

Edward Newbigin : 1850 – 1934

Extracts from interview with Edward James Dudley Newbigin

Knowledge Bank – Hawkes Bay Digital Archives

10th September 2014

Edward Newbigin, was born in 1850 at Ryton in Northumberland, UK. Edward, along with his father John, brothers William, Andrew and sisters, Elizabeth and Clara set sail on the ship 'Ardberg', 1864 from London to Auckland. The trip took 120 days arriving in Auckland 16th December 1864. William was granted 140 acres by the Government before he left England. He did not come out as an immigrant but paid the passage money of all his family and was entitled to this grant of land. He sold it for 3/6d an acre but never saw it.

Unfortunately in 1865 a typhoid fever epidemic came about and William, Elizabeth and Andrew all died in July 1865. They were buried in the Grafton cemetery in Auckland. Edward moved around the Auckland area for some months, eventually moving to Napier as he wanted to be a sheep farmer. On arrival he rolled up his blankets and walked some 40 miles inland to the Taihape area where he worked and on the property of T H Lowry.

After 8 weeks experiencing shepherding he decided to return to Auckland, but while staying in a hotel in Napier waiting for a steamer, Mr Swan who was the mayor of Napier at the time, heard him conversing with another person and asked him if he came from the north of England. He replied "Yes". Mr Swan then said "If you go to the brewery I will give you a job".

At the Napier brewery he rose from bottle washer to brewer and he stayed for 20 years. The brewery had a big fire in 1869 and was very badly damaged, and the shareholders sold their shares to Mr Swan. On rebuild it was called Swan Brewery and then changed again to White Swan Brewery. By this time Edward was the manager.

During this time he built a house and brought his sister Clara to Napier and they lived together until she married Mr Frederick George Smith, a successful business man in Napier.

In 1882 at the Presbyterian Manse in Napier, Edward married Margaret Willis aged 17 in the presence of F G and Clara Smith. Margaret was born in Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. Margaret's parents' names were Henry Willis, Miner of South Shields in England, born 26th March 1855, and Mary, of Blythe, Northumberland, England.

In December 1892 shortly after returning to Napier from a visit to England with his wife and first child, Edward Newbigin purchased the St Aubyn Brewery at Hastings from George Ellis who was the Mayor of Hastings. On January 31st 1893 he took possession of the brewery. In February 1893 Edward was overheard to say in St Aubyn Street, Hastings :-

"Well, my man, I bought the brewery. Yes, it is a "Newbeginning for Hastings".

The Hastings brewery known as Burton Brewery, was later changed to Leopard Brewery. Edward took his wife and child to England again in 1912 -13. Edward suffered considerable loss during the 1931 Napier earthquake and during the depression he offered land in Market Street for a 'good cheer depot' the site of where a building of his was demolished during the earthquake. A report states the meals were plentiful, nourishing and piping hot. Boiling hot vegetable broth with more or less unlimited bread was followed by a great plate full of Irish stew with carrots and turnips added to the stew. The hours were 12-2 and 3.30-5. School children before the adults.

Edward and Margaret lived in "Bendower" a fine two storeyed house in Hastings on the corner of Hastings Street and St Aubyn Street, the brewery being their neighbours. They had three children - Elsie 1885 -1961, then came Doreen quite a few years later, 1900 - 1981, and Dudley 1902 - 1964. All were schooled at Woodford House in Havelock North, Dudley later at Croydon in Wellington and Christ's College in Christchurch.



"Bendower", the home of Edward and Margaret Newbigin, on the corner St. Aubyn Street and Hastings Street North, Hastings, situated next door to Hastings Brewery.

Edward Newbigin made several trips to England with his wife and family. Not all of these trips are recorded in UK incoming passenger lists, although the departures are recorded. However there is sufficient information to establish that the Newbigin family – Edward, Margaret, and daughter Elsie – were in England in 1912-13.

