

They Make Racing Cars —

PALLISER RACING DESIGN LTD



RACING DRIVER Hugh Dibley first came into contact with Len Wimhurst when he bought a single-seater Lola and then later when he purchased a sports-racing Brabham BT8, in which he had considerable success under the banner of the Stirling Moss Automobile Racing Team. Wimhurst was the workshop foreman at Brabham but confided to Dibley that he thought he could build just as good a car himself. Dibley agreed to let him try and in the summer of 1967 the first single-seater car built by Wimhurst, who by then had left Brabham and was working for Thomas Parkinson Engines, was sitting on pole position for a club race at Castle Combe. Dibley was at the wheel and the car was called a Palliser—Dibley's second Christian name.

Since that somewhat egotistical beginning over 100 Pallisers have been built; they are presently reckoned to be just about the best Formula Fords on the market; the range now encompasses Formula Three, Formula B, Formula Atlantic, Formula Super Vee and a Group 5 sports car, and the company is presently in the process of tripling the size of their very cramped premises in North Street, Clapham.

Dibley is 33 years old, recently married (for the second time) and has been well known in racing circles for almost ten years now. His experience of racing is wide for after a good grounding in single-seaters he moved on very successfully to sports cars and had a particularly good season with the Brabham BT8. This was later replaced by a Group 7 Lola T70-Chevrolet, which he raced both in England and later in a series of races in the States which was the forerunner of the Can-Am series. Since then he has driven the Howmet turbine, and various other sports cars, as well as driving Palliser Formula B cars whenever possible.

One of Dibley's main problems is that of time for he lives an incredibly busy life. Not only is he very much the Managing Director of Palliser but he also flies for BOAC. When we visited the Palliser workshops he had his head buried in a Boeing 747 flying manual. Dibley is presently on a training scheme to fly the big jumbo jets but in fact his main task in the Corporation is as a navigational instructor and examiner, although this job also includes a lot of operational flying which in recent years has been in Boeing 707s.

Dibley's co-director in Britain is 44-year-old Len Wimhurst, who, as well as running the engineering side of the business (leaving the politics to Dibley), designs the cars. Wimhurst is a toolmaker by trade, but joined Lola Cars and later Brabham, for whom he worked for four years, finally being appointed the workshop foreman. He is a man very much in the mould of Brabham's Ron Tauranac, being a practical engineer. His designing talent is as an improver rather than innovator, but it seems to have that attention to detail which makes for a successful car.

The third director is based in America, although he is a Briton by the name of Bob Winkelmann. He is the older brother of Roy Winkelmann, whose Formula Two team scored many victories in the days when Jochen Rindt was driving for him. Bob was in the Royal Navy for a time, then worked for BOAC as a traffic officer, before moving to the States to make his fortune over there. After several jobs he moved into the buying and selling of race cars and at this stage he met Dibley. Winkelmann was shown photographs of the first prototype Palliser and was immediately very enthusiastic and agreed to market them in the States.

In 1968, working in this small-time way, Wimhurst produced three cars which were all sold in the States for Formula B racing. The cars performed well and everyone was very heartened so, in October of that year, it was decided to move into permanent premises at 65 North Street and form a limited company under the name of Palliser Racing Design Ltd.

Completely new Formula Ford, Formula B and Formula A cars were designed, although the side-radiator FA car was, in fact, abandoned. The orders from Bob Winkelmann in the States were sufficient that, at the time, Palliser did not consider attempting to break into the British sector of the market. By the end of that year Palliser were well established as racing car manufacturers having

built 42 Formula Fords and six Formula B cars.

The policy for 1970 was to continue to sell most of the cars in the States, but also open up the market in Britain once the original batch of orders for America was fulfilled. This is exactly what happened and it was further decided to run a works car in Formula Ford for Peter Lamplough and lend a chassis for Formula Three to Roger Keele. Lamplough soon started to bring some excellent results and, from the middle of the season, was backed up by a private customer, Bob Evans, who was also a regular winner. Several more cars were sold in Britain as a result and they have built up an excellent reputation not only for the actual cars but also for the friendly and efficient service offered. So 1970 was a good year with 50 more Formula Fords produced, plus three more FBs and a prototype Super Vee and Formula Atlantic.

