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On the cover

DBS overlooking Chatsworth. Photo: Mark Donoghue

On the contents page

UMC 272 recapturing past glories in the 2010 Mille Miglia. Photo: Rene Photo Collection

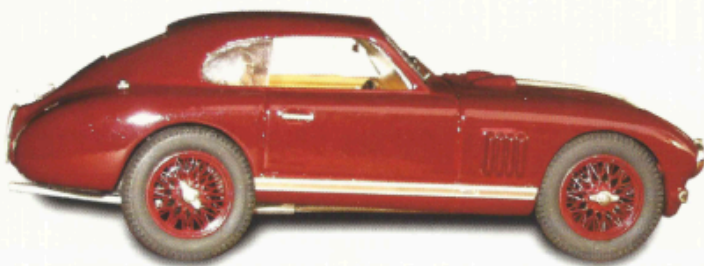
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1949 Aston Martin DB Mk II

by Richard Loveys



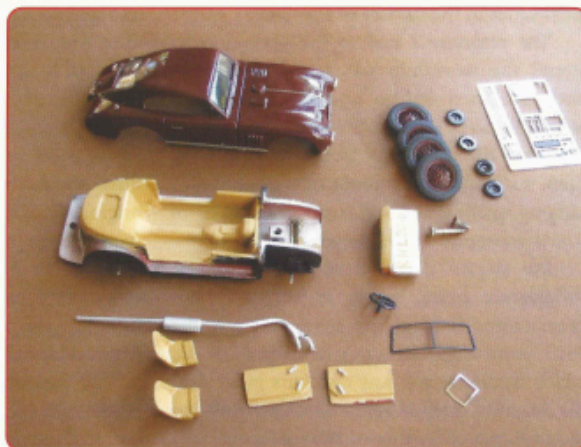
In 1948 it became clear to David Brown that a new model was needed both to build on the racing success in that year's Spa 24 hour race and to meet the sales targets. The new saloon cars were designed by Ted Cutting and Frank Feeley and were known as the DB Mk II.

Four cars were built in 1949 and they were the link between the Two Litre Sports (aka DB 1) and the DB2; in effect they were the prototypes of the cars which followed. The four cars all had registration numbers starting with the letters UMC. Three of them were built to race. The fourth (UMC 272, chassis LML/49/4) was the 'Works development car' – as it says in the 2006 Register – as well as being used by David Brown as his personal transport. It was sold to Lance Macklin who raced it with factory support, and it was the subject of an article in *The Motor* of 1st February 1950. UMC 272 is the model under review here.

Tin Wizard, which is based in Germany, has been making kits and fully assembled models of 1:43rd scale cars for some time. It has recently added some Aston Martins to its range, carefully choosing interesting cars that no one else has already made. One is DB3/7, the only DB3 originally built with a fixed head body, and the others are the four 1949 UMC cars. All these have been released in the last year or two and are available from specialist model shops and can usually be found on Ebay.

The kit for LML/49/4 comes in an excellent polystyrene box with transparent lid which is useful for holding the various parts as the process of building the model proceeds. The kit's components are made from well finished white metal, with photo etched sheets for the detailed parts such as screen wipers, body trim strips and the nicely designed three piece grille. Each wheel needs to be assembled from two discs of photo etched spokes, a turned brass hub, and inner and outer rims; the result is excellent.

The design of the kits is helpful to the model builder as it makes detail painting very straightforward, in addition to enhancing the finished article. The seats, door inner panels, instrument panel and the central tunnel are all made as separate parts. The headlamp rims have the small rectangular blocks at the top which are on the full sized car but rarely seen on models. The petrol fillers and the handle for the small rear panel are beautifully made, polished and bright plated; they are all, however, not quite right for the car in its original 1949 condition and were replaced with suitable items from the parts box. Another item discarded was the plated gear lever because the



car was originally built with a steering column gear change and the model was built to show the car as it was originally made. The seats were also changed.