The Newbigin family visited the NZ High Commission at 13 Victoria St., London on the 7/10/1912 where they signed the visitors book. They also attended a reception for the new Governor General of NZ – the Earl and Countess of Liverpool - at the Westminster Palace Hotel on the 18/12/1912 “*where Mrs Newbigin wore primrose brocade with black ninon, and Miss Elsie Newbigin sapphire blue with a wide band of silver leading.*”
(source - *Papers Past - Hawkes Bay Newspaper*)

Edward's trips to England tended to be lengthy - 6 months or more. While it is not known when the family arrived in England on the 1912-13 trip, they left England on the 1st March 1913 on the “California” to New York, then on the “Zealandia” from Vancouver arriving in Auckland on the 8th April 1913.

The purpose of this research into the travels of the Newbigin family is to check details of the 1913 Austin 20 hp which Edward owned and used around Hastings until about 1940. Touring with this Austin in England before bringing it back to NZ in 1913 was not really possible as the family had left England before the chassis was advertised. The chassis for this new Austin 20 hp car had been shown at the Paris Motor Show in December 1912, but was not advertised in England until March 1913. The car was shown at the Olympia Motor Show in England in November 1913 with several body styles. Where and when Edward Newbigin brought this Austin is not known. Did he order the car before he left England?

Gilbert Llyod of Hastings knew of the Austin both as car and truck and could remember the car being driven around Hastings with Mrs Newbigin and children in the back before 1920. He understood that the family had been to England and had perhaps toured in the car before bringing it back to New Zealand. He said that Edward Newbigin's son, Dudley, on finishing school in 1921 returned home and spurned the use of the old Austin.

The Austin was then replaced by a new 1921 two door close coupled black and gold Cadillac which Gilbert said was quite the smartest car in town. The Austin was stored in nearby Apsey, White & Co's fruit packhouse. Gilbert worked for Apsey, White & Co during the school holidays in 1923 where he and a friend ate their lunch in the old Austin, one in the front, one “lolling around” in the back using the chauffeurs speaking tube. He thought the Austin was a “Whitehall Limousine” as it had a closed rear compartment and roof rack, but without a folding hood. Gilbert said that the vehicle was stored until 1940 when it was converted into a truck for the brewery.

There is a question over Gilbert's memory and date here. A photograph of the brewery published in the Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune in 1984 at the time of the Hastings Centenary shows the Austin in truck form outside the brewery with the caption giving the date as 1921. This is not correct either, as the Austin was in storage at that time. A study of other photographs of the brewery indicates that this photograph was taken not long after the 1931 Napier earthquake damage at the brewery had been repaired. It would appear that the Austin was converted into a truck about the time of the earthquake. It was used by the brewery for local deliveries up until 1940 when it was sold to the Sorenson family of Mangatahi for use as a farm truck. When the tyres wore out the Austin was used as a stationary hay elevator before being left derelict on the farm.

