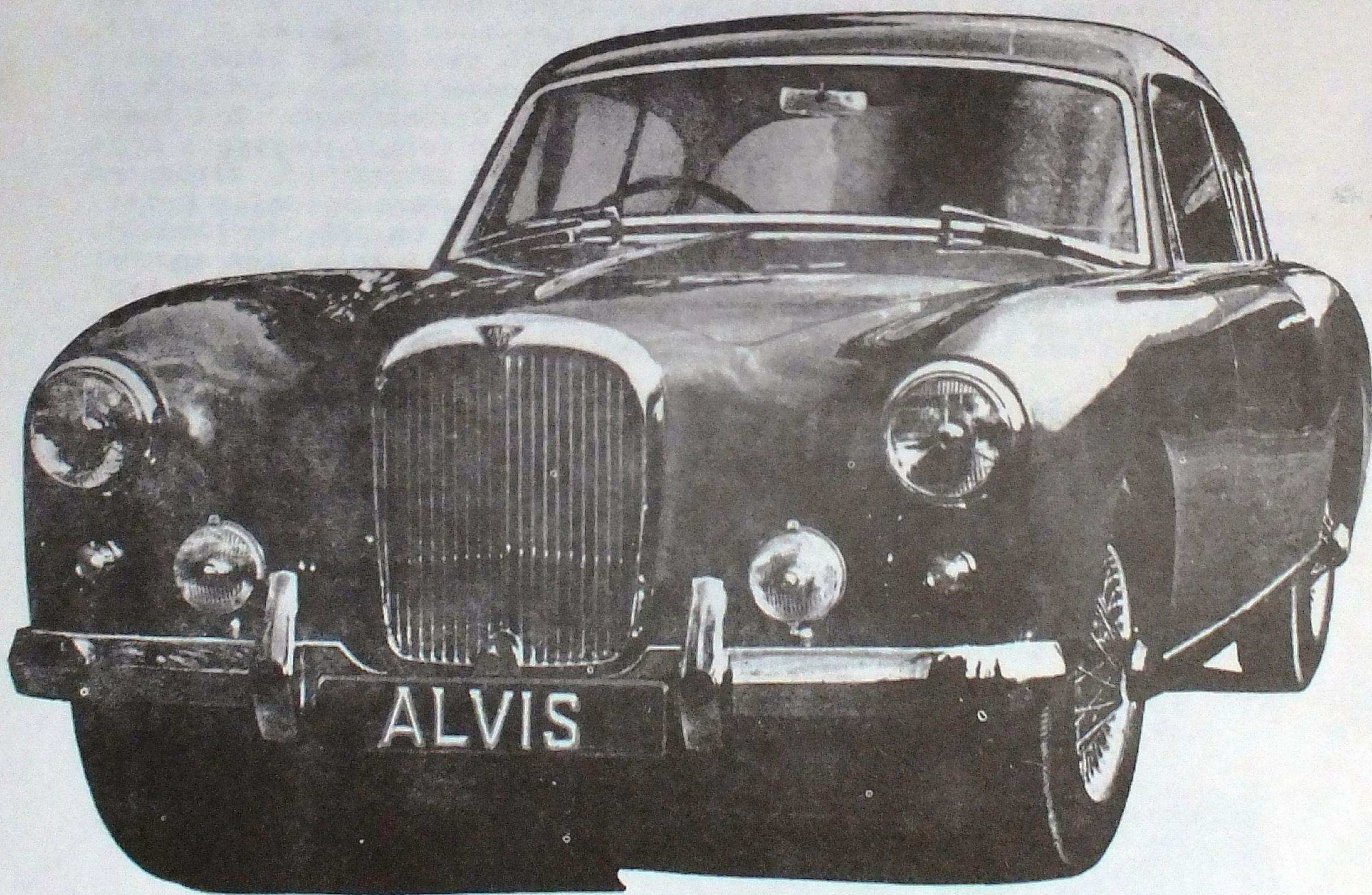




TC108/G CAR REGISTER



MOST EXPENSIVE? A publicity photo of the TC108/G, which was quoted at £3,451. 7. 0d. ex works (including 50% Purchase Tax).

