reckoning that business would be equally good for the Salisbury Show, she set off for what was then Rhodesia's second town. She left Bulawayo early on a Monday morning, stayed overnight at Gwelo, and reached Salisbury late on the Tuesday night. She did, indeed, do good business in Salisbury—including meeting the man who was to become her husband.

Frank Harris, then Minister of Agriculture, and two farmers went with her on the return journey. In those days the Salisbury-Bulawayo road looped through Umvuma and, when Harris suggested they take a look at Zimbabwe, Winifred agreed. "People had gone by ox-wagon and the like before, but I believe we were the first to go there by motor car," she said.

Mrs. Tolbutt with her taxi.

Cape to Odzi in £16 car

CAPE Town to Odzi in two weeks! By today's standards, a very leisurely trip indeed but, in 1927 when Mr. David Lewis of the well-known Rhodesian timber company and his father made the trip, it was something of an epic—and certainly not the sort of thing people did every day.

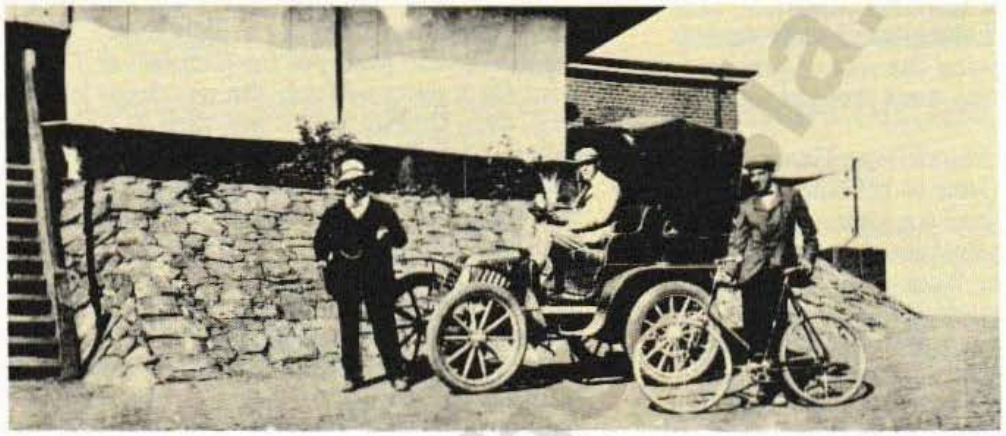
"We bought an Essex for £16—it was second-hand—on the Parade in Cape Town. It took us about two weeks to do the trip." said David Lewis. "There were no roads from the Limpopo to Salisbury; we just went from police station to police station through Nuanetsi. Sometimes we slept at police stations—in those days, people were always inviting you to stay the night—but usually we slept on the road."

The roads from the Cape to the Limpopo were mainly gravel, although Mr. Lewis recalled that the stretch from Bloemfontein to Johannesburg was "red sand, a foot deep. It took us a full day to get from Bloemfontein to Johannesburg; today it takes about two hours or so." Going over one high pass in the Cape they had to stop the car every few yards to cool the boiling radiator with fresh water.

They crossed the Vaal River at Christiana in the Free State by pontoon, and were hauled across the Limpopo by a team of donkeys that did regular service there until the Beitbridge was built two years later. Before crossing the Limpopo, the carburettor had to be covered by a bag, and all inlet and outlet pipes closed off to prevent sand or water getting in.

The Lewises had to call on nature's own "horsepower" again before finally reaching Odzi. Said Mr. Lewis: "That stretch of road between Inyazura and Odzi that goes up and down had vleis in all the dips in those days and we kept getting stuck in the mud. Eventually, we got tired digging ourselves out, and we sent to Odzi for a span of oxen to pull us through."

In those days, filling or service stations were unknown outside the main centres (although many country stores had petrol supplies), and motorists were always careful to carry ample stocks of petrol in the four-gallon tins, packed in boxes of two that were standard equipment. You also had to be able to carry out on-the-spot repairs. On one occasion, when the Lewises had a mine at Wedza, David Lewis and his father were travelling to and from the mine in separate cars when they swept round a bend—and hit each other head on!



George Pauling (left), car and friends at Matopos Hotel, 1903.

"My father's car wasn't badly damaged, but I had hit him in such a way that I had bent my front axle which stuck out in front of the car in those day's," recalled Mr. Lewis. "I slept by the road that night, then made a fire next morning, heated the axle, and hammered it straight with a rock."

Later, the Lewis family moved to Marandellas, today a comfortable 45 minutes drive from Salisbury. In the 1930's, according to David Lewis, "you used to leave Marandellas early in the morning and reckon to get to Salisbury by sundowner time. If you did, you thought you'd had a helluva good trip. The road used to be through Arcturus, and there used to be a chap who kept a span of oxen to pull you across the Melfort River. Otherwise, you carried planks and went across the railway bridge."

Eventually a strip road was put down between Marandellas and Salisbury, and David Lewis recalls his father doing the trip in an hour—"That was a record time in those days."