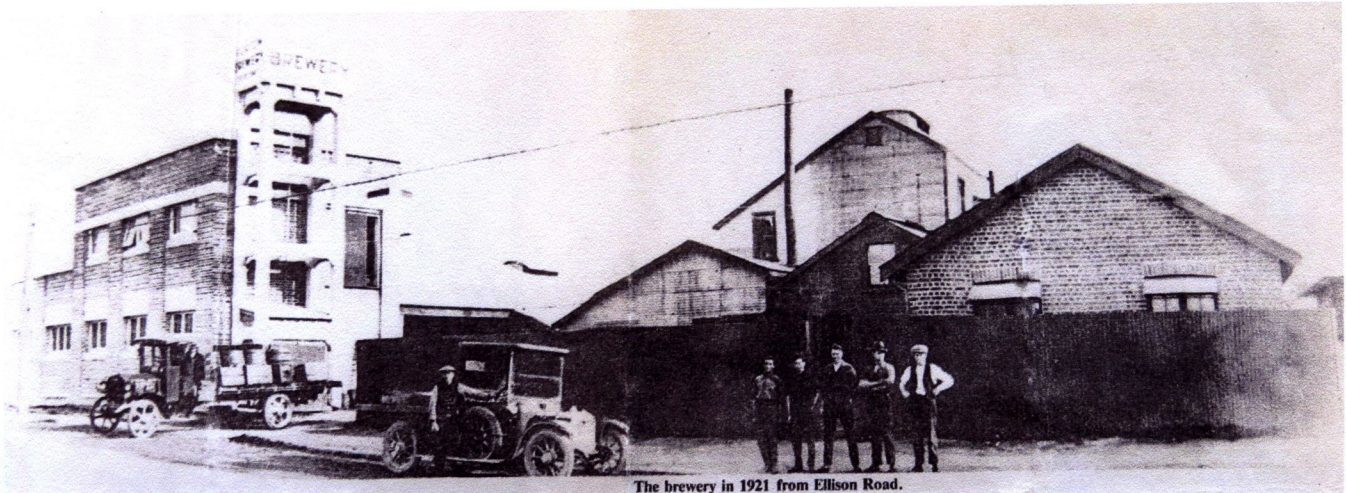
Owners of the Austin :-

Edward Newbigin of Hastings	:- 1913 – 1940	used by his Brewery for local deliveries to about 1952
Sorenson Family of Mangatahi	:- 1940 - 1960's	farm truck, stationary hay elevator, then left derelict.
Charlie Black of Napier	:- 1960's	remains acquired and stored
Charlie Edwards of Auckland	:- 1970's	remains acquired and stored
Ross Haynes of Christchurch	:- - 1984?	remains acquired some research done
Ross Vesey of Christchurch	:- 1984 - 2016	remains acquired considerable work & research done
Dennis Milne of Manawatu	:- 2016	semi restored chassis and parts acquired

Burton Brewery – Hastings and the Newbiggin 1913 Austin 20 hp.

The photograph below of Burton Brewery was printed in the Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune for the 1984 Hastings Centenary. The date shown for this photograph is 1921, however it is more likely that the photograph was taken after 1931. Burton Brewery was owned by Edward Newbiggin.

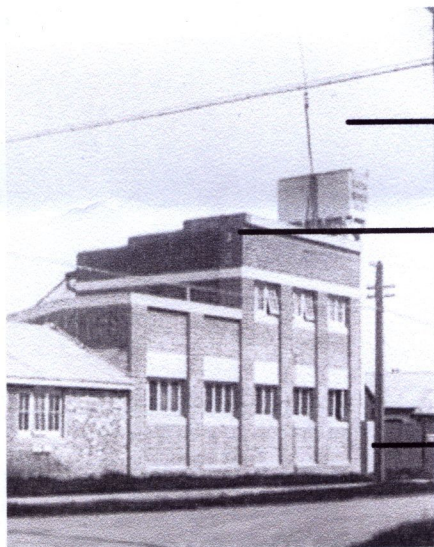
The purpose of examining the Burton Brewery buildings is to try and establish when the 1913 Austin 20 hp owned by Mr Newbiggin from new, and shown in the middle of photograph 1, was converted into a truck for his brewery. There are two other photographs of the brewery which show some changes in detail of the building and this allows the photographs to be sequenced correctly.



*1. Leopard Brewery – photo in Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune
Hastings Centennial 1984*



*2. Burtons Brewery – Ellison Rd. Hastings
Photograph :- National Library of New Zealand ca 1920's - 1930's*



Copy of part of photograph 2

- a No "Leopard Brand" sign.
- b Stepped brickwork with no overhanging cap as in front.
- c Concrete pillar for fence.

Photograph 2 would appear to pre-date photograph 3 which was taken just after the 1931 Napier earthquake. In photograph 3 there is now a "Leopard Brand" sign (a) on top of the water tank, and the brick work above the roof line (b) has fallen off the top of the wall. The concrete pillar for the fence (c) lies broken across the footpath, and a brewery truck is being used to clean up earthquake damage.



- a Leopard Brand sign.
- b Stepped wall broken off above roof.
- c Broken fence pillar lies across footpath.