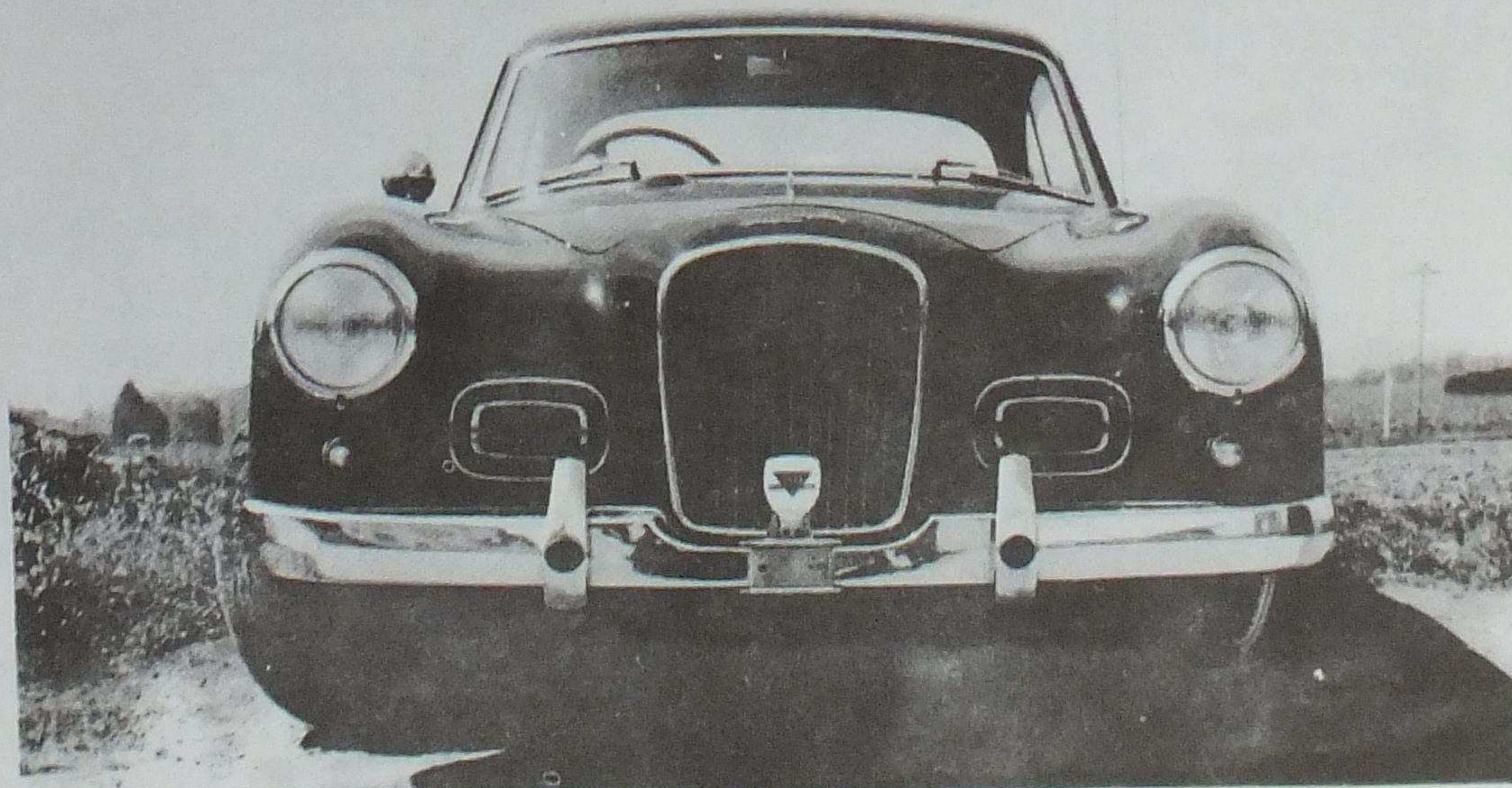
THE TC 108/G by Dave Culshaw and John Fox

