



**Vancouver Island Section**

**March, 2013**

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**Coming Events - Mark your calendar now!**

**May 11, noon: Chemainus Theatre.** Buffet lunch and *Delicious Lies*, an adaptation of Molière’s comedy *Scapin*. Twelve members and guests hregistered for this event. Organiser Barry Patchett

**Jun 22-23: Islands wine tour**, Saltspring Saturday market, Saltspring wineries, dinner Cowichan Bay, overnight in Duncan; Cowichan Valley wineries, lunch Cobble Hill. Organiser: Stan Garrod ([click](#)).

A Salt Spring Island resident, Stan will draw on his contacts as the BC editor of *Where to Eat in Canada* to showcase a selection of wine and food from our area. **Because some of the venues are not large, registration for this event will be limited. It will be first come, first serve, with preference to those planning to take in both days, so drop Stan a note if you plan to go.**

Residents of the Big Island will catch the 9 AM ferry Saturday from Swartz Bay to Fulford. Stan will guide us through an artisan cheese operation and a couple of wineries on the south end of Salt Spring. We will go up to Ganges for the public market, lunch, and another winery visit, leaving the island in the afternoon by the ferry at Vesuvius.

**Section Officers**

*President:* [Bob Wilson](#)

*Vice President:* vacant

*Secretary:* [Hazel Ostrowerka](#)

*Treasurer:* [Rob Watson](#)

*Membership:* [Jeff Cohen](#)

*Director at large:* [Dennis Ostrowerka](#)

*Newsletter:* [Bob Wilson](#)

*Hon. Vice President:* Peter Trzewik

*Past President:* [Barry Patchett](#)

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## Welcome New Members!

*David & Pauline Stephen*

## Renewing Members

*Dwayne & Brenda Dunn*

*Ralph & Valerie Hasenfuss*

*John & Cordelia McIntosh*

*Horst Meissner*

*Jon Mills*

*Rondi & Dave Opko*

*Terry & Barbara Peace*

**Thank you!**

We'll spend the night at the Thunderbird Motel in Duncan ([click](#); double \$79, ask for the Mercedes Club block booking), but wait for a confirmation of event registration from Stan before you book. We'll have dinner Saturday night at the Masthead in Cowichan Bay.

Sunday's itinerary offers breakfast and two or three Cowichan Valley wineries, before lunch at Merridale cidery.

**Jul 20-21: Forest Grove Concours, Oregon.** 2013 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the W113 (pagoda-roof) SLs. Portland Section is planning a Feature Class for this model and is coordinating attendance by Club members. More details will be available later. Organizer: Allen Stephens ([click](#)), Portland Section.

**Jul 28: Barbeque.** A mid-year afternoon barbeque, hosted by John and Cordelia McIntosh at their home on Coal Point.

**Aug 18: Rally/ treasure hunt.** Jeff Cohen and Rob Watson have offered to put together a rally and treasure hunt in the Victoria area.

**Sep 8: Mercedes-Benz in the Park, N Vancouver.** The BC Stars Section invites Island members to their annual event at Waterfront Park in North Vancouver. I went across last year and enjoyed the day, seeing some unusual older models that we don't have in our Section, and the hosts made me feel very welcome. Organizer: Louis Fourie ([click](#)).

**Sep 15: Lunch.** The tentative destination is the dining room at the Point-No-Point resort, west of Sooke. The Section went there for lunch four or five years ago and had a good time. Organizer: Bob Wilson

**Oct 19: AGM** Discussion of the event calendar and election of officers for 2014. Union Club. Organizer: Jeff Cohen

**Oct 25 or 26: Oktoberfest.** Our annual homage to German culture at the Edelweiss Club, with dinner and dancing. Maybe this year we'll be able to field a contestant in the Schuplattler contest ([click](#)). Organizer Hazel Ostrowerka.

**Nov 10:** Morning coffee, locations TBA. Organizers: Bob Wilson and Barry Patchett

**Dec 13 or 14(?): Xmas party,** Union Club. Date subject to confirmation.

## Details

Seventeen members and guests gathered at Diamond Detailing for a lesson in exterior maintenance. Owner Sean Scott and his helper Chris put on a three-hour demonstration of keeping the outside of an MB clean and shiny. The draw for the lucky—at least we thought so at the time—member's car resulted in Barry Patchett offering up his E 350 for beautification.