3. Burton Brewery 1931 – after the earthquake

Photograph :- National Library of New Zealand – by James Henry Daroux



4. Burton Brewery – after the earthquake
Postcard from Hawkes Bay Brewery

Photograph 4 shows the brewery without the “Leopard Brand” sign. The brick work of the damaged wall has been replaced without the step down, and has been capped to match the front of the building. There also appears to be an addition on the roof behind the tank. The fence pillar has been replaced, and is now a darker colour like the fence and gate.

From this photographic sequence it would appear that the photograph 4 was taken after the damage of the 1931 earthquake had been repaired, not in 1921 as depicted in the newspaper and postcard. It would appear that the Austin 20 hp had been converted into a truck earlier than 1940 as Gilbert Lloyd had remembered.

Gilbert was a school boy in 1923, and could remember the Austin being driven around Hastings with Mrs Newbigin and her two daughters in the back before 1920. He worked for Apsey, White & Co (Produce Merchants) during his summer holidays in 1923 where the Austin had been in storage in the packhouse basement since 1921. Gilbert and a friend used to eat their lunch in the car – one in the front, and one in the back – using the chauffeurs speaker tube to communicate. Gilbert thought that the Austin was converted into a truck from a “Whitehall” limousine about the beginning of WW2, but the Sorenson family of Mangatahi told that they bought the Austin truck in 1940 and used it through the war and up until about 1950. The Austin was most likely converted to a truck around the time of the 1931 Napier earthquake.

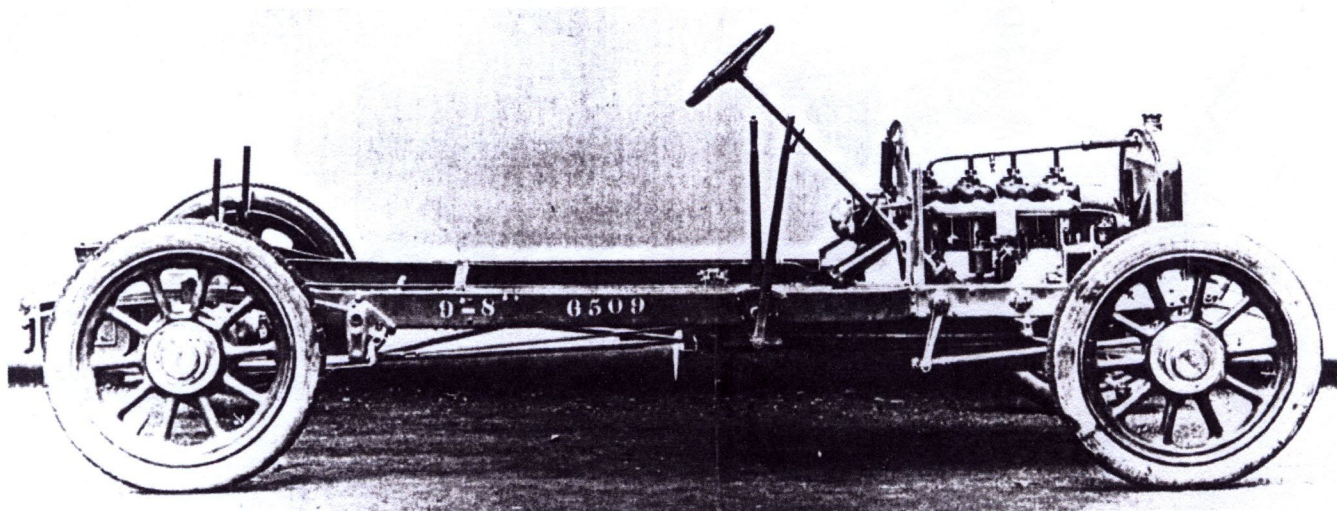
I bought this 1913 Austin 20 hp car from Ross Vesey in November 2016 after viewing it in Christchurch. The car is now in my workshop near Palmerston North where I have everything laid out so that I can understand it, before I carry on the really excellent research and work that Ross had done. The car came in two trailer loads – one 5 days before the big earthquake in Kaikoura, and the second three weeks after the earthquake, but by a much longer route.

