

ELFIN

OWNERS and DRIVERS CLUB Inc.

NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 126 - September 2012



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ELF – IN



❖ Small, slight, and delicately - made or proportioned, quick, agile and delicate (as in movement or thought), having an otherworldly, unearthly or magical quality.

- Webster's Dictionary.



ELFIN OWNERS and DRIVERS CLUB Inc.

EDITORIAL:

Like motor racing itself, the Elfin Owners & Drivers Club has changed considerably over the years. When it first began more than 30 years ago, the club consisted mainly of drivers who saw the locally built Elfin as a way of entering the sport or furthering their careers, and so the membership was relatively small and exclusive. The EODC prided itself on having quite a number of 'big' names within our ranks – some have retained their allegiance to this day, but naturally their ranks have shrunk. And so the 126th issue of the newsletter now goes to a rather different audience, members who mostly receive their copies online and pay their memberships by direct credit. Many are not directly involved with motor racing, but at least enjoy their Elfins as road cars, or join in club racing at a less serious or professional level. Others don't own Elfins, but at least acknowledge those qualities that set the marque aside and appreciate its racing heritage. And so, with considerable reluctance, we occasionally engage in a culling process when names are removed from our membership. Costs are such these days that it is not feasible to retain unfinancial members, although in reality we have carried these members for up to four years before taking this action. Naturally we would love to welcome them back into the club are always looking for new members, so if you have any Elfin owners or enthusiasts amongst your friends, please encourage them to join the EODC.



Our latest issue has news of two events that may be of interest as possible club runs, given that the weather at last is/may be on the improve. Let me know as soon as possible if you would like to participate. Also, **MARK BEATRICE** continues to work at encouraging members to bring their Elfins to the sprint days at Phillip Island.

We continue the story of the 'Quick Pixies' – Elfins that raced in SE Asia, and there are some interesting items of gossip in our 'Bits 'n Pieces'. **BILL ATHERTON** reports having "some teething problems" with his Elfin Streamliner. Not surprising, seeing it has been out of action for 40 years! Another Streamliner out of commission for about the same time is the car of **IAN HOBBS**, but Ian reports some stirring in the camp.

Also, did you know that two EODC members held the Australian land speed record at different times in the past? Read on – it's a fascinating story!

Brique

EODC DIRECT CREDIT DETAILS

Bank Account No. 5003785

BSB 633-000

Bendigo & Adelaide Bank

Make sure your **NAME** appears on the transaction so your payment can be identified.

CLUB MERCHANDISE FOR SALE:

EODC keyrings (\$12), lapel badges (\$8), cloth badges (\$8), decals (\$2).

Send orders and money to Brian Reed, Box 447, Aireys Inlet. 3231.





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BITS 'N' PIECES

IAN HOBBS writes... All is well over here in SA. I am putting a unit I have on the market to fund a few activities including replacing it with a house. Some of the proceeds will go to my Streamliner and I hope it will be going by the end of next year. Dave Meyers, the new owner of the Brosnan Streamliner has order six windscreens using my old one as a template for the likes of **FFRENCH**, **SULLIVAN** (I think), a couple of others and the two of us. We now have mine and it looks great. We are looking into reproducing swirl tanks at the moment.



THE ELFIN RETURNS TO CALDER AFTER 41 YEARS:

BILL ATHERTON writes....Thanks Brique, it really has been worth the long hard journey since 1989 when Nick Langford stripped it back to its space frame and started its rebuild. My good friend Martin Ogle put it together but doing my achilles last year delayed it another year.

I last raced it at Calder in 1971 and it was a great feeling to put her back onto the main straight after all those years. She's quick but she

quickly reminded me of the problems I used to have with the standard MG TC gearbox ratios! Her second gear is too low and I don't know how Brian Morrell raced it like that!

But there were some teething problems and I was very lucky it didn't get wrecked! In the morning session she went like a bird and everything was tickety boo apart from her skating... too much tire pressure. Once we dropped 8psi we were better behaved!

