

BACKFIRE



Volume 54 No 1 May 2020

PO Box 200 Newcomb VIC 3219
www.wdhvcgeelong.com



Club meetings: 7.30pm 2nd Tues each month. **Clubroom:** Geelong Showgrounds, 79 Breakwater Rd East Geelong.



*Backfire is the monthly newsletter of the Western District Historic Vehicle Club (Reg No A00011857H).
Member of the Federation of Victorian Veteran, Vintage & Classic Vehicle Clubs.*

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President's Piece

Hello members.

First up, I trust that you are all keeping well in these unusual times. I have spoken to a few of you over the last month and have discovered that you are adapting pretty well.

No doubt about it, this last month has been like no other (in my lifetime) and I certainly hope that next month will see some level of normality beginning to return. What I don't want to see is the lifting of these current restrictions too soon or perhaps too dramatically. My fear is that if we do, we run the risk of undoing all the good work that has been done to-date. Time will tell.

Soon the committee will make contact with each other to determine whether we can have a meeting, with the view to getting the club active again. A lot of this will obviously be dependent on the Government's ruling on social gatherings. I hope that as soon as we get the go ahead, we can recommence the rallies and outings as previously listed in Backfire.

Been getting a bit of exercise walking around the town. I have to tell you I've never seen so many beautifully manicured gardens in my life! At least people have been putting all this down time to good use.

How many have been following my sage advice and been busy out in your shed? I can say that being isolated in the shed is wonderful so long as you don't run out of stuff. My project has taken a few huge leaps while stuck at home. By the time you read this, the chassis fabrication work should be completed and with some luck, I will have it stripped back down for painting. I hope I get as much fun driving this car as I'm having bringing it back from the grave.

In last month's edition I mentioned the little issue I had with the gearshift in the clubman. Well this has been solved, thanks to our member Rod Campbell. He happened to have a gearstick hanging about and was kind enough to give it to me. Thanks Rod. Another job sorted!

So that's all for this month, you know what you have to do: get out in your shed.

An Englishman walks into the Australia embassy in London and enquires about migrating to Australia and what is involved with Australian citizenship. The embassy official asked the man if he had a criminal record, to which the man replied, "Is that still necessary?"

Dallas

MARCH GUEST SPEAKER - John Hickford

John Hickford is still actively involved with cars.

At 88 years old, he is among our more senior club members, but despite that he remains an active participant in meetings and club outings.

Given half a chance he will squeeze his tall body in behind the wheel of one of his beloved Lancias and send it roaring up a hill climb or along a standing quarter mile. He still knows how to swing a spanner and has a lifetime of making, modifying and fixing cars behind him.

Not to mention driving them!

Last month John gave a delightful account of his lifelong love affair with the Lancia. Prompted by questions from moderator, John Bailey and from the floor, John talked about the various vehicles he had worked on and raced.

Webmaster Damien (Gus) Giustini had cobbled together a PowerPoint presentation to further prompt and illustrate the conversation.

Putting his heritage to good use, Gus had also translated an extract from an Italian book that contained an extract on John Hickford's career with cars.

This is reprinted on the next page, along with some of the photos displayed on the night.

- Ed



MARCH GUEST SPEAKER - John Hickford c t d

Here is a translated extract from the Italian book that John gave me....

- Damien Giustini

Then suddenly an amazing change! A private Australian, John Hickford, has built (and the word is, with pieces from his Lambda) a single-seater for uphill races, mounting the front suspension and the original mechanics at the front, but with the engine, obviously very well thought of, prepared and positioned in the centre of the car, behind the driver,

Of course for us conservative fans this is something a little frightening, but so be it.

Passion knows no limits, not even between Lambdists!

However the car still seems to exist and was timed at a maximum speed of 117 mph, which is 190kpm.



John was introduced to the father of touring car ace and six-time Bathurst 1000 winner, Larry Perkins, through Ron Chandler, the Lancia dealer and wrecker, who built a Lancia-based special of his own in the early 1950s.

As a teenager, John worked at Chandler's Hawthorn dealership on the weekends, so he knew in advance through Perkins' regular visits what he was building. John's first look at the 'Perkins Special' came in 1951, when Eddie brought the racer down to Melbourne from his home at Cowangie in Victoria's Mallee.

In an impromptu test run in what was then Melbourne's semi-rural outer suburb of Templestowe, I am sure John remembers a piece of the car's custom aluminium bodywork parting company with the

car and wrapping itself around Eddie's head!