Gilbert Lloyd and Charlie Black of Hastings had provided some written details of the vehicle as they remembered, but reading these showed some discrepancies, and details have been checked from other sources where possible. This research was necessary to help establish the authenticity of the vehicle.

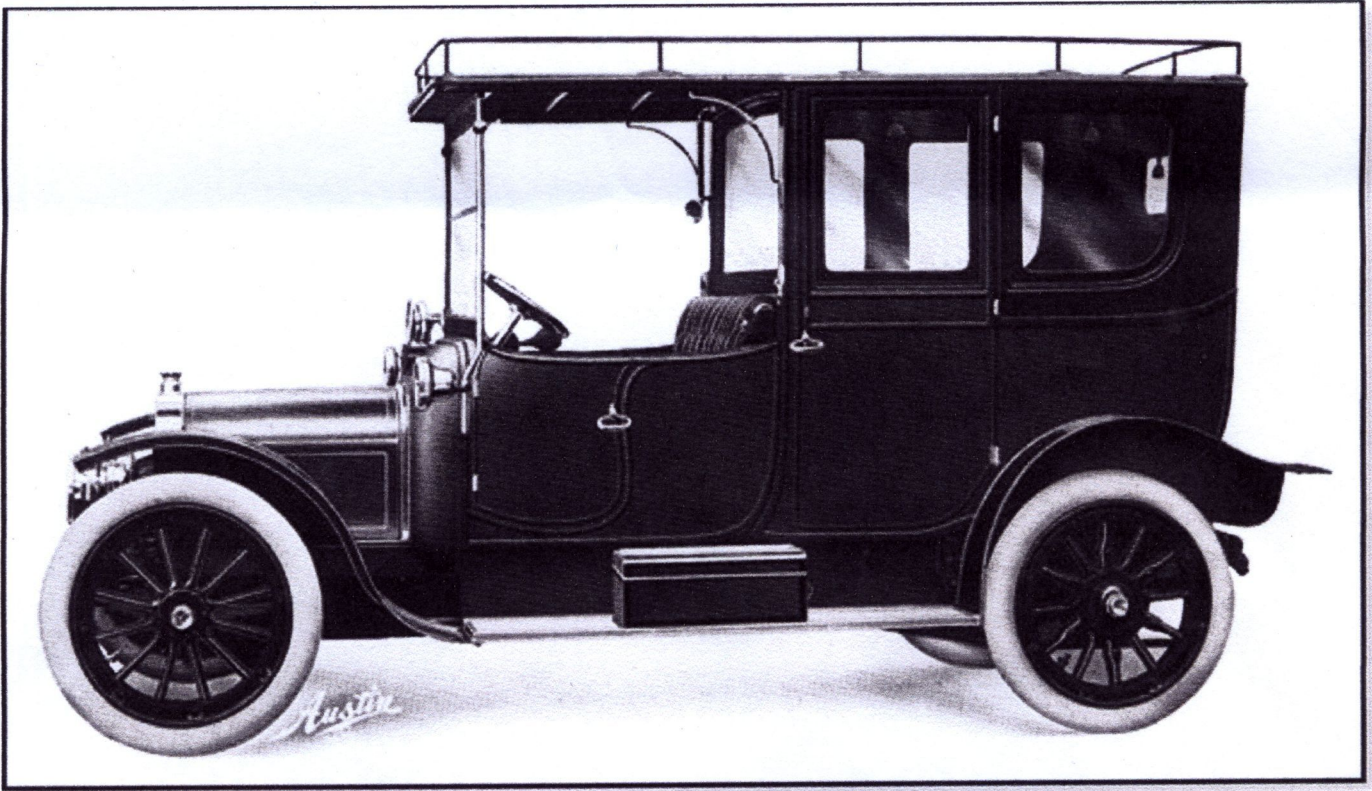
Gilbert Lloyd thought that the Newbigin family from Hastings bought the car in England and toured in it before shipping it back to New Zealand in 1913. Research shows that the Newbigin family had been in England from at least October 1912 and had left England on the First of March 1913 - before the new Austin 20 chassis had been advertised. Did they order the car before they left England ?