However once we went out after the lunch break, trouble struck. Through the esses on the back straight and up the hill, and guess what... NO STEERING... never struck that before. Wheels turned left and with no control we were heading for the wall. Fortunately I got enough brake on it to pull up in time. Cause; The old pinch bolt had never been tightened up on the spline from the steering rack and the column had slipped off the spline! But that was what her first shake down drive day was to find. I was just lucky that it didn't happen in the hairpin at the top of the straight.

That would have been a disaster. We then had problems with the SU's but we'll get that fixed before Martin & I do another test day at Calder in a couple of weeks. The MG Car Club has a Rob Roy Hillclimb on the 26th August and a Phillip Island Sprint day in September. An historic day at Rob Roy in October and the Sandown Historic in November is the calendar.

So she will be on display to all, finally.

I just want to give a big thank you to Elfin Owners & Drivers Club for their support to me. **BILL HEMMING** has helped me out with the seatbelts and **PETER FFRENCH** has been a great back stop over the journey.

At least another old Streamliner is back on the track. And this one is pretty special.

According to Brian Morrell's scrap book, he got 4th place at the 1962 Australian Tourist Trophy meeting at Mallala in December 1962. Bib Stillwell won in the Cooper Monaco with Bob Jane in the lightweight E type second and the Ricardian 3rd. But Brian got 1st place in the 1500-2000cc class. So perhaps Brian's Streamliner was the first Elfin to crack a National Sports Car gong!

Many thanks.

BILL ATHERTON

"... I loved the story (in the last issue) on the stain glass window; what a fitting way to remind us of **ROSS (WILLIAMS)**. We all miss him so much."

Regards **GRAEME WRIGHT**



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BITS 'N' PIECES

ELFIN MEMBERS STRUT THEIR STUFF

BALLARAT FESTIVAL OF MOTORING: At the Reunion Dinner held on Saturday night of the Festival (1 September), three drivers were honoured who competed at the motor race meeting on the Ballarat Airfield in 1961. Two of those drivers are EODC members - **JOHN AMPT** and **BILL PROWSE**. Special mention was made of **BILL PROWSE** who raced his Riley Imp at Ballarat in 1947. Our period photo (top right) shows Bill in action with a line up of Avro Anson planes in the background. The 88 year-old drove his current open top sports car to Ballarat in order to compete in the sprints and regularity runs on Sunday, Sept. 2. "It was bloody cold!" was his not-so-surprising quip.



Another EODC member, **GRAEME WRIGHT** had his Elfin Mallala selected for the car show in The Ballarat Mining Exchange and ran both the Mallala and the Clubman in the competition. His Mallala also featured on the official brochure, shown here with the Festival organisers John Emery (left) and Gary Grant.



Further afield, **LAURIE BENNETT** continues to wave the Aussie flag with distinction overseas, and here he is in action at the famous Nurburgring. Unfortunately he isn't behind the wheel of his Elfin, but the race report in the "Masters Newsletter" said "Into the top six came the much travelled Australian **LAURIE BENNETT** (McLaren M1B.)" (His is the black car and white helmet, centre right of photo). Laurie is certainly much travelled - he came home recently for nine days and was seen at the memorial service in Melbourne in honour of the late Diana Gaze before heading back overseas to resume his racing. **Late news: Laurie (described in the Masters Historic racing Newsletter as "antipodean Bennett") has just scored his first podium finish (outright) at Zandvoort. Congratulations, mate!**



YOUR CHANCE TO TRY TARGA HIGH COUNTRY

This targa rally returns to Mansfield Mt. Buller on 9-11 November for three days of high octane action. Members of car clubs are invited to be part of the action by taking part in the Shannon's touring component of the event. The tour gives owners an opportunity to use their vehicles safely on a closed road while enjoying the thrill of driving past crowds of spectators gathered to watch the rally. Our cars would also be part of a display at the Mansfield Street Party on the Friday. Competition door panels and vinyl plates plus a finisher's memento are part of the package.

Cost of entry is \$450 per vehicle, and each car must have a driver and navigator. To be eligible, our club will need a minimum of 10 Elfin. There is also the opportunity to have a 'Tour Leader' vehicle free of charge to lead the EODC club cars, giving two lucky people a great day's motoring for free.

Interested?

Contact **BRIAN REED** a.s.a.p.
0427 395 296.