The Eddie Perkins' Perkins Special was built in 1950 using a Lancia engine, transmission and suspension parts on a bespoke chassis, so it could be rear engine. After some racing mishaps, it was rebuilt by John Hickford, who changed the engine to an Austin engine in Healey 100 spec and renamed it 'Lancia Austin Special'.



One of Hickford's other changes, which we can see in the photo, was to replace the Lancia transverse leaf spring at the rear with "coil-over-shocks" so although the engine isn't visible it must be Hickford's version of the car.

Learning from past mistakes, John fitted a transverse leaf spring rear suspension this time, as per the Perkins original, while a quirky touch on the re-born Lancia Special is the fuel tank made from a genuine 1950s jerry can!



After some issues with the engine purchased specifically for this vehicle, John cannibalised his 1925 tourer for its engine and radiator to give the new Lancia Special its first competitive run at Rob Roy in August, 2011 - 53 years after his last run there!

Since then, some fine-tuning has followed, along with runs at Mt Tarrengower and this year's Historic Winton, where the car drew a LOT of attention.



Gary's Giggles

Tall Tales from our Legendary Librarian

A bloke takes the day off work and heads for the golf course. He is on the second hole when he notices a frog sitting beside the green. And it's croaking: "Ribbet, nine iron", over and over again.

So he grabs a nine iron and hits the ball to within 25 cm of the cup: "That's amazing! You must be a lucky frog!"

The frog replied: "Ribbet. Lucky frog."

The man picks up the frog and takes it with him to the next hole. "What do you think, frog?"

"Ribbet, three wood."

He takes out a three wood and hits a hole in one. By the end of the day, the man has enjoyed the best game of his life and is reluctant to leave the frog. He's just about to pop it in his pocket when the frog says: "Ribbet, Star City."

They go to the casino and the bloke asks the frog, "Now what?"

The frog says: "Ribbet, roulette."

They approach the roulette table and the bloke whispers: "What do you think I should bet?"

The frog replies: "Ribbet. \$3000, black six."

It's a million to one win but with the frog's track record the bloke piles his chips on black six and wins a fortune.

Taking his winnings, the man books the best room in the hotel, sits the frog down and says: "Frog, I don't know how to repay you. You've improved my golf game enormously and won me all this money. I'm very, very grateful."

The frog looks up at him with big froggy eyes and says: "Ribbet, kiss me."

Well, why not? After everything the frog has done it deserves a kiss. Whereupon the frog turns into a beautiful 15-year-old girl.

"And that, your honour, is how she ended up in my room."

Dodge Brothers Ute in the UK.

The Crossley brothers, Francis and William, two God fearing men with an engineering education, were operating an engineering business at Manchester, in the English Midlands.

Interest in internal combustion engines led them to obtain the UK and worldwide (except Germany) rights to manufacture and distribute engines to the Otto & Langden of Cologne gas/fuel atmospheric internal combustion design in 1869, and later, in 1876, the Otto 4 stroke/cycle engine, and also in 1877, the diesel system.

Crossley Brothers (company name) manufactured and distributed over 100,000 engines before becoming part of the Rolls Royce Power Engineering group in 1988.

In April 1906 the brothers registered and commence manufacture of quality passenger vehicles. Interestingly in the early 1900's Henry Ford visited Crossley Motors factory to inspect their production line.

The Dodge brothers were suppliers to the early vehicle manufacturing industry (including Henry Ford) and commenced importing cars as Dodge Brothers Cars in 1914.

The photo, taken at the Crossley factory, shows what appears to be a pre-20's Dodge Brothers Utility with the company name Crossley



Brothers of Manchester painted on the tray sides. Why did the Crossley Brothers use a post-1914 imported American vehicle in lieu of a vehicle from the Crossley Motors range? Did Crossley Motors management not want to have one of their vehicles as a work vehicle? Maybe the Dodge Brothers utility was an ex-army vehicle acquired in 1919, after WW1? (The Dodge utility was imported under an arrangement to supply engines to Dodge in America.)

From 1914 Crossley Motors did supply the armed services with of thousands of goods and service vehicles for WW1. After the war the factory was recommissioned and many of these vehicles to be returned to civilian life.

The Dodge utility in the photo is right hand drive and as such is an export vehicle to the UK but probably not during the conflicts of WW1.

The vehicle appears to have a roadster style, with the hood folded down behind the passenger. The headlight have the embossed 'star' style lenses.

Many questions to be debated but here is the photographic evidence, and, as we all know the camera does not lie.