The Austin 20 was first shown as a bare chassis at the Paris Salon de l'Auto in December 1912, and this was reported in both "The Motor" on the 3rd December 1912, and "The Autocar" on the 21st December 1912. The chassis was first advertised in March 1913, and in November was shown as a complete vehicle at the Olympia Motor Show.

This Austin had been owned by the Newbigin family from new, was used until 1921 and then stored. It was converted into a truck for their brewery by about 1931, and used for local deliveries until 1940. The Austin was then sold to the Sorenson family of Mangatahi and used it as a farm truck until the tyres wore out. It was then used as a stationary hay elevator before being left derelict on the farm. The original bonnet and scuttle were still in place, and part of one front guard was still there when the car was found and recovered by Vintage Car Club of New Zealand member Charlie Black in the 1960's.



1912/13 Austin 20 chassis – showing painted number



1912 Austin 20 hp "Whitehall Limousine"

There seems little doubt that the Newbigin Austin was a "Whitehall Limousine" shown above or a similar body style. Gilbert Lloyd remembered Mrs Newbigin and daughters in the back of the car being driven around Hastings before 1921. Gilbert also remembered playing with the speaker tube when the car was in storage. Both Gilbert Lloyd and Charlie Black said that the Austin in truck form was a often seen about town with local deliveries from the brewery around Hastings and Havelock North.

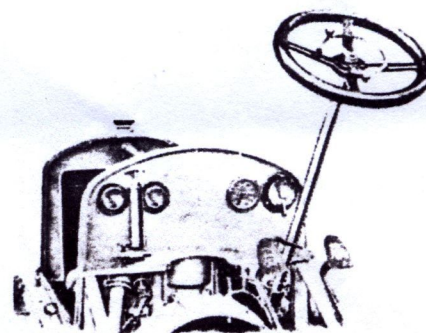
The photograph of the vehicle outside the brewery shows quite clearly that windscreen would fit the "Whitehall Limousine" body style. The handbrake is outside the body and there is no door on the drivers side. The body follows a line which curves passed the handbrake to the windscreen. The spare wheel is mounted on the running board, and the seat appears to be straight across the body. There is an electric horn mounted on the mudguard.

The scuttle on the car shows no signs of the windscreen post being mounted on it. From the photograph of the car it would appear that these posts were mounted behind the scuttle. This windscreen mounting is also consistant with the "Whitehall Limousine" body style. The timber framing under the scuttle is screwed in place from in front of the rolled scuttle edge and the screws were soldered over. The rolled edge on the rear side of the scuttle is in fact a split tube fitted over the edge of the scuttle. There were dummy electrical sockets mounted on the lower scuttle sides for plugging in the side light wires when the side lights were removed.

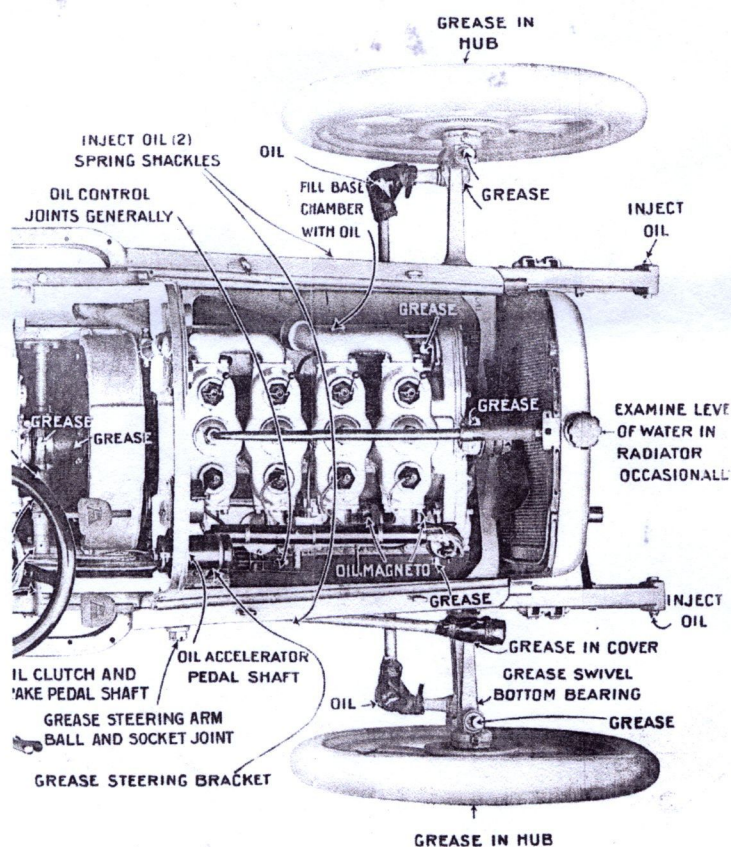
Austin cars at the time were identified by painting the number on the side of the chassis, and stamping it on the centre bonnet hinge. The gearbox number is stamped on the face of the gearbox, and also identifies the model and year of the car. The Austin 20 hp car numbers started from 6500.