Major Charles Duly, Mrs. Duly, and daughter Dorothy in the Gladiator, Rhodesia's first motor car.

'Don't forget the whisky'

TODAY'S motorist, setting off on a journey within Rhodesia, needs to be assured of little more than that his vehicle is fit for the journey and he has given himself sufficient time to get to where he is going.

Not so the motorist of the twenties, when motoring in Rhodesia was still a thing of wonder to many people. One of the earliest publications of the Automobile Association of Rhodesia was a handbook, "Motoring in Southern and Northern Rhodesia." Among the many advisory sections was one entitled—"Things wanted on a long motor trip"—and the list is both formidable and amusing to the motorist of today.

Top of the list was—"A friend to take turn about at driving and/or a good strong native for opening gates, repairing punctures, etc." The lengthy list then goes on through such essentials as pennies for gates; eating utensils; washing and shaving kit; rifle and/or shotgun and ammunition; bedding; mosquito net; tarpaulin or tent; and warm coat "for self and native."

An extensive list of equipment and spares to be carried was also recommended ranging from hand axe, spade, chains and rope to a large apron or overalls, with things such as spark plugs, fan belt and insulating tape in between. It was obviously felt that, even after a major repair job, a motoring gentleman and his car should always look at their best because, also included in the list, is a tin of car polish and "cleanser for hands." Perhaps the most essential items of all, coming at the end of a hefty list of recommended food supplies was—"sparklet bulbs, whisky."

The handbook had plenty of practical advice on overcoming or lessening the hardships likely to be endured and problems encountered in those days. On rivers in flood the writer advised—"Never attempt crossing unknown rivers in flood without wading in or otherwise ascertaining depth and strength of current . . . You will get wet doing so, but you will get wet and drowned in addition if you habitually disregard this precaution . . ."

On precautions to be taken when lighting fires in the bush, motorists were told to have green branches "ready-cut beforehand to beat it out as it spreads—you won't have time to cut them if it does!"

Long-distance motoring was, obviously only for the hardy. Should you have to bed down by the roadway at night—"A canvas stretcher bed, in winter is one of the coldest things in the world, unless as many blankets are placed beneath you as on top . . . But the ground, if hard, is the warmest place."

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Bush repairs to a Model T Ford

THE wise motorist carries a few spares with him on lengthy journeys. However, it is unlikely that the modern Rhodesian motorist would have in his toolkit a block and tackle! But that was almost standard equipment for early Rhodesian motorists used to travelling in the bush far from helpful garages.

One man who had to make use of available materials to effect a major repair was Mr. J. M. McCarthy of Sakubva, Umtali, who was employed in the 1920's as a surveyor for the Land Settlement Department.

He had acquired a Model T Ford in 1921 and, in August the following year, he was sent down to Nuanetsi Ranch to do some survey work. Negotiating a bad drift across the Lundi River—"the worst I have ever crossed"—he must have damaged his offside front wheel for, a mile from the river, it collapsed and he found that eight of its wooden spokes were fractured and the wheel badly buckled.

"I turned with great difficulty and wobbled back to the river." he recalls. "There I found a herd boy from whom I bought a riem which I soaked in the river. I cut down a tree, three inches thick, and cut two pieces the same length as the diameter of the wheel. I took off the buckled wheel and placed the two sticks across it on either side of the hub. I then bound the wet riem round and round the sticks and the broken spokes and went to bed. In the morning the wheel was straight. I put it on and drove 50 miles to the Nuanetsi H.Q. The wheel was still tight as a drum.

"In a rubbish heap I found an old Ford wheel with eight sound spokes. I dismantled my wheel and, after a good deal of fitting, replaced the broken spokes with the sound ones. That wheel was on the car when it was sold two years later! On that particular trip to Nuanetsi, which lasted four months, I broke my drive shaft pinion, back axle (twice), and drive shaft, all of which I had to repair myself."

Four-speed gears a luxury

CHOOSING a new car these days comes down, more or less, to availability, cost and colour. In earlier days of Rhodesian motoring, with a far wider range than is now available, you had to concern yourself with finer details to find the right car for you.

Although today's country dweller tends to go for the larger cars or station wagons because of their ability to last in rugged conditions or their greater space for carrying supplies, such was not the case in the early days.

In fact, a 1927 handbook of the Automobile Association of Rhodesia emphasised that high clearance and light weight were the two most important factors when choosing a car. Said the handbook: "Heavy cars are at a disadvantage when sand, mud, rocks or steep drifts are encountered, as they cannot be pushed out, as a light car may, with the help of a few willing natives."

Four-speed gears were considered an unecessary luxury as "it is very seldom that a speed of 35 or 40 m.p.h. can be indulged in, and that only for short stretches . . ." Shock absorbers or "snubbers" were also recommended, although, apparently, few motorists at that time used them.

Another important factor was the type of wheels on the car. Warned the handbook: "With the extreme dryness of the winter and humidity of the four or five summer months, wood wheels are apt to dry out and crack, and require re-tightening, while disc wheels oppose rather a large surface to the current when crossing rivers."

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