The process began with a light power-wash rinse followed by a hand wash, with Sean keeping up a running commentary on the process: different wash mitts for the top and bottom, car soap, wheel shampoo, California

blade, the types of drying cloth. We moved from the outside, where a light rain was falling, to the shop interior. Sean explained that lots of light was needed to see what was happening in the subsequent steps, and the inside was indeed brighter than the day outside.

A clay bar and water were used to remove surface contaminants from a part of the hood. These accumulate over time, though using the right polish can minimize them, resulting in a gritty feel when running one's fingers across a freshly washed surface. I began to realize that maybe we hadn't done Barry much of a favour by picking his car when I noticed that the part of the hood that remained untreated was definitely not as smooth as the clayed part.



*Sean clays the hood*

*Photo: Barry Patchett*

Sean then moved to the trunk lid, where we'd found a small scratch in the finish. We watched Barry sweat as Sean took a piece of wet-and-dry sandpaper to the light scratch, after which it looked much worse. The sandpaper was followed by a several passes with a rotary buffer over the whole upper surface of the trunk lid, using progressively less aggressive grades of polish. When the polishing stopped, the surface was visually free of swirl marks and felt perfectly smooth. Wax was applied with the buffer and wiped off by hand.

Sean then moved to Rory Grewal's 1970 W114 sedan, whose burgundy paintwork showed oxidation behind the surface shine. A few passes with the rotary buffer showed that the hood could be restored without repainting.

Diamond Detailing provides a complete care and cleaning service for both the outside and inside of any car. Our thanks go out to Sean and Chris, who gave up their Sunday afternoon to show us their work and answer a steady stream of questions. I and others there found this a most informative event. Rob Watson has promised to write up his extensive notes in an article that will appear later. It's just too bad that Barry and Rory will get a nagging feeling about all the untreated surfaces each time they look over their cars.

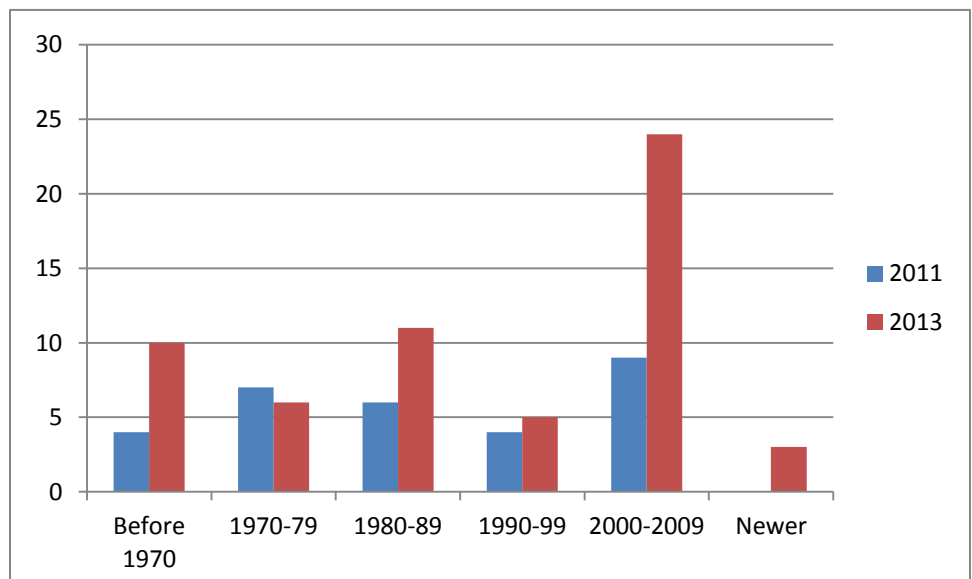
## What We Drive (Revisited)

The May, 2011 issue of this newsletter, contained a look at the how members' cars were distributed by age, undertaken partly as a guide to see where interests might lie. As promised in January, here's a look at the current numbers:

	May 2011	May 2013
No. of Section members	33	59
No. who recorded car info	23 (70%)	35 (56%)
Before 1970	4	10
1970-79	7	6
1980-89	6	11
1990-99	4	5
2000-2009	9	24
Newer	0	3

Aside from the growth in membership, the most obvious changes have been the increase in daily drivers made in the last decade and collector cars from the 1950s and '60s. The most popular collector model is the W113 series pagoda-roof SL built from 1963-71. There is still a clear interest in cars from the 1980s, which offer a combination of quality, comfort, styling and simplicity hard to find in

another marque. The oldest car in the Section remains a 1950 170 S, the newest a 2012 ML 350 (although I'm aware of an unrecorded 2013 GLK 350).



Since under 60% of Section members list their vehicles in the national database, it would be wrong to assume that the figure above shows an accurate profile. I suspect, but have no way of knowing, that the majority of "missing" cars fall into the period after 1988, the current provincial cut-off for collector vehicle licence plates. If there is a trend in the data above, it's towards a membership with newer vehicles.

## Stargazing

### GLA - A Compact SUV Concept

MB showed a new compact SUV model called the GLA at China's major spring Auto Show, in Shanghai.



*Daimler photos*

Aside from making an entry into the premium SUV category, the most talked-about feature of this vehicle was its lighting system. To begin with, the interior has a fibre-optic strip that extends from the dashboard along each side edge of the console and between the individual rear bucket seats. The two strips continue into the cargo area, where they are set into the load floor in a loop on each side.



*The interior fibre-optic lighting strips.*

However, the *pièce de resistance* was laser headlights, the next and possibly final step beyond LED lighting, I suppose. The headlights are powered by lasers on each side that produce a light, said to be blue, which reflects off a mirror-lens to produce a diffuse driving beam. The electrical power requirement would be quite substantial, and Daimler's press release indicated that the lasers are actively cooled, but lasers offer

other possibilities. For example, the headlights could be made to pulsate when the vehicle is unlocked in a dark parking lot or at night. MB is not the first manufacturer to show laser lighting on a concept vehicle; both Audi and BMW did so about 18 months ago.

Pulsating headlights, however, would be just the beginning of what can be done with lasers, and therein might lie the 'why' of the carmakers' interest, or at least some of it. The technology could be used to project directional instructions from the navigation system onto the road in the form of arrows – showing the driver and other road users where he is (or should be) heading. They could also be used to project images from the Comand centre onto a vertical surface in front of the vehicle, the garage wall, for example. Movies anyone? There's no word of a buttered popcorn-maker in the console, however.

Minus its fancy lighting features, the GLA looks ready for production, a vehicle with a lot of development behind it. I and others I've talked to are skeptical that the cost and complications of the laser headlight technology will mean it doesn't make it through to production. I also suspect that the lighting strips in the cargo area will disappear and that a conventional bench seat will replace the individual buckets in the rear.

The GLA Concept is based on the same MFA front-wheel drive platform as the A and B classes, which would lend their four-cylinder engines, 7-speed automatic, and optional 4-Matic to a production version. A GLA would compete against the BMW X1, which is already on sale, and the Audi Q3, which is headed to Canada later this year. If you want to read more, Alex Currie pointed me to a link in the Globe and Mail ([click](#)), which says the GLA will be on sale in Canada by September, 2014.

### Stretching Out in China

MB unveiled a long wheelbase version of the E-class at last month's auto show in Shanghai. It will have 14 centimetres more legroom in the rear seat and an exclusive interior that allows adjustment of the front



*Daimler photo*

passenger seat from the seat behind, an idea so sensible one wonders why it isn't more common. The company said that the stretched E will be built exclusively for the Chinese market in Beijing, where MB has two plants in a joint venture with BAIC (Beijing Automotive Industries Co.).

### The Powertrain Network

The Daimler Board of Management's strategy for Mercedes-Benz is guided by a plan for growth through 2020. To keep to that plan, the company needs more capacity to make transmissions because the powertrain network in Germany is already operating full-out and there's no space left in Stuttgart to expand it.

