

## **BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group**

### **ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEWEE :** Alan Kemp

**TAPE NUMBERS :**

**INTERVIEWER :** Deborah Stomps

**BMCLA DS 1 and DS 2**

**INTERVIEW DATE :** 20 November 2002

**NUMBER OF TAPES :** 2

**RESTRICTION ON USE :** (as stated in Release Form)

### **INTERVIEW TAPE LOG**

This interview took place at: Alan Kemp's home at Baulkham Hills, NSW

on 20 November, 2002

This log was prepared by Reg Fulford using a Yamaha KX - W202 recorder

This interview is part of the Oral History Project of the BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group.

**Tape:**

<b>Tape: BMCLA: DS01 Tape 1 Side A</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0	Born Punchbowl 1928. Started BMC 9 Dec 1957. First role, Instructor Apprentice Training School. Previous job was training, then Foreman at Commonwealth Aircraft Corp.	Beginnings Commonwealth Aircraft Corp. Apprentice Training
30	Tom Jessop, Apprentice Training Sup. at CAC had moved to BMC. Offered Alan job at BMC as his Asst. Signed up by Ron Hill of Personnel Dept.	Tom Jessop Ron Hill Joining BMC
72	Had no previous teaching experience, but had been through Tom Jessop's school at CAC. BMC school had about 60 Apprentices. Nature of training. Types of trades	Previous experience Trades
92	Part time University students also went through trade training system. Apprentices and trainees moved through various departments. All aspired to spend time in Styling and Experimental departments.	Training system
150	Description of Experimental laboratories. Types of testing. Example of wheel testing	Experimental laboratories
160	Trainees nearly all Australian with usual nicknames eg Fitter & Turner apprentice named Turner was called "Fit"	Apprentices mostly Australian
180	Apprentice school made display items for Advertising - cutaway engines, models etc. Model of Rotodip	Advertising display models Rotodip
205	Anecdote relating to mishap with Morris 1100 being setup in all-white photographic studio for advertising photos.	Photo studio - advertising
228	Anecdote relating to advertising stunt at Windsor Speedway involving an exploding shed that went wrong.	Advertising stunt Windsor Speedway
256	These activities led to more Advertising work including preparation of Rally Cars in Apprentice School. Finally had to choose between School and Advertising. Chose Advertising	Rally Cars Move to Advertising Dept.
270	Ian Milbank brilliant Advertising Manager. Spectacular advertising promotions. Anecdote re car release at Trocadero involving Bondi Lifesavers towing a surfboat up George St. and elephants - difficulty of getting elephants into Trocadero.	Ian Milbank Austin Freeway Bondi Lifesavers Elephants Trocadero
298	Mid 60's moved to Advertising - worked under Ted Holmes, Milbank offsider, preparing Rally Cars & Road Test Cars for Journalists. Description of Press Release activities.	Ted Holmes Rally Cars Press road tests
334	Anecdote re Mini newspaper ad depicting Arthur Calwell in parliament with a balloon from his mouth proclaiming benefits of the Mini. Considered contempt of Parliament and Milbank had to appear before the bar of the House to apologize. Very embarrassing but good publicity.	Milbank advertisement Arthur Calwell Contempt of Parliament Apology to House
356	Public Relations took over Press releases and Alan took over dealer releases - description. Dealers mostly older experienced gentlemen eg Eric Lane of Vaughan and Lane	Dealers Dealer Releases Eric Lane Vaughan & Lane
378	Demonstration stunts for Advertising. Austin 1800 Sydney to Perth and return in under 5 days with Tom Floyd (editor Wheels magazine) and Bob Holden (Rally Driver)	Sydney - Perth drive stunt Tom Floyd Bob Holden Wheels Magazine
394	Crossroads Alice stunt. Evan Green (then journalist) approached by Castrol to test oil Australian desert in summer. Evan organized BMC to support an east-west crossing with Mini and Austin 1800. Crew were Jack Murray (description), Evan, Alan (technical support) and Scotty Polkinghorne (photographer). Evan wrote a book about it called Journeys with Gelnite Jack.	Crossroads Alice Jack Murray Evan Green Scotty Polkinghorne <i>Journeys with Gelnite Jack</i> (book)
427	End of Tape 1 Side A - continued on side B	

<b>Tape: BMCLA: DS01 Tape 1 Side B</b>		
430	Crossroads Alice continued. Description of the documentary film	<i>Crossroads Alice</i> - film
462	Documentary film " <i>The Long Road</i> ". 15000 Km in 10 days. Morris 1500 driving back and forth Alice Springs to Darwin. Team listed.	<i>The Long Road</i> - film Alice to Darwin - drive stunt
550	Beatles Australian Tour. Milbank contracted to provide transport. Anecdote re damage to the truck to be used to greet the Beatles at the airport. Truck decked out with BMC signage, but accidentally driven under too low bridge on the way to the airport.	Beatles tour Accident on way to Airport
613	Further Beatles anecdotes. Alan stayed with Beatles at their hotel and acted as chauffeur - both Sydney and other capital cities. Went tenpin bowling late at night with Paul McCartney. Other anecdotes include high speed drive with police escort to avoid press in Brisbane	Beatles tour Beatles Chauffeur Paul McCartney
712	Other activities with Advertising Dept. Ran Competition department. Ran 9 cars at Bathurst in 1966. Also ran Rally cars	Competition Dept. Bathurst 1966
734	P76 introduction - dealer release in Singapore. Milbank gone. Change in "higher ups". Alan not involved but thought management there to do England's bidding. He referred to Team coming from England and going through place with an axe. He did not know when.	P76 release Impressions of management
745	Moved to Marketing. Competition Dept outsourced. Had been problems with Morris Car Club providing free help and BMC mechanics working a lot of overtime	Competition Dept
765	Company had many changes of owner. Alan not affected. Anecdote re Peter North and David Abells	Management changes Peter North David Abells
788	Camaraderie in the company - good place to work - incentives to employees	Employee incentives
813	Introduction of P76 - reactions in the marketplace. Reasons for non acceptance - introduction at wrong time - big car at time of fuel crisis.	P76 - market reactions
832	Peter North came in and brought in new crew - John Kaye from Fiat, Max Hamilton from Avis, and John Pola from Travelodge. John Pola said to be highest paid Public Relations exec. In Australia.	Peter North John Kaye Max Hamilton John Pola
	End of side B Continued on DS02 (tape 2) Side A	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS02 Tape 2 , Side A</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0	Appointed Marketing Services Manager - description of job and responsibilities. Involvement with Motor Shows and farmer field days. Had taken over some years earlier from Ted Holmes when he left.	Marketing Services Motor Shows Field days Ted Holmes

