

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

### **ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEWEE :** Christopher Rogers

**TAPE NUMBERS :**

**INTERVIEWER :** Jennifer Cornwall

**BMCLA JC 2**  
**BMCLA JC 3**

**INTERVIEW DATE :** 9 May 2001

**NUMBER OF TAPES :** 2

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

#### **INTERVIEW TAPE LOG**

This interview took place at: Christopher Roger's home at Enfield

on 9 May 2001.

This log was prepared using a Philips AS 340 recorder by Kim Wilcox.

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

## Tape Log

Tape : 1 BMCLA : JC 2, Side A		
TIME	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0m-0sec	Chris Roger's personal history prior to joining Nuffield Aust. b.1931 lived at Ashfield. School Trinity Grammar from 1940 to Leaving Certificate. First job Paton Electrical for 12 mths. Second in 1950 Dunlop Rubber. Married 1955	
3m-10s	Joined Nuffield Aust (later BMC) June 1956. First as D'man Planning Dept under John Evans. Then to assist lone Product Engineer Jim Bigelow. Factory operation then only CKD (Completely Knocked Down) assembly of Morris Oxfords and Morris Minors. Main task processing information for assembly operations. Helped set up Goods Inwards procedures with Col Coleman. No local design or modifications at this stage. Although in same office, Austin Motor Co. people looked after building of Engines and Nuffield people looked after assembly of cars.	John Evans, Jim Bigelow. Morris Oxfords Morris Minors. Col Coleman
10m-10s	Merging of Nuffield and Austin as BMC (British Motor Corporation). Building of new Press Shop and new Car Assembly Building (CAB2). Receipt and incorporation of new Engineering Standards from BMC (UK). Austin cars (models A30 and A50) were previously built at Ruskin Body Works Dudley St. Melbourne. First Austin built in Sydney was the A55.	Austin A30, A50 and A55.
13m-10s	Setting up of Product Design Engineering under Bill Abbott from GMH. Build up of Engineering staff from GMH Vic. and Chrysler SA.. Only ever salary bonus in 1956 to all staff of one weeks salary during visit by Lord Nuffield. New plant very automated with Rotodip and Paint Shop and Assembly lines. Transfer Machines in Unit Plant (Engine plant).	Bill Abbott Product Design Engineering Lord Nuffield
17m-20s	Outside suppliers. Requirement for high Aust local content to avoid Tariffs. Commonisation and standardisation of new models Austin Lancer, Morris Major and Wolseley, virtually the same except for radiator grilles.	Austin Lancer Morris Major Wolseley 1500
21m-35s	First design modifications required reinforcement of bump stop area because of service problems. Bill Abbott set up Experimental Department to investigate these service problems, resulting in many more strengthening mods.	Experimental Engineering
23m-55s	Introduction of durability testing by Product Engineering to get accelerated daily mileage on test vehicles and pick up early mechanical failures. Testing also included bad dirt roads in outback at Lake Cargelligo and Charleville.	Durability Testing
27m-00s	Local Morris Major Elite introduced local rear end cosmetic changes to match styling of Holden cars. Press Tooling for this all made in UK.	Morris Major Elite
29m-15s	First attempt at local cosmetic design of vehicle by local stylist Bill Moody. Based on Austin A95 with all local modifications and marketed as the Morris Marshal. (continues on Tape JC 2, Side B.)	Bill Moody Austin A95 Morris Marshal

<b>Tape : BMCLA : JC 2, Side B</b>		
<b>TIME</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0m-0sec	Continuation from Tape JC 2, Side A	
1m-10s	Market perception. Japanese competition early 1960's. BMC initially had around 60%, Holden around 40%. BMC not holding market share with 4 cylinder cars, hence 6 cylinder Austin Freeway. Austin A95 and A105 didn't sell well because of price, although well built. Holden got lion's share of market.	Austin Freeway Austin A95 and A105
4m-25s	BMC Aust. persisted with British designed cars because no other options, no money, insufficient resources to design new car which persisted right up to Marina in the 70's. Morris Major Elite was only model UK designed peculiar to Aust. BMC only plant building complete car on one site. Holden built engines and cars on different sites.	
7m-00s.	Little reaction in UK to falling Aust sales figures as total volume was only small percentage of total BMC volume. Frustrating that UK body design less than robust needing mods to fix. The Wolseley 24/80 with timber fascia was out of market price range.	Wolseley 24/80
10m-30s	Austin A55 at unveiling, considered out of date. Holden and Ford perceived more Americanised and better worth. Morris Minor produced comeback with bigger engine and big sales push, increasing market position to 2 <sup>nd</sup> place in 1961.	Austin A55. Morris Minor 1000
13m-35s	Front wheel drive cars Morris 850, 1100 and Austin 1800 sold well. They were British designed, more compact cars, with good handling. The Morris Cooper S version won Bathurst in 1966. Mainly CKD assembly at start with some local content.	Morris 850, 1100. Austin 1800
17m-10s	Effect on morale of 1966 market share slump to 13%. Always a perception that BMC Aust was selling the wrong cars for Aust conditions. Nomad with overhead cam E series engine had a hatchback design of body as a result of pressure on UK by Bill Serjeantson and Graham Hardy. Only about 7000 sold, but UK worked up in their market with a hatchback version of the 1800.	Nomad Bill Serjeantson. Graham Hardy
21m-5s	In 1970 Tasman and Kimberley with crossways 6 cylinder OHC engine introduced. Otherwise same as 1800 predecessors.	Tasman & Kimberley
22m-45s	Leyland takeover in early 70's had little effect on day to day operations in Aust. Mainly just changes to logos.	
24m-20s	Leyland trucks were not made. Existing BMC trucks were made at Pressed Metal at Enfield. Les Carey was Truck Engineer.	Trucks Les Carey
25m-50s	Generally a happy workplace, particularly Engineering. Experienced engineers came from GMH and Chrysler.	
28m-25s	Marina was designed in UK for fleet use. Initially very poor durability in Aust. Although claimed not to be problems in UK, the tests at MIRA (UK Proving Ground) did reveal the problems encountered in Aust. Available in 4 and 6 cylinder versions, though 6 cylinder versions were not badged as such. (continues on Tape JC 3, Side A)	Marina