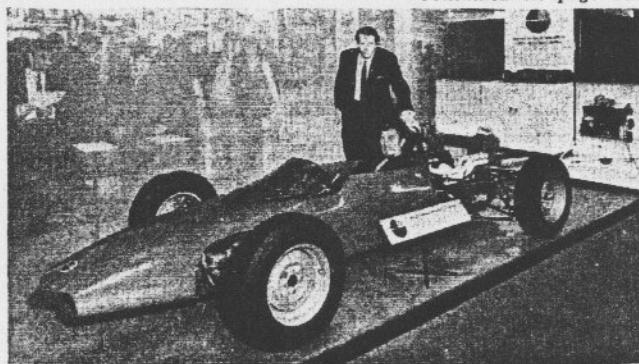
Another aspect of the business is the selling of components, for which the firm has already become firmly established amongst the various special builders and small-time manufacturers. Palliser sell, as separate items, their cast wheels, magnesium uprights, steering racks and virtually any other part of their racing cars people might like to purchase. Firms like March Engineering, McNamara in Germany, Daren and several others have all used Palliser parts from time to time, while the oil pumps produced by the company are used extensively by BRM for their twin-cam and Formula Ford engines. In fact, Palliser have a good working relationship with BRM and their engines are recommended and used by the majority of Palliser drivers. The castings are made by Kent Alloys and, for instance, a complete front upright assembly would cost about £50, less the brake.

Dibley has found the rapid growth of the company rather catching up on him and, for a time, he used to do all the books and accounts himself but this is no longer possible. Now he has an office manager in Julian Lakin, plus a secretary, and Australian racing driver Vern Schuppan, who has just joined the company, as a general Man Friday to help out. The work force varies depending on the time of year but averages around ten employees with several sub-contractors helping out in times of stress.

The future looks bright, too, with a well-filled order book for the coming season and the long overdue move a couple of doors down the road into much larger premises. The old workshop will also be retained for prototype work, bringing the total space up to something like 5,000 sq. ft.

Basically, Palliser offer four models for 1971. The largest number will no doubt be Formula Fords and the latest version, the WDF3, is not radically different from last year's car, but provides improved suspension geometry, altered body shape and generally more cockpit comfort for the driver. The next model is the WDB3, which is available for Formula Atlantic, Formula B, Formula Two and Formula Three applications. This is a space frame based on the FF design but with stressed aluminium panels and different suspension. It is with the Palliser Formula Super Vee that the company hopes to expand into Europe, and already this space-frame device has attracted orders from Germany and America. Finally, and this is a new diversion for the Clapham firm, is a Group 5, 2-litre sports car. This is actually being made for John Green's Daren firm under a manufacturing agreement rather similar to the McLaren-Trojan one. Already in Mk. II form the Daren has showed potential and with the backing of Palliser and a more efficient body shape much is hoped for from this new alliance. Dibley himself is expecting to drive a BRM V8-

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EARLY PALLISER.—One of the early Formula Ford Pallisers seen here exhibited at the 1969 Racing Car Show. Bob Winkelmann is seated in the car while Hugh Dibley stands by.

TWO ENGINES PER TEAM BEING THE ONLY ONE THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BE

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powered Daren in several races. This is the company's first attempt at producing a monocoque chassis, but they are finding it a most interesting challenge. In fact, Len Wimhurst has a monocoque Formula Two car on his drawing board at present which may appear later in the year. Meanwhile, all the space frames for the production cars are built by Arch Motors, up at Huntingdon, who do similar work for nearly all the major firms. Palliser also have the manufacturing rights for a Formula A car originally designed by Len Bailey and Frank Gardner, while a one-off hill-climb car is being built for Mike McDowell and this utilises a Formula Two chassis with a 1967 Repco 3-litre engine shoehorned in the back.

Palliser intend to run several works or works-assisted cars in this coming season. Schuppan will drive a Formula Atlantic and possibly

also a Formula Super Vee, while Lamplough will conduct a Formula Three under the banner of Alan McKechnie Racing. There are several promising and fast privateers with Palliser Formula Fords so the firm's representation in this category will be left to them.

Dibley has no great five-year plan for the company—he works on the basis that he will take everything as it comes. So far, he says, the company has exported something like 350,000 dollars worth of business and hopes to top the half-million mark before the end of the year. However, he points out that very little of this has been seen as profits and the plan is to plough all the money back into the business. So from small beginnings and still with a part-time managing director Palliser Racing Design has built up a good reputation and business in the short space of time and all the indications are that they will continue to expand and bring plenty of dollars to this country.—A. R. M.