The kit includes a differential and well detailed underside which shows the chassis. None of this is seen when looking at the finished model sitting on its wheels. The kit does not, however, include brake drums which can be seen through the wheel spokes; these were easily made from items in the parts box. There are also no pedals, but you can hardly see the ones that were carefully made from thin metal.

The instruction sheet follows the same format as the other Tin Wizard kits, it is an A5 sized photo of the components with an indication of where they fit. There is no comment about the appropriate colours to paint the various parts which is a pity as this kit is of a specific car – why would anyone wish to build a model in the wrong colours? The car itself has been beautifully restored and there were some excellent pictures of it in the Summer 2010 edition of *AM Quarterly*. Further information was obtained from *Aston Martin Lagonda* by Chris Harvey and (somewhat surprisingly) from *Aston Martin V8* by Michael Bowler, both of which contained pictures apparently taken in 1949.

The final result of a careful build can be an excellent model of an interesting car in the history of Aston Martin. The retail price of the Tin Wizard kits in the UK is about £51, with finished models at about £150, they are well worth finding.



Mille Miglia cars at the Fiera di Brescia

The Italian Job

by Daniel A Waltenberg

photos: Rene Photo Collection Italy and Daniel A Waltenberg

To take up the story from the last AMQ: When my wife happily left Villa d'Este after a long weekend of admiring automobiles, I was left behind with UMC 272 to prepare it for the next adventure: the Mille Miglia Retro 2010 taking place from 6 to 8 May, just ten days after Villa d'Este.

When I prepared the history file for UMC 272 for Villa d'Este, I came across Lance Macklin's Italian adventure in 1950. He met an old Italian prince called Raimundo Lanza who invited him to the Targa Florio. Aston Martin was busy preparing for Le Mans and Lance Macklin bought UMC 272 from David Brown, took it to the Weber factory in Bologna, where they fitted three twin-choke Weber carburetors (definitely the first Aston and possibly the first British sports car with Webers) within a week and free of charge.

Macklin raced at the Coppa Inter-Europa Meeting in Monza, came second in his class and fourth overall, with an average speed of 85.90mph, and won the concours d'elegance. From Monza he drove to Naples and boarded a ship to Sicily. He started the Targa Florio (1,000 miles around Sicily) a minute behind Ascari in a Ferrari. Road conditions were



UMC 272 at the Targa Florio 1950

unpleasant and after two hours he caught the rear lights of Ascari, became excited and sped into a right turn at 90mph. There was no hope of stopping and he decided to go straight off the road, dropping the car 200-300ft and ending up half upside down. Luckily neither Macklin nor his co-driver were badly hurt.

He had already entered the Mille Miglia with co-driver John Gordon and they were fighting time to reach Brescia for the scrutineering and start. Unfortunately they did not quite make it. When they reached Rome the Mille Miglia had already started five or six hours before. With the knowhow of John Gordon, they made their way through back streets leading straight out of

Rome onto the Mille Miglia course. With much horn blowing and arm waving they managed to convince the carabinieri to lift the barrier and they joined the Mille Miglia, still carrying the Targa Florio racing numbers, creating confusion amongst marshals and timekeepers. They had a good fast drive up to the turn-off for Genoa where they sadly left the course and headed for Monte Carlo where Macklin's mother lived.

UMC 272 having such a history, I had to enter it in the Mille Miglia Retro 2010 to complete Lance Macklin's Italian adventure. With little supporting documents and the missing FIVA ID card, I registered UMC 272 on 14 December 2009, four days before the registration deadline.

Wednesday 5 May – Registration

I met my co-driver and Aston Martin specialist Rene Wagner at Coldrerio, from where we drove to Brescia in his Range Rover, towing UMC 272. We arrived at the Fiera di Brescia (Brescia Trade Fair) at 12.30pm and started the registration process to obtain our starting number 117, the road book and several other items. At the technical FIVA



At the Mille Miglia Museum

check we met Dominique Fischlin again, who had also been at the Villa d'Este. With the FIVA verified sticker on the windscreen, we parked the car at the Fiera di Brescia at 5.30pm. I was amazed at how much time we spent and how little information we received as newcomers, but I am told that this was a big improvement on previous years. We checked in to our roadside hotel allocated by the organisers (very different from my expectation of a Palladio-styled residence) and enjoyed an excellent dinner in a local ristorante accompanied by a nice bottle of Amarone.