It certainly pays to keep an eye out on ebay for Elfin memorabilia.

JAMES CALDER recently found a copy of an invoice sent from Shelby American to Elfin Sports Cars in 1966. The price for the roller cam kit? \$US251.





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THE AUSTRALIAN LAND SPEED RECORD 1961:

Reflections by Geoff Smedley 2010.

This is perhaps the most unlikely but successful challenge to a record ever staged and it comes with a story that is equally remarkable.



Austin Miller, Australian Land Speed Record Holder (1961 – 1964)

I had known my friend, the late **AUSTIN MILLER**, for a number of years previously and we had raced cars together in earlier times. Around 1959 Austin came to live in Tasmania after recovering from a fairly major air crash in Victoria, where he had operated an aerial crop spraying business for many years. He decided at that time that perhaps a slower pace of life would be better suited to his wellbeing, so he bought a hotel in Launceston and renovated it. Renamed The Monaco Hotel, it soon became the mecca of motor racing fans from far and near.

It could be argued that the array of beverages served at the Monaco may have instigated the record attempt! Not so! But it was Aussie's infectious desire and persuasive talents that eventually won out and the idea grew into a reality early in 1960, with myself entrusted with putting together a vehicle that could better the current record of 157.5 mph set by **MEL McEWAN** in the "Tornado Special" in South Australia a few months earlier

Some of the difficulties soon became clear: firstly, there was no money in the kitty. meaning that all work had to remain "in house". The only equipment available was the 1959 Cooper F2 fitted with a 2.2 Climax motor that was Austin's current race car, but certainly not suitable for the job in hand. A friend of Aussie's in Melbourne had just set a water speed record using a Corvette engine and this power plant had been offered on loan as a starting point to our quest, but the thought of stuffing 400 hp into a petite Cooper F2 seemed almost as ridiculous as attempting the record itself. An assessment of the work needed to adapt the chassis to take the big and brutal Corvette engine proved it would need to be a bit of a "suck it and see" effort or do it as she goes, with all chassis work to be undertaken before the transplant could take place. Also the transmission drastically needed modification from the existing Citroen Light 15-based box used by Cooper at that time. To this end I was fortunate in respect of engineering facilities with the family business (Bedford Machine Tools) at my disposal and, being a trained engineer, I was able to modify this box to a beefy 2 speed specialised unit, and with savage cross bolting of the housing in theory, it would withstand the short lived punishment expected of it. All this along with special beefed up drive shafts to cope with the extra power were made and, as it seemed, a never ending general tweek in all the right places, eventually we were starting to see some result and the project began to take shape into the car we hoped would bring us success. The only thing I was fully confident of was the fact that Aussie Miller was one of very few blokes in the world who could steer this mish- mash of bits to success. His long career in flying and driving at the top echelon of open wheeler racing in this country certainly proved he had not only the courage but also the anatomy to do the job.



Ready to go! AUSTIN MILLER, Bruce Burr and Geoff Smedley

After the work on the car was finished there was the hassle of setting up the legalities and finding a location suited to such an attempt. We had looked at a few areas as possibilities but each had drawbacks and we needed a course that would give us the very best of chances and a remote beach on the North-West coast of Tasmania (Bakers Beach) looked like the ideal place, a little out of sight in case of failure and some 4.5 miles of good surface to set up a good surveyed strip to test our hopes. It took quite a few weeks for our little band of helpers to arrange all the last minute problems including being told the night before

we were about to contest the run that the official timing gear was in Hobart, which meant someone had to drive the 250 mile journey to retrieve this very important bit of gear. While this was being attended to, my friend Bruce Burr and I decided it would be prudent to take the car to the beach the evening before to eliminate any holdup on the following day.



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THE AUSTRALIAN LAND SPEED RECORD 1961 *continued*:

The best laid plans were in place. We were armed with arrowed placards to be placed on trees showing the way into this well hidden beach, and the evening turned into night before we reached the last mile or so of very dense bush and not having ever tried to visit this remote place in darkness we became hopelessly lost - our signs we had diligently placed were in areas that have never been found to this day. Our problems didn't stop there. Eventually arriving on the western end of the beach it required about a 4 mile drive in the Land Rover, with car and trailer on tow behind, to the eastern end to a base site we had previously chosen. We were finding this spot hard to locate in the darkness and required driving in the softer sand further up the beach and, of course, the trailer and race car became bogged. Things became hopeless, so we simply unhitched the trailer and moved the Land Rover to a little higher ground and turned in for the night.