## Tape Log

Tape : BMCLA : JC 3, Side A		
TIME	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0m-0sec	Continuation from Tape JC 2, Side B	
0m-30s	Aust. was about to release the car as Cavalier but Lord Stokes over-ruled and name went back to Marina. Needed big local mods to strengthen the back end. Suffered from bad engine resonance. Aust made a local radiator grille. Car didn't sell well.	Cavalier
4m-00s	1971, Leyland announced development of P76. This followed magnum opus produced by Bill Serjeantson in 1968 to get permission to build a car right for Aust. Barry Anderson with small group did mechanical design. Kell Ericson did an engine, which was a rebirth of the Rover V8 and also a six cylinder in-line engine. Body design done by Michelotti in Italy. Drawing office split into two, one doing P76, the second doing all other models.	Leyland P76
7m-55s	P76 body consisted of larger but less panels and made use of adhesives rather than welding in some areas. Windscreen was glued in rather than set in rubber. Bigger panels were rather flat and tended to dent easily. Styling was not very attractive. Car had water leak problems. Lot of teething problems. Panel fits were poor. Company was running short of cash and interest rates were high. Cars needed lot of rework before suitable for selling. Problems were mainly in execution of build rather than design.	
12m-00s	P76 released in 1973. Disappointing release. Pedr Davis in his book "Wheels Across Australia" described it as a desperate gamble. It had been an attempt to match the type of car being built by the competitors. P76 and a two-door version 47 and the Marina were last cars to be built by Leyland Aust. Boot of P76 was designed to carry a 44 gallon drum, but resulted in rather unattractive appearance. New design for P76 was already under way.	
17m-20s	When closing down of Leyland announced, small force of engineers asked to stay on at Milperra, to handle Jaguars and Rovers coming in which had to be modified to meet local safety requirements. Later also built specialty trucks for Aust. Military. Big party in canteen that night.	
21m-35s	General comments on design of BMC cars, impact of BMC on local technology, mixed nationalities at BMC and in particular in Engineering. Press Shop started originally as UK's Fisher and Ludlow.	Fisher and Ludlow
27m-20s	Effect of local design rules in late 60's on body shape, door locks, hinges, seatbelt anchorages, knobs on fascia, sun visors and mirrors. Designing body for impact test. (continues on Tape JC 3, Side B.)	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : JC 3, Side B</b>		
<b>TIME</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0m-0sec	Continuation from Tape JC 3, Side A.	
0m-55s	General impact was with car on a trolley at 30 mph into 200 ton concrete block. MIRA used remote control of car instead of trolley. In Aust, used facilities at Ford proving ground in the You Yangs in Victoria.	
3m-15s	BMC as a company to work for: Staff well paid, sick leave very liberal, overseas travel with stopovers allowed. Generally honest to work for, very little animosity throughout. No bonus schemes.	
5m-40s	Social side: Bowlers club, playing with other nearby firms, BMC Car Club, Engineering Wine Bottlers Club.	
7m-0s	Best vehicles from BMC: Morris Minor 1000 and Morris Major Elite.	
8m-10s	Opportunities to rise through ranks: Many young engineers did improve their positions. Good apprentice training school. Union problems: Not in Engineering. Female employees: In Engineering there were tracers and secretaries. Personal Highlights: Seeing the first car of each new model go into production in assembly line conditions, stint in England working on Nomad for 5 months.	
16m-30s	Worst parts of working at BMC: The paperwork, introduction of Engineering Change Requests to get changes approved. Large paperwork system under Rex Scanlon and Peter Davis. Each car had about 10,000 components and about 3,000 to 4,000 drawings.	Rex Scanlon Peter Davis
20m-0s	After BMC: Went to work for Nielson, Engineering consultants for 10 years then started own consultancy.	
21m-30s	End of Tape JC 3, Side B / End of Interview	