



Article from:

Veteran motorbike passion

Colin Taylor

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THE tears were streaming down my face, but I wasn't upset.

Not angry, sad or even laughing too hard - I was just wind-whipped.

But that's what you get for taking a ride in an open-top historic racing car on a raw spring morning in Ballarat.

The 1916 Morgan Grand Prix three-wheeler I was hunched down in was expertly piloted by Colin Sargent, of Brown Hill, but owned by his daughter, Catrina.

This two-cylinder, powder-blue veteran is Catrina's pride and joy, but it's far from simply a museum piece.

Catrina is more than happy to put it to work, its latest outing being a trip to Wagga Wagga last month for the [Veteran Car Club of Australia's 1 & 2 Cylinder Rally](#).

She and Colin, with mum Merralyn, are well known identities on the national veteran and vintage scene, with a store of rally badges, fond stories and warm relationships with fellow enthusiasts.

They're off again this weekend, on their way to the seventh [National Veteran Motorcycle Rally](#) at Albany in Western Australia which runs from Sunday to Friday week.

"Mum, Dad and I will be there with our 1913 and 1915 Rovers - and perhaps the 1906 Minerva as a 'spare'," Catrina said.

The Morgan was first spotted in France in 1995.

Once shipped to Australia, it was quickly restored by a NSW collector and put on the road.

"I first recall seeing the car on a 1 and 2 Cylinder Veteran Rally in Devonport in 2004," Catrina said.

"I continued to make contact with the owner, saying if he ever wanted to sell it, to please let me know.

"I had always wanted a three-wheeler Morgan."

Three years later, the sale was agreed.

"Since 2007, I have driven the Morgan a few hundred kilometres of very enjoyable veteran motoring," Catrina said.

However, the low-slung Morgan is by no means the only prized vehicle in the family's collection.

The Sargents' imposing red-brick shed and workshop is a testament to one family's passion for motoring history.

Just inside the door is a stunning A Model Ford which Colin has owned since he was 16.

That was the car Catrina used to hang L-plates on to drive to school.

Down the other end is a 1914 Humberette cycle car, very cute, but still a work in progress.

Then there are the 17 motorcycles.

Catrina, a nurse at Ballarat's Base Hospital, has always had a love of veteran and vintage bikes.

A 1928 AJS side-valve was her first acquisition, before she found and bought a 1927 AJS 350cc, then a 500cc, all from a collector in Mirboo North.

"But I'd always wanted a Scott Biscuit Barrel," she said, "because they were different."

And she found one - a 1926, two-speed, water-cooled Super Squirrel, tagged the "Biscuit Barrel" because its fuel tank looks just like one.

Catrina believes there are probably only two or three of these in the country.

The rest of the stable includes a 1925 Rudge, 1913 Royal Enfield, 1929 Scott and, the oldest of all, a 1906 Minerva.

But the most prized of all is the Indian - a 1925 Chief with an Australian-built Goulding sidecar, which Colin's grandfather, George Griffiths, bought new in Ballarat in 1926.

George apparently used it only on weekends to "go rabbiting on Saturday and take my grandmother for a ride on Sunday to the cemetery".

Colin's first memory of the bike was as a small child in the 1950s, but it wasn't until 1967 that he was able to talk his grandmother into handing over what was left of it.

By the late seventies, it was running again, but, in 1989, the whole family got involved in its meticulous restoration.

Colin, a former radio technician, does a great deal of the mechanical work himself, but Catrina is equally at home in the workshop.

"Grandpa was a fitter and turner and used to make bits, but I went to night school for a couple of years to learn fitting and turning," she said.

The Sargents are members of the Ballarat Car Club, Veteran Car Club, Vintage Motorcycle Club of Victoria and the Antique Motorcycle Club of Australia, with Catrina filling the post of newsletter editor for the last-named club for 12 years.

Wandering in the sprawling workshop with Catrina, I try in vain to capture an accurate picture of all those photos, pieces of memorabilia, posters, trophies, badges and bits.

Then there's that line-up of bikes. It's enough to bring a tear to the eye.

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In it together: Catrina Sargent and dad Colin with her 1916 Morgan and his 1915 Rover.

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