(Image from the Crossley Register Newsletter No102)

- Harold Newton

Letters to the Editor



Those were the days

My mum used to cut chicken, chop eggs and spread butter on bread on the same cutting board with the same knife and no bleach, but we didn't seem to get food poisoning. Our school sandwiches were wrapped in wax paper in a brown paper bag, not in ice pack coolers, but I can't remember getting Ecoli.

Almost all of us would have rather gone swimming in the creek, the lake or at the beach instead of a pristine chlorinated pool (talk about boring). No beach closures then either.

We all did Phys Ed and risked permanent injury with a pair of Dunlop sandals or bare feet if you couldn't afford the runners. No cross-training athletic shoes with air cushion soles and built-in light reflectors that cost as much as a small car. I can't recall any injuries but they must have happened because they tell us how much safer we are now.

We got the cane or the strap for doing something wrong at school. They used to call it discipline yet we all grew up to accept the rules and to honour and respect those older than us.

We had at least 40 kids in our class and somehow we all learned to read and write, do maths and spell almost all the words needed to write a grammatically correct letter. Funny that!!

We all said prayers in school, irrespective of our religion, sang the national anthem and saluted the flag and no one got upset. Staying in detention after school netted us all sorts of negative attention we wish we hadn't got.

And we all knew we had to accomplish something before we were allowed to be proud of ourselves.

I just can't recall how bored we were without computers, Play Station, Nintendo, X-box or 270 digital TV cable stations. We weren't!! Don't even mention about the rope swing into the river or climbing trees

Oh yeah ... and where were the antibiotics and sterilisation kit when I got that bee sting? I could have been killed!

We played "King of the Castle" on piles of dirt or gravel left on vacant building sites and when we got hurt, mum pulled out the 2/6 bottle of iodine and then we got our backside spanked. Now it's a trip to the emergency room, followed by a 10 day dose of antibiotics and then mum calls the lawyer to sue the contractor for leaving a horribly vicious pile of gravel where it was such a threat.

We never needed to get into group therapy and/or anger management classes. We were obviously so duped by so many societal ills, that we didn't even notice that the entire country wasn't taking Prozac!

Blow me down! How did we ever survive?

Love to all of us who shared this era, and to all who didn't – I am sorry for what you missed. Wouldn't trade it for anything! Aaaaah, those WERE the days!!!!

- Anonymous

Bay to Birdwood

I made a call to the History Trust of South Australia regarding the Bay to Birdwood Rally last week. The Birdwood Museum could not be contacted: (staff on leave and the answering machine off). They rang back yesterday to answer my query re the running of the B 2 B in October.

At this stage they are still considering their options and will it depend on what the various governments decide with the closed state borders.

The lady (Pauline) whom I spoke to suggested that by the end of May a decision will be made as to:

- Running as currently setup in September.
- Running a South Australian entry only (closed borders)
- Postpone the event to a later date.
- Who knows!

Will have to wait and see.

In the meantime keep safe and extend that shed.

Regards,

Harold

Midnight Musings

Little Gus is still Little Gus as 70 is not 'old' to a lot of us.

Ivan Cave

Ivan sent this in response to Robin's photo of Damien (Little Gus) celebrating his birthday at the last Avoca Weekend (April Backfire) - Ed

Late Mail

Some news I received this morning: I entered a virtual car show with the Seal Cove Auto Museum (USA) and we took out third place with the Hupmobile in the Brass Era class.

I have won a family pass to the museum. (ha ha hah - when it opens again)

Simon Anderson

Congrats Simon. Good that car shows car can still run "on line". Be a long trip to redeem your prize!

Send your Letter to Editor to:

editor@wdvcgeelong.com

or drop it in my letterbox

(50 James Cook Drive Wandana Heights 3216)

Club Activities

All WDHVC activities remain cancelled until at least **1 June 2020**. The committee will review the situation on 19 May 2020.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held as soon as it is considered safe and responsible to do so. Your current Committee will stay in office until an AGM can be held.

Membership Renewal

The 22 members who have not yet renewed their club membership **are unfinancial**. To renew, complete the Membership Renewal Form (available from the Registrar, Barb van Galen (Ph 5278 9368) and **post it** to:

**The Treasurer,
WDHVC Inc**

PO Box 200 NEWCOMB VIC 3219.

Membership renewal for postal applications is \$50.

Red Plate Vehicles

Any unfinancial members with vehicles on the club plate scheme through WDHVC must not drive them, as VicRoads considers these vehicles to be unregistered. Heavy fines apply if you are detected driving unregistered vehicles on the roads.