We were woken just after daylight by a local TV crew that had somehow found us without the aid of our signs. To our horror we found the tide was in and was lapping the deck of the trailer. The car looked to be sitting on the water, which presented more of a comedy act than a serious record attempt. Anyhow, with the aid of the TV crew we managed to get things into a more respectable state before officialdom and others started arriving, none of whom had seen any of the dozen or so directional signs we had placed the night before.

The timing equipment had arrived from Hobart and set up and it was time for the first test runs up the beach. Bearing in mind that this would be the first test of the car itself, it was a very nerve racking time for me, but if Aussie felt the same way he certainly didn't show it, climbing into the car as if heading off on a fun drive up the beach. The first couple of runs looked well, but a problem with the timing equipment held proceedings up for some time, making all previous runs null and void. But it did give us a chance to delve into a possible gearbox problem which turned out to be a minor adjustment - stripping a transmission on a beach in the open is not really recommended. Soon all was ready for the first official run from East to West.

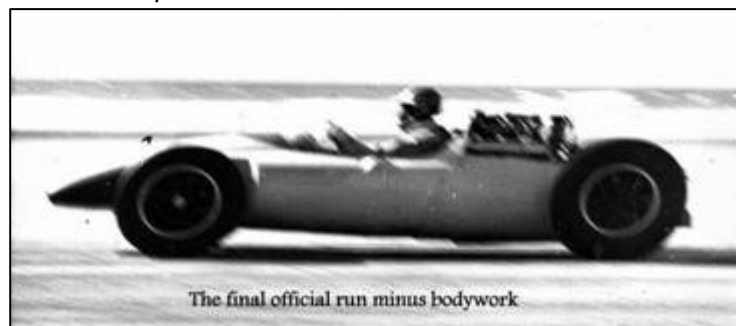


Smedley and Miller directly before the first official run.

The car achieved 172 mph, well on target. We had the car geared for around 202 mph @ 6,500rpm and this first run was looking good. The reverse run was a little down, which was expected against a growing wind and adjustments were made to the car before the next speed run. While working on the engine it was necessary to remove the canopy I had made to try and wind cheat the car. I had rigged up a quick release arrangement for this canopy should the need arise, but somehow the mechanism got damaged in the refitting after the previous run, causing a major drama on the next attempt.

At an estimated 170 mph the canopy ejected and went skywards, also releasing the whole back half of the body. This certainly shocked the observers and somewhat dimmed the hope of taking the record, but the "never say die" Aussie, the pilot, was determined to have a go without such refinements even though beach conditions had deteriorated and the wind was lifting the sand into a heavy haze. Pulling down his goggles the intrepid Miller set off, disappearing into a wall of sand and into the record books by pushing the record up to 164.7 mph, not what we hoped, but a record that would stand for almost four years, and all on the smell of an oily rag.

To reminisce on a time when this sort of thing was possible and practical learning was still in vogue. For me I later entered into F1. as a race engineer where in those early days your skills were required on every aspect of the car, you featured dirty hands but acquired a lot of private satisfaction. It was an era in time we will never see again in the name of Motor Sport. It was four years later when Donald Campbell in his jet-powered Bluebird officially became the fastest man on wheels, putting the record up to 403 mph on Australia's Lake Eyre, but the successful Miller challenge remained for some four years and certainly must always remain as a dinkum piston-engined record done on a shoestring by a man of his time..... Austin Miller (My Mate!)



The final official run minus bodywork

*We're proud to have **MEL McEWAN** & the late **AUSTIN MILLER** as EODC members. Ed*



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QUICK PIXIES – Elfin in the East continued from June newsletter...

events for Iriawan, whom he fondly described as “the little fella, a sparkling guy and hugely loyal, [and] extremely good in a kart...”