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As a catalogued Alvis model the TC108/G first appeared at the London Show of October 1955, but its Graber-style format was already well established. It is not widely realised that three TA 14s (known as "Tropic Coupes") received the Graber treatment as early as 1947/48, but none have subsequently come to light. They were followed by 9 TA21s (8 convertible + 1 coupe) 8 TC21s (6 convertible + 2 coupe), and 15 TC21/100s (8 convertible + 7 coupe). Thus it was that early in 1955 two further chassis of the TC21/100 type were despatched by the works to Switzerland to become the prototypes of the new catalogued model. These, both r.h.d. duly returned, and were registered SHP 642 and TDU 810 respectively. Both are still extant, but the former is by far the better known, being featured in numerous automotive publications, particularly as the Autocar Road Test car on March 22nd 1957 (when it was approaching two years old), and more recently in the Autocar of 16th February 1980 as one of Mike Taylor's "Pleasure Machines" subjects.

From the mechanical point of view there was no major difference between the TC 108/G, and the earlier TC21/100 series, and it was therefore the last model to use an Alvis-designed gearbox. The mild confusion referred to in the previous articles of 1974, still applies because the model exists in two forms: Swiss-built by Graber, 24 in number (15 coupes + 9 convertibles), and British built by Willowbrook of Loughborough, on Graber jigs. The exact number of the latter remains in doubt and recent requests from Willowbrook reveal only that 25 bodies were sanctioned, allocated numbers 56001-56025. Some sources say 16 were actually built, but the highest known body number is 57013 on DEK 385 (25928), the 57 digits indicating completion in 1957. Herein lies another mystery as car 25927 is supposed to have body 57010, also 1957 but car 25919 was registered YWA 333 which Glass's guide says is a 1956 car but the body is reportedly 57011 from 1957!

We also know that body number 56008 is still unaccounted for. I once had a theory that this was the unused shell that lay around the Jobs Lane Service Department for many years. This was eventually sold to a member in the Wigan area who mounted it for a short period on Grey Lady chassis 25848 - LFY 509. This however is now known to have been cut up, and the front end used to repair Willowbrook TGA 629 (25927) which had suffered some frontal damage. Whilst this hypothesis remains a possibility, with the benefit of a decades hindsight 56008 may equally be sitting WDU 434. Those members interested in reading further into the construction by Willowbrook of these bodies, are referred to a finely detailed article on the subject in Autocar of 26th July 1957, which is very well illustrated. Willowbrooks differed from Swiss built versions in having a glass-fibre dashboard and Rover 90 style rear lamp clusters. Graber used Grey Lady lenses for the prototypes and Silver Cloud lenses on later cars.