Thursday 6 May – Brescia to Desenzano to Bologna – 227.11km – 5 hours

Our sleep was accompanied by a good dose of petrol and never-ending engine sounds from the nearby road, preparing us for our adventure. The weather looked rather promising after days of heavy rain. An early breakfast at 7am, followed by the transfer to the Fiera at 8am, saw us meet up again with UMC 272. We drove to the centre of Brescia, parked and displayed UMC 272 at the Piazza di Vittoria, collected all the gifts and the OBU device (GPS tracker) and started to study the road book in a nearby coffee lounge. During our lunch we met a DB2/4 driver and MM newcomer, Reginald Fuchs with his daughter Linda. We all had similar questions about the MM but were left guessing.

At 4.30pm we drove UMC 272 to the Mille Miglia Museum for a buffet dinner. On the short journey we noticed our Lagonda Bentley engine choking slightly indicating a problem. The heavy rain had filled the cylinder head with water near the sparks and



Father and son

Rene had to replace them all, allowing the engine to run smoothly again.

At that point I began to realise that I had been somewhat adventurous in registering UMC 272 in the Mille Miglia Retro. It had been completely restored by Works Service

in 1992 and clocked around 4,000 miles in 18 years. But the article 'Behind the Wheel of UMC 272' in *Classic Driver*, by my friend Steve Wakefield, was the only source of experience. I drove UMC 272 for the first time between Villa d'Este and the Mille Miglia Retro, apart from the 200 metres in Villa d'Este, from Zurich to St Moritz to the Bernina Pass and back covering 500 kilometres. It had behaved very well, but the weather was dry and cool. Were we really properly prepared? I guess not, but if there was to be no risk there would be no fun.

We had a bite from the buffet, and, having waited more than 12 hours for the moment, we drove to the Viale Venezia to meet Simon Kidston on the presentation ramp. We started at 8.08pm and drove into the twilight for our first leg to Bologna. Suddenly all the weariness was gone and I started to become one with UMC 272, following the commands of my co-driver. Initially, my driving was reserved, but I quickly realised that was getting us nowhere, so I switched to my 'Thai' driving style, crossing red traffic lights, taking the middle of the road and accepting the speed limit as an invitation to outperform it. We headed through the night on country roads at speeds between 100 to 130 kmph, guided by the more or less correct road book, with control checks in Desenzano and Cento, passing villages with thousands of spectators waving and cheering to go faster and louder. What a great feeling!

After three hours our trip master gave up, leaving us to our boy scouts' instincts, getting lost and finding our way back on track. We arrived happily at the Piazza Maggiore in Bologna five hours later at 1.08am, drove to the Fiera di Bologna to park UMC 272 and transferred to the Mercure Hotel (no



Start in Brescia



more hotel expectations). Our dinner was in a plastic bag in the mini bar – I declined it with a smile (no more food expectations), showered and fell asleep at 2.30am.

Friday 7 May – Bologna to Imola to San Marino to Urbino to Spoleto to Terminillo to Rieti to Rome – 519.54km – 12.45 hours

The day started at night after three hours of sleep, with a wake-up call at 5.30am. After breakfast and check out, it was unfortunate that there was no transfer bus in sight. Five minutes waiting and we hopped into a taxi opposite the hotel at the main train station and made our way back to UMC 272. The day presented itself beautifully and the weather was much warmer than in the past days. Our start was at 8.08am and we were heading for the Imola circuit. UMC 272 handled and ran very well, but we could feel the cabin heat climbing reminding us of its nickname 'sweatbox'.

We stopped for lunch in Urbino and continued to Spoleto from where we were climbing up the Apennines through long and winding roads to the ski resort Terminillo. The higher we climbed into overcast forests, the more residual snow patches we saw alongside the road, until we were driving into rain-filled fog on the three-metre wide wet road, hemmed in by four metres of solid snow and were ultimately reduced to zero visibility. Being blessed with plenty of Swiss mountain driving and skiing experiences, I trusted my instincts in leading a convoy of cars until a flag waving marshal, or rather a silhouette of such, directed us to a car park where we were offered some hot drinks.