TAKING THEM ON

The car was then dispatched to Kuala Lumpur for the 1969 Grand Prix International at Batu Tiga in October. The gearbox seized while Henky Iriawan was leading the race, and Tony Maw, now with the 600 Prototype, took the win and set FTD as well. Mike Cook retired his Elfin Mono due to overheating problems. Iriawan had won the Sports and GT race in an Elfin 300 earlier.

Iriawan's gearbox was rebuilt for the Macau Grand Prix in November where he faced formidable opposition – Australian Kevin Bartlett arrived with a 2.5-litre Mildren-Alfa; Albert Poon, Hong Kong Alfa Romeo importer

and winner of the 1963 and 1965 Singapore Grand Prix, had a Frank William Brabham BT30-Alfa; Hong Kong's John Macdonald, on his way to becoming one of Asia's top drivers, had Mike Costin's Brabham BT10 FVA, the very car used to develop Cowsorth's FVA (and eventually the Formula 1 DFV) engine; and Cathay Pacific pilot Steve Holland had Cooper's Elfin 600C Repco V8. Bartlett, who would later race Formula 5000s in the United States, won ahead of Hong Kong favourite Albert Poon. Weekend dramas were plenty. Iriawan's 600C FVA suffered suspension damage during practice and he parked after two laps, lamenting later that it was intractable over 80mph.

Iriawan used another Elfin, the much-favoured Elfin 300B Sports racer, in the Sports Car race. The 300B's gearbox broke in practice however and he was

unable to bring the car to the line. The race was won by John Macdonald in his newly-acquired Lotus 47.

TERRA FIRMA

Back in Malaysia a week before Christmas, Iriawan easily won the Malaysian National Open championships in his Elfin 600C. The race meeting was the Malaysian Motor Sports Club's last event for 1969 and the main race was for saloon cars. The only overseas drivers were Iriawan and Albert Poon with his Alfa GTA. The combined single-seater and sports car race featured just 10 entrants in the 30-lap race where Iriawan took pole followed by an old Brabham and an even older Lotus 23B sports racer. Iriawan would repeat his win the next year in the same car while nursing an ailing engine with a misbehaving cylinder. Jan Bussell was second in his Brabham, and British

Tony Maw (centre) obtained BP-BOAC and Longines sponsorship for Gamie Cooper (right) in Kuala Lumpur.





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QUICK PIXIES – Elfin in the East *continued...*

Army officer Lt-Colonel David 'Bob' Birrell third in a new Formula Ford Hawke DL2A, the first time a Formula Ford made its appearance on the Asian circuit.

Cooper was still innovating with the 600 (which had also been developed for Formula Ford racing along the way) and the 600D emerged from the 600C, lighter with the Repco 830 V8 now a semi-stressed member of the space frame (the same engine type triple world Formula 1 champion Jack Brabham used in the Tasman Championships of 1968). Malcolm Ramsay arrived for the 1970 Singapore and Malaysian Grand Prix over Easter with Cooper's 1969 600C Repco V8 while Iriawan ran his 600C FVA. Graeme Lawrence now had the ex-Chris Amon Ferrari Dino 246T V6, and given that this was to be the last year of the Formula Libre series, Australian racer Frank Match arrived with a thundering McLaren M10 Formula 5000 with 5-litre Chevy power.

1970 would mark the year the Singapore Grand Prix was reduced to 40 laps from 60 laps of previous years, but with a preliminary 20-lap race to determine grid positions. Match, well-equipped by Rothmans in an air-conditioned truck, found the going tough during practice. A fellow competitor recounted that Match "lost the McLaren in a big way going over the humped, very fast right-hander in the main straight. The car slid for about 150 yards... damaging the front suspension and radiator against some trees in the process..." Match also decimated a bus stop along the infamous Murder Mile. Ramsay's Elfin meanwhile ran into fuel injection trouble, grit in the system had restricted the engine from revving fully. Ramsay lost his hearing for a week as a result of the cacophony. The other competitors did not have it any easier as well, Iriawan finished the 20-lap preliminary race in 6th position, the highest Elfin finisher for the weekend. Twelve cars went out for the formation lap of the 40-lap

Grand Prix but only ten started the race! Ramsay finished 4th and Iriawan improved to 5th.