The plan is to shift excess capacity to a subsidiary located in Cugir, Romania. Called Star Transmissions, this plant presently builds engine and transmission components for MB's new car lineup as well as spare parts for older models. Starting in 2014, the current generation of dual-clutch gearboxes, which we expect to see on the new A-class, for example, will be shifted from Stuttgart to Cugir. A new generation of automatic transmissions may also be built in Romania.

The central location for production of MB's powertrains is at six sites in the Unterturkheim region, including Hedelfingen. These sites produce most of MB's engines, transmissions and axles. One in Berlin also makes engines and powertrain components, while another in Hamburg makes axles and other parts. More engines are made in Thuringia, Germany. And there's the joint venture with BAIC making engines for cars and vans sold in the Chinese market.

In North America, the 4-cylinder gasoline engines will be made at Nissan's plant in Derchard, Tennessee, as part of Daimler's strategic alliance with that company. These engines will be destined for future C-class assembly at MB's plant in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, beginning next year. Quite the network, is it not?

### **A KERS on Poor Fuel Economy**

Our last newsletter had a story about an unusual migration of technology from road cars to race cars. In that case it was anti-collision radar. This time the migration is going in its more usual direction, and it concerns KERS.

KERS stand for Kinetic Energy Recovery System, a technology that was introduced on Formula One cars in 2009 after a number of earlier experiments that came to nothing. The system recovers kinetic energy during braking, using it to spin up a flywheel to a mind-numbing number of rpm. That energy can then be transferred from the spinning flywheel to the rear wheels during acceleration for an extra power boost, or it can be used to reduce the load on the internal combustion engine at modest acceleration rates. That reduces fuel consumption.

Volvo has announced the results of its extensive testing of a KERS system in a 4-cylinder S60 model on public roads. Experiments as early as the 1980s showed that steel flywheels were too heavy to be practical and could not be rotated quickly enough without the risk of coming apart. Volvo's current flywheel is made of carbon fibre, has a diameter of 20 cm, and spins up to 60,000 rpm. It rotates in a vacuum to minimize frictional losses and delivers its power to the rear wheels through a special transmission. The flywheel and its transmission fit around the right-side back axle, next to the differential.

Volvo's implementation of KERS provided the S60 with an additional 80 hp at peak flywheel speed, cutting the 0-100 time of its 4-cylinder to 5.5 seconds. It also reduced fuel consumption in the city driving cycle by up to 25%, a gain that any manufacturer would look at with interest. Volvo has said it is evaluating how the technology can be implemented in upcoming car models.

### **An End of the Conventional Spark Plug?**

A spark plug to ignite the fuel was part of Etienne Lenoir's patent for the first internal combustion engine in 1860. The modern commercial design we're all familiar with, a plug with a prominent ceramic insulator and central and side electrodes, dates from a 1902 patent by Robert Bosch. This basic design hasn't been altered in over 110 years, though there have certainly been improvements to materials and the performance and shape of the electrodes. The plugs in a modern MB gasoline engine should last for at least 100,000 km, but such high mileage was not always the case. My experience with the spark plugs in classic cars is that they work at their best for only 10,000 km or so, partly because the engines don't run efficiently and partly because a coil-and-points ignition system produces a relatively weak spark at low rpm. Plugs last longer in ignition systems without points, which takes in pretty much everything built since the 1970s. Ignition system upgrades are one of the most common modifications made to classic cars; Barry Patchett reports that he expects about 45-50,000 miles from the plugs in his W113, which has an updated, breakerless ignition system.



Federal-Mogul is a large American company making parts for new cars and the aftermarket. In late March, they showed a replacement for the conventional spark plug at a convention for automotive engineers. The device, which is not on sale yet, looks a bit like a ballpoint pen, threaded for the spark plug hole at the point where you might grip the pen, and with a spark radiating over 360 degrees coming down and outwards from the tip. Federal-Mogul calls it an advanced corona ignition system; their engineer said that it is a direct replacement for sparkplugs in existing engines. By making the combustion process more efficient, it will reduce combustion temperatures and the amount of fuel required throughout an engine's operating range. Federal-Mogul is the maker of Champion brand sparkplugs, under whose name this product will be sold.

*A Champion spark?*

*Photo: federalmogul.com*