One of the advertised features of the Austin 20 hp was a cast aluminium dashboard as featured in the catalogue and chassis photograph. There was no dashboard with the car when found, and Ross had gone to a great deal of trouble to find a cast aluminium dashboard. However he had to trim the scuttle to make it fit the dashboard, and wondered if trimming the scuttle was the right move. The piece trimmed off had holes for securing wooden bonnet rests and dashboard. Inside the scuttle there is mark that suggests a wooden dashboard was fitted.

The bonnet with the car when found had remnants of paint that are consistent with paint on the scuttle. The brass bonnet hinges show signs of having been plated, and there is a number stamped on the centre hinge – 6542. This number is earlier than the number stamped on the gearbox for this Austin, but still 1913.



The Straight Aluminium Dashboard on the 20 h.p. Model.



With this aluminium dashboard mounted the bonnet sits high and close to the scuttle horn mount. The bonnet does not sit properly on the dashboard, and appears to be too short.

There are remains of the wooden valences that fit along the chassis and under the bonnet sides still with the car. These valences are rebated on the underside so that they align along the chassis, and both bonnet catches are bolted through the valence and chassis. They also have a dished shaped rebate along the top side where the bonnet sides sit and drain. When the valences are put in place, they come inside the line of the aluminium dashboard, and the bonnet will not fit. The bonnet catches line up with marks on the bonnet.