Ramsay's cruel luck continued at Batu Tiga the following weekend when the 600C's rear suspension collapsed on lap 34 while braking for Rothmans Corner in second place and Iriawan spun out early in the race. He went on however to win the Non-Championship World Sports Car race in the Elfin 300B.

ELVES IN THE CITY

Five Elfin 600s were entered for the 1971 Singapore Grand Prix – Garrie Cooper, John Walker, Tony Maw, Malcolm Ramsay and Hong Kong magnate Teddy Yip. Local architect Edward Tan had an Elfin Mono. Maw's 600 now sported later-style bodywork and wings. Walker was the only outstanding Elfin runner and finished second in both the 20-lap preliminary and the 40-lap Grand Prix.

At the Selangor Grand Prix a week later, Maw's 600, Walker's 600B/SA



Malcolm Ramsay in the Elfin 300 (closest) with Richard Wong and his Porsche 906 Spyder sandwich what appears to be a Lotus 23B in the Sports & GT race at Batu Tiga in 1969.



Australian John Walker in his Elfin 600SA at the 1971 Singapore Grand Prix.

To be continued...



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MEMBERSHIP:

No. 590 - **ANDREW MCLAREN** - (S.A.)

Andrew has the Elfin 623 (#74437) originally campaigned by Ian Richards (1974-79). He is the current Group Q record holder at the Collingrove hillclimb.

No 591 - **DAVID THOMPSON** - (Vic.)

Although not an Elfin owner (yet!), David has joined the club in order to try his hand at club racing in his Holden HQ. His car was previously owned and raced by Darren Carrington.

We welcome our new members and hope they have a long and happy association with the EODC.

FOR SALE:

ELFIN CATALINA 1962

Chassis 625 - Ex Matich "Green Car". Charlie Smith won NSW FJ Championship in 1963 and competed in original Tasman rounds. In very good condition with a fresh Ford 1500 fitted. Eligible log booked as eligible for Formula Junior. Has log book and C of D and some spares included. Ready for Tasman 2012 entry

\$70,000 - Option to purchase a package of most components for a Formula Junior motor.

DOUG ANDERSON 0408910981



ELFIN CATALINA 1962

Chassis 629 - Ex Ron Tonkin and Don Reiman/Mike Tighe WA.

Originally with a Consul engine but now a fresh Ford 1500. Has had a ground up rebuild and in excellent condition. Log book and C of D and some spares included.

DOUG ANDERSON 0408910981

\$55,000



WANTED:

Car members to participate in the following event:

'Red Hill' Car Display at HISTORIC SANDOWN 2012.

- *Free entry for car and driver as well as 1/2 price entry for all passengers in participating cars.
 - *Secure parking among like minded enthusiasts.
 - *The chance to win a trophy for the best club car on display.
- 'Red Hill' will be active on **Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th November.**



Interested?

Then contact **BRIAN REED** - 0427 395 296

and we'll see if we can get a club display together.

'Red Hill' is perhaps better known as 'Dandenong Rd. corner' - a really good viewing spot.



ELFIN OWNERS and DRIVERS CLUB Inc.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Address.....

Postcode.....Fax No.....Mobile No

Phone No.....(home)(work)

Email.....

I am an owner/ex-owner/entrant/driver/mechanic/enthusiast of Elfin cars. (Please circle)

CAR.....

YEAR OF MANUFACTURE.....

CATEGORY.....

CAPACITY.....

ENGINE.....

ENGINE NO.....

CHASSIS NO.....

COLOUR.....

Any other significant mechanical details?

- HISTORY OF CAR -

EVENTS CONTESTED (include results and dates)

PREVIOUS OWNERS (and years)

◆◆◆ Please include a photograph of your car ◆◆◆

I wish to become a member of the Elfin Owners and Drivers Club, and

☐ have enclosed a cheque for \$20 - membership fee (no cash please).

☐ have paid my membership via direct credit -

Bank A/C No. 5003785 BSB 633-000 (Bendigo & Adelaide Bank)

Signed

Please return to Brian Reed
Box 447
AIREYS INLET 3231

or email reidywithchampers@yahoo.com.au

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