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Dame Nellie Melba's 1909 Renault — back on the road.

Melba's car has a spin

Dame Nellie Melba's 1909 touring car took to the roads again last week.

By PETER MAHONEY

The famous Australian operatic soprano bought the majestic-looking Renault in Paris during one of her many world tours.

She had it shipped to London, where the coachwork was built by the then famous firm of Alford and Adler.

Its present owner, Mr George Williams, said the car was rediscovered on a Mitchell property, just outside Lithgow, 18 years ago.

Dame Nellie was originally Miss Mitchell, and the property was her uncle's.

Mr Williams has restored the veteran to new condition, and its gleaming, hand-painted maroon finish is adorned by gold leaf.

The Renault cruises at 40 mph with few problems, although Mr Williams said, "There's no fear that it's done over half a million miles."

He wouldn't put a price on it — an academic point, since he wouldn't sell for any price.

"I have three sons and a daughter, and I've spelt it out that when the time

comes the car goes to the Canberra Museum," he said.

The Renault, which was on display at the Opera House two years ago, had last week's outing as rehearsal for the 1980 Cartier Prestige Oblige et Concours d'Elegance to be held at the Showground on August 23 and 24.

This is not a normal motoring event, but a selective parade of the world's most beautiful prestige cars combined with what the promoters call a light-hearted contest of wits.

Channel 9 personality Sue Smith, who will ride in the Renault, hired an ankle-length, once-worn Edwardian dress and a flowery picture hat for the rehearsal.

Last year the Cartier Prestige Oblige weekend raised more than \$8,000 for the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, and this year the organisers hope to do even better.

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