72	Reverts to role in release of P76. P76 Dealer Release - preview release in Singapore Description of Singapore arrangements	P76 release Singapore
110	General dealer release in Canberra. Very large operation. Around 300 dealers. Car received very well by dealers.	P76 Dealer release Canberra
130	Alan considered P76 a brilliant car. Criticisms came later - mainly regarding build problems, panel fits etc. Build quality improved when plant closure was anticipated.	P76 assessment Build problems
165	Questions re schism between middle and lower management - Alan did not experience this.	
187	Peter North brought in people to help, including John Conomos (now head of Toyota Aust.) and Bob Johnstone as Truck Sales Mgr. Alan was to go in London to Mexico Rally with Andre Welinski in Austin 1800, but Bob Johnstone said no - there was too much going on.	John Conomos Bob Johnstone Andre Welinski London Mexico Rally
200	In response to questions about management retrenchments, said that he did not understand reasons - some managers went, some were retained	Management Retrenchments
240	Good place to work up till say 1976. Not much socializing between people on production line - language difficulties. Social clubs.	Socializing Social Clubs
253	Company looking after workers. Example - company Sister (Sister Madden) visits him in hospital on occasion when he was sick	Sister Madden
266	Hospitality bus at car races bought by Alan. Some ways social mixing and some ways not Apprentices annual cricket matches and prize-givings	Social events Apprentice prize-givings
295	Limited staff social mixing after work - 2 pubs fairly regularly visited by some. On production line, language barriers prevented much socialising.	Social mixing
320	Many foreman level staff had been brought from England at the beginning. Not seen as anything unusual.	Staff from England
332	Many apprentices were sons of employees who had come from England. It was very common for employees to want their sons to join the apprenticeship scheme	Apprentices
345	Female employees. He had only one female apprentice in training school. Did not complete training. Left because she was pregnant.	Female apprentice
380	Re camaraderie and socializing with other employees - no experience of that. His only socializing was possibly dinner with an interstate dealer when setting up Motor Show	socializing
392	In response to further questions about mass redundancies in 1976 following introduction of P76, Alan said he had not been aware of impending trouble. He thought that the reason for the redundancies was that the company was losing too much money	Mass redundancies
400	Force 7 - flash version of P76. 20 built - 12 crushed. Alan arranged auction for surviving 8. Sold as display items not to be registered. Now most are surviving and registered - some current owners	Force 7
425	End of Side A Tape 2. Continued on SideB	

<b>Tape : BMCLA :DS02 Tape 2 , Side B</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	
442	Example of company personnel attitudes. Details of experience of training an Aboriginal apprentice. Government scheme. Lengthy description and anecdotes.	Personnel Aboriginal apprentice Government schemes
592	More questions about mass redundancies in 1976 - Alan's experience of mass redundancies. He was on the list to go but was retained by his boss Max Hamilton (Sales Mgr.) for model release activities - brochures, Motor Shows. No farewell parties - people just drifted off.	Redundancies Max Hamilton
656	Plant closure - waste of machinery - everything auctioned off very cheaply - examples	Plant closure Auctions
675	Stayed on another 10 years until 1986. Last years not much different for Alan as still doing same sort of work - Motor Shows still had to go on.	After plant closure Last 10 years - advertising
690	Putting on Motor Show displays. Later subcontracted	Motor shows
713	Visit to Birmingham Motor Show - much more extravagant than Australia. Exhibits offered to Australia but transport costs prohibitive.	Birmingham Motor Show
728	Closing comments. BMC good place to work. Had worked his way into a variety of jobs.	Feelings on BMC
744	Anecdote on Public Relations stunt at finish of MGB production with John Pola. Temporarily made P.R. Manager, but preferred advertising. Best thing - freedom to do what he wanted. Worst thing - closing of Waterloo.	Best and worst memories MGB - last production John Pola
773	Retrenchments - difficulty of retrenched people to get a job - some ex apprentices now had good jobs - waste of people - some older people never worked again. No shame - just accepted. No sabotage at plant closure	Retrenchment effects
813	Didn't know a lot of things and didn't worry about a lot of things. Fond memories. After 14 years, still dreams about the job - especially making show deadlines.	Looking back Memories
826	Retirement. Hiring boats at Berowra.	Retirement
836	End of DS02 (Tape 2) Side B End of Interview	