Red Plate registration renewals. Contact Gus Shea directly to arrange for your paperwork to be signed if it falls due in the coming months. Ph Gus on 0400 203 151.

Backfire

Backfire will continue to be produced. Thank you for all the fascinating contributions received for May. Keep up the great work! Help us all to stay in touch.

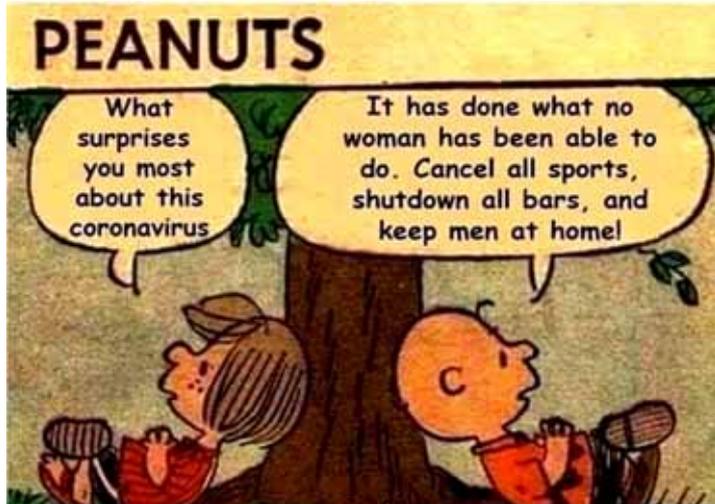
Website

Gus is maintaining the website: check it out for updates and items of interest.

25 MAY - MONDAY JUNE BACKFIRE DEADLINE

By 5pm please.

Contact: Jon Breedveld 0417 311 441



Anzac Day 2020



I stood in my driveway at 6am,
holding a lighted candle in
Grandma's candlestick holder.

Flickering lights up and down the street made me feel proud
to be a fair dinkum Aussie.

After the minute silence, I heard various bugle calls from
different directions. The good old Aussie spirit brought out the
people who had a go at playing, whether they could or not.

I heard Advance Australia Fair played way off in the distance.
I thought that we are blessed to be part of our wonderful
country, Australia.

I thought of the stories Grandma told me, about her brother
Tom Rogers, who died in the Boer War.

I thought about Mum's brother, Jack Chigwidden, who died,
along with the whole crew of their Lancaster, when it crashed
near Tilburg, Netherlands. Jack is the only Australian buried
in the Tilburg cemetery. We visited his grave some years
later, and were impressed with the way the grateful Tilburg
residents had maintained the whole cemetery.

I thought about my father-in-law, Fred Trebilcock a strapping
6 foot 2 teenager, who lied about his age, so he could go off
to the great adventure of war. I thought about how he threw
himself into life as a husband, a father, a fierce campaigner
for the rights of the intellectually disabled, a miner deep
underground in Broken Hill. Then a career change to become
"The Gentle Giant" as a nurse in Geelong Hospital.

Fred kept the war bottled up inside until his wife, Betty's
death. Then we were told of him being sent to New Guinea,
where he stumbled on a Japanese camp. The Japanese
quickly disappeared, leaving behind the mugs of strips of
meat they had been eating. Then, Fred found the body of the
Australian soldier, from whose body those strips of meat had
been cut. "They told us we would be shot at, not that we
would be eaten!"

The army found out that he was under age, so he was
shipped back to Australia, only to be put on an over loaded
train for Darwin. Every time the train came to a slight rise,
everyone had to get out and push. As a Darwin Defender,
Fred found his greatest enemy was trigger happy American
soldiers, who fired first before asking "Who goes there?"

Darwin was a terrible place to be. The Japanese dropped
more bombs on Darwin than on Pearl Harbour, using the
same aircraft. Fortunately for Fred, he survived the war.

"No bugger is ever going to tell me what to do ever again!"

Fred was pushed in a wheel chair by our eldest son, Paul in
the 2016 Anzac Day march, proudly wearing his medals. He
had proudly marched every year until then. He died on
2 October 2016, having led a good life.

I also thought of the many who returned from wars, injured
physically and mentally, to suffer for the rest of their lives. I
thought of the loved ones, who shared the suffering and pain.
I thought of the inexcusable national scandal, of how our
Vietnam returned soldiers returned not to be treated as he-
roes, but to be jeered at and abused. Shame Australia,
shame!