Car No.	Year	Model	wire wheels	Coachbuilder	Body No.	Engine No.	Registration	AOC No	colour/comment
25909		TC108G		Willowbrook	56002				
25910	1957	TC108G		Willowbrook	56007	25910	DJS 600	6774Sc	2nd owner
25911	1956	TC108G	ww	GRABER Special	DHC	25911	AMW216L	4416EA	green
25912	1956	TC108G		Willowbrook	56006		543 ALG	(1957)	Cheshire
25913		TC108G		Willowbrook?	lhd			Ca	
25914	1957	TC108G		Willowbrook	56001		YNK 922	803N	Herts.
25915				GRABER?					
25916				GRABER?					
25917				GRABER?					
25918	1956	TC108G		GRABER CABRIOLET	rh		ZH25496		CH grey
25919	1956	TC108G		Willowbrook	57011?		YWA 333		
25920				Graber?					
25921	1957	TC108G		GRABER Coupe	rh	25921	SG87013	6781CH	green
25922	1957	TC108G	ww	GRABER CABRIOLET	rh	25922	SO-6865		CH green
25923	1957	TC108G	ww	GRABER Coupe	rh	25923	ZH-3312		CH blue
25924	1957	TC108G	ww	GRABER Coupe	lh	25924		6161CH	blue
25925	1956	TC108G	ww	Willowbrook	56009		TLL 394	3752Sc	blue
25926	1957	TC108G		Willowbrook	56004		XYB 560	6165	Bristol
25927	1957	TC108G		Willowbrook	57010		TGA 629	2815N	Glasgow
25928	1957	TC108G		Willowbrook	57013		DEK 385	5266SE	Wigan
25929		TC108G		GRABER					
25930	1958	TC108G		GRABER Coupe	rhd				CH silver
25931		TC108G		Willowbrook	56012		9 JGC		
25932		TC108G		Willowbrook	56003		BYE 1	5389Sc	
25933		TC108G		Willowbrook	56008?		WDU 434		
25934		TC108G		GRABER					
25935		TC108G		Willowbrook	56005		WWK 194	5600Sc	
25936	1957	TC108G		GRABER Coupe	rhd	25793	SZ24142	5787CH	blue
25937		TC108G		GRABER					
25938	1959	TD PROTOTYPE		Park Ward saloon		25938	9 VMG	1913SE	brown
25939	1957	TC108G		GRABER special	lhd				wine
25940	1958	TC108G		GRABER cabriolet	rh		BE92442		wine
25941	1958	TC108G		GRABER Cabriolet	lh	25941	SG34234	4438CH	silver *
25942	1958	TC108G		GRABER Coupe	rh		BE 8940		blue
25943	1958	TC108G		GRABER					
25944	1958	TC108G		GRABER Coupe				6161CH	
25945		TC108G		GRABER				CH	



All the Willowbrooks which have so far come to light have been closed cars, but it is worth remembering that in October 1957, Alvis Limited decided to introduce and catalogue a convertible version too. The photograph of it which I have, shows recessed spotlights typical of the Graber specials, but with a prominent vertical crease forward of the rear wings, more characteristic of the later TDs.

Whilst on the subject of related TDs, I previously mentioned a letter which I have from Herman Graber, which besides referring to the design of the prototypes for Willowbrook, also refers to a single prototype for Park Ward. This we can assume to be 25938, though in the TC 108/G series - a TD21, the first. The photographs which I have seen of this car - 9 VMG show it with a grille considerably wider than the one familiar TC/TD versions. It would be interesting to learn whether this was original, or a development modification. It does not seem to have been done for aesthetic reasons. Whilst raising this mystery, there are two others. One of the Swiss-bodied cars in the sequence (25936) has been declared by a previous owner to be a TC21/100. Possible, but not very likely. Stranger things have happened, such as how the peony red TD21 Series II which appears in the makers white cover brochure, bears the registration number TDU 810 - that of 25859 - the second TC108/G prototype.

The new Register is fairly self-explanatory, with only minor additions, and changes of locality from a decade ago, and from this list let us not forget 25941 which is the famous convertible in which A.O.C. Member Ralph Schwarz made that epic dash across the Iron Curtain, with his fiancée concealed in a false petrol tank; a memorable "Alvis" journey ranking alongside Basnett and Redferns 1961 Moscow trip, or indeed Scottish Nationalists use of a Firefly to spirit the Stone of Scone away from Westminster Abbey some years earlier.

In conclusion, the TC108/G remains a model of great charm and charisma, and Members are urged to forward any snippets of information they may have no matter how apparently trivial. Much work needs to be done before the list can be considered as finalised. In this connection perhaps Swiss members may be able to advise if there is such a thing as a "Graber Body Number" anywhere on their machines, which would assist in pinpointing individual examples, and establishing exact numbers built.

Swiss built cars do not all conform to the familiar pattern, the Standard model being augmented by a Special, and also a Super. The Special has a slimmer surround to the radiator grille, larger spot light recesses, and vents in the front wings, whilst the Super has lines more akin to the TD21, a wrap-round rear bumper, and a mesh-type grille rather like that on the very special Works TD21 (5193 VC) which was believed to have sported six Amal carburettors at one stage of its existence.