Then it was downhill back to speedy roads, clocking around 100mph and leaving the fog and dark clouds behind, heading towards Rome. UMC 272 felt light and fast enjoying the swift ride. We arrived at 8.53pm in Roma Saxa Rubra to be escorted by the police in convoys to the Castel Sant'Angelo (the mausoleum of Hadrian) where the talented Mr Kidston was awaiting us for the on-stage parade on the presentation ramp. After a few minutes our convoy hit the Roman Friday night traffic. Romans seemed to have little respect for our police escorts, ignoring their commands entirely. That left us stuck in an underpass filled with hot exhaust fumes, with our water temperature climbing above 100°. When it hit 105° I changed seats with my co-driver, as UMC 272, obviously disliking the stop-and-go exercise, was becoming more difficult to 'drive'.

Joining the queue at Castel Sant'Angelo surrounded by thousands of Romans, we struggled to climb onto the 1½ metre high



On the track at Imola

stage, where we listened to Simon and, after a high five, chugged away into the next waiting line. The water temperature had gone beyond the instrument's range and the cabin temperature was unbearably hot. The engine went silent, but we managed to restart it just in time to drive off with the next convoy, hoping for a cooling breeze. What a hope: after 200 metres UMC 272 stopped in the middle of the road just in front of St Peter's Square and the Papal Basilica of St Peter. The engine heat had expanded and blocked the front drum brakes.

Getting out of the car was a big relief, and a gentle breeze made me feel human again. I headed off to mobilise the police to secure our Aston. My broken Italian helped a bit but the finishing explanations in English left long faces. The police were very helpful and tried to locate an English-speaking officer who could address the car's problem. To cut a long story short, we finally got a tow truck to take us to the Villa Borghese car park and transferred to the hotel, where we checked in at 1am, had a quick buffet dinner followed by a shower and were asleep by around 2.30am.

Saturday May 8 – Rome to Viterbo to Siena to Firenze to Bologna to Reggio Emilia to Parma Cremona to Brescia – 638.18km – 15.20 hours

A short sleep was again ended by a wake-up call at 5am, since our starting time was 7.23am. The day started with lots of rain; UMC 272 did not like the rain and the engine started to choke again. After Viterbo the sky cleared and we were driving into the beautiful landscape of Tuscany. Again, thousands of spectators were cheerfully bordering the

roads. On the other hand, lots of wannabe racers in modern Porsches, Ferraris and support vehicles combined with the everyday local traffic to make our drive challenging and often dangerous. Lunch break was in Buonconvento, with my next noticeable stop at the Ferrari factory test track at Maranello. Somewhere along the way we were handed another plastic bag representing our dinner.

We finally arrived, after a long day, on the presentation ramp in the Viale Venezia in Brescia at around 11pm. I was extremely happy and fulfilled that we had completed our mission. On the way to the Fiera di Brescia we got lost, finally checking in to the hotel at 1am.

Sunday 9 May – Prize-giving

After breakfast we drove to the city centre to attend the award ceremony at the Teatro Grande, which was followed by a buffet lunch and farewell at the Mille Miglia Museum.

The results were published and distributed. Out of 375 starters, 290 arrived at the finishing line and we finished in 208th position with 660 points compared to the highest score of 20,170 for the winning 1939 BMW 328 Mille Miglia Coupe and the lowest score of 334.026 points for the last, a 1956 Mercedes 300 SL W198.

One could criticise the Mille Miglia Retro, but it remains one of the most exciting road experiences in the world, and I take this opportunity to thank the organisers for making such a great drive happen and all the Italian people for their enthusiastic support and for hosting such a great race – sorry, rally.

Does history repeat itself? Obviously not, UMC 272 did not win the concours this time, but it did successfully complete the Mille Miglia Retro. I hope that Lance Macklin would appreciate the closing of an unfinished chapter 60 years later.