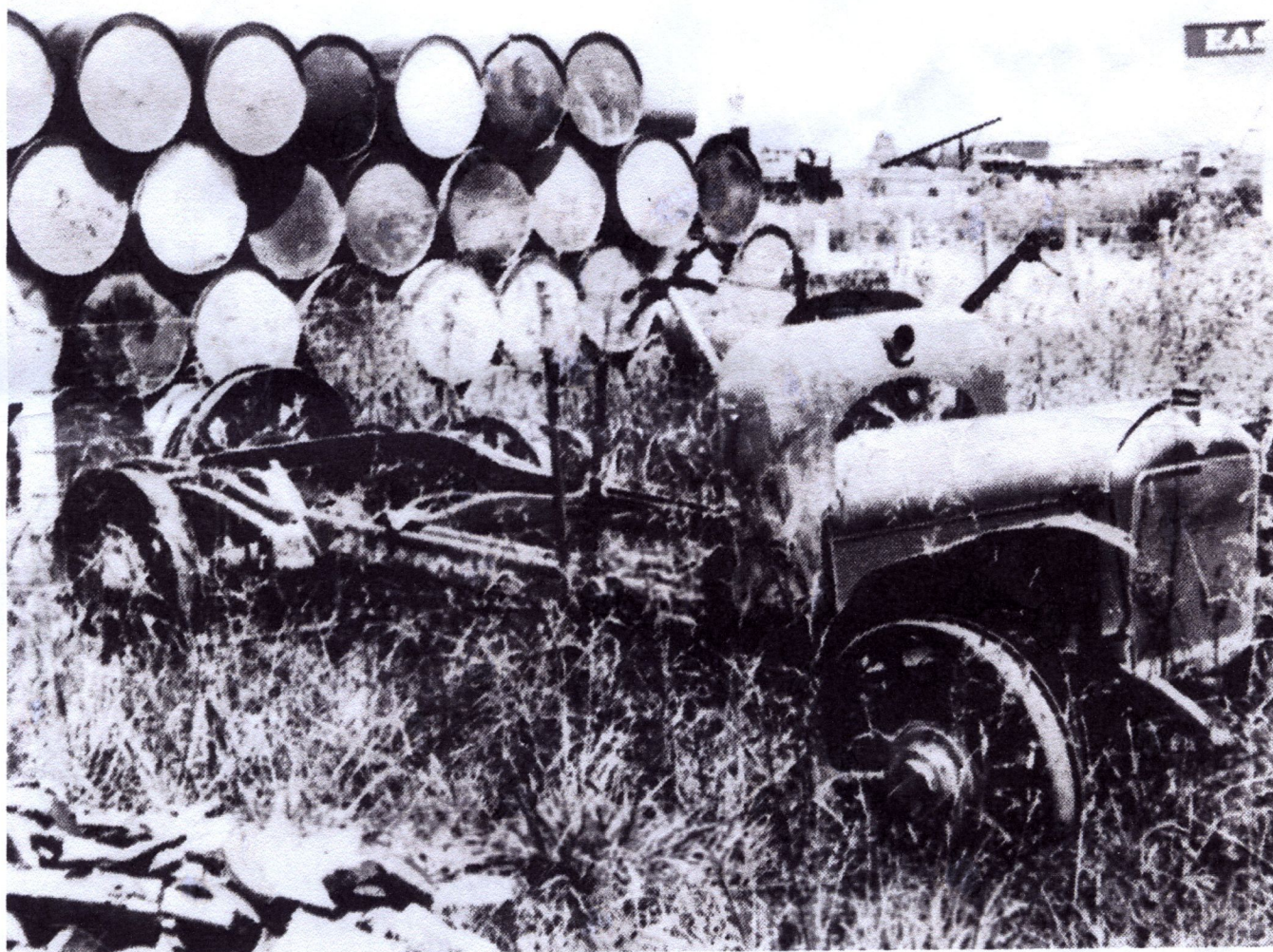
The chassis photograph (left) in the handbook for the 1913 Austin 20 shows valences and the aluminium dashboard. The valences are angled out for the wider aluminium dashboard. The rear bonnet catch is outside the chassis line, and through the valence only. The chassis drawings also show this detail.

From this it would appear that the Newbigin car was fitted with a wooden dashboard that was narrower than the aluminium one. This would accommodate the bonnet that came with the car. The scuttle width is 41 inches – the same as for the 15 hp chassis. This scuttle width allows for the handbrake to be on the outside of the body – correct for both 15 hp and 20 hp cars. The earlier 18/24 Austin had a scuttle width of 43 inches, and the handbrake was inside the body.

The trade journal "The Garage and Motor Agent" March 27 1920, lists Austin production with chassis numbers up to 1919. The chassis numbers are consecutive and with year of production.

The Newbigin car has the number 6542 stamped on the bonnet hinge, but the painted number on the chassis is no longer visible. The gearbox is stamped 7035/20/13. The engine in 6542 shows the number K107 stamped on the underside of the crankcase, and on the inside of the timing cover. The individual cylinders are stamped with this number as well as the number of the cylinder. The main bearing caps are also stamped K107 and numbered in order. The chassis has the features of a 1913 chassis, not 1914 or later where the gearbox selector position has changed, the gearbox cross member changed, and the clutch cross shaft extended right across the chassis.

(The gearbox for the spare chassis is 7036/20/13 - the consecutive chassis, with engine number K87.)



The Austin 20 in Charlie Blacks yard – photo Peter Fry about 1968/69