To all Australians who have in any way contributed in any of
our wars, I offer my heartfelt thanks and admiration.

LEST WE FORGET.

- Peter Telfer

The Reluctant A-model Ford Ute

In 1947 our family moved to the bush – to a little cleared farm at the end of a dead-end road, with a time-worn house and a dark green 1928 Ford ute. Mum and Dad were in their early thirties, and they rattled up with their truckload of furniture and three kids. Douglas was nearly five, Jim was one and I was three. We were greeted by our nearest neighbour, a smiling Mrs. Bassett, bearing a big bunch of flowers. The scene was set for life at Timboon, surrounded by good neighbours.

The trusty old A-model ute, which came with the farm, was our only motor transport, and Mum never wanted to learn to drive. Dad drove us everywhere in that ute – to take the cans of milk to the corner, to Timboon or Cobden for shopping, to visit neighbours, to the beach at Port Campbell and even to Geelong, which took nearly all day. Mum, Dad and the baby sat in the front. The rest of us sat in the back, with Mum banging on the window if she thought we were getting out of hand. Sometimes the ute broke down – a “petrol block” was the usual diagnosis!

On the night of July 21st, 1950, quite unbeknown to Douglas, Jim and me, a great event was to occur - Mum was to have another baby. When it came time to go to hospital, the old Ford refused to go. It was run down the hill to kick start it, but it still refused to go. Mum and our Nana Trigg walked the half mile to the Bassett’s farm house with the suitcase, while Dad struggled with the ute. Alas, Mr. Bassett was away with their car. Mrs. Bassett set off across the paddocks for the next neighbour, who also had an old ute. Her lantern blew out and she became lost for a time.

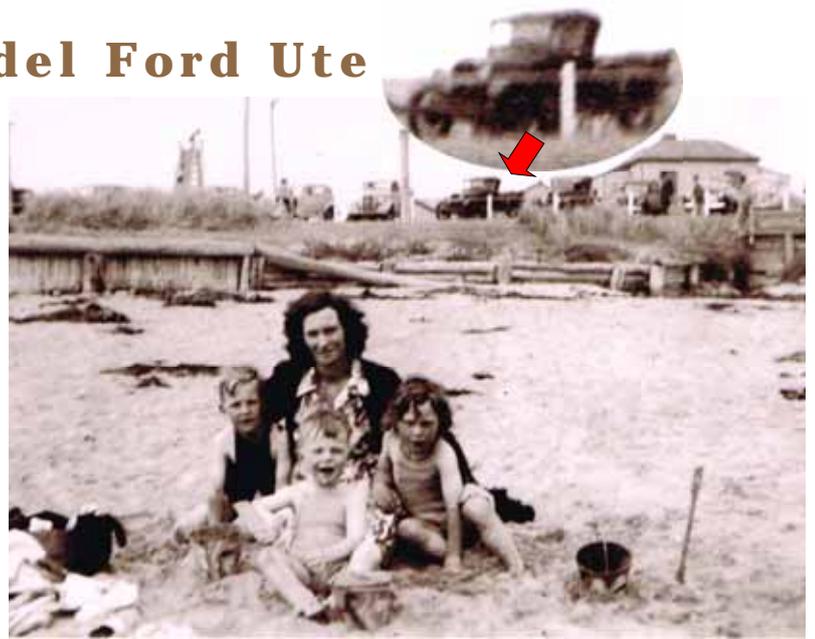
Meanwhile Mum and Nana returned home with the suitcase. Dad hitched the horse, lazy old Nell, who never pulled, to the truck. Nana, an intrepid little woman, led the horse, while Dad and Mum were in the ute. Nell pulled like a champion that night. The truck coughed into life and off they rushed, 12 miles to Cobden, arriving just in time for Kathy’s birth. Kathy was the last baby in our family!



That all happened nearly 70 years ago. The old Ford has long gone, but my brother Douglas and his wife Margaret still live on that farm at the end of the dead end road, with the Bassett family as their neighbours. *Pat. Evans.*

Photos: (Above) Mum, Douglas, Jim and me at the beach at Port Campbell. The old ute is in the row of vehicles in the background. That would have been before 1950. How Port Campbell has changed in the years since that photo! (L) A restored example of the 28 Ford ute.

PS: Good to hear that Pat’s husband, Robin, is recovering well after heart surgery - Ed



MEMBERSHIP & RED PLATE RENEWALS

All WDHVC members who did not renew their club membership by 31 March are unfinancial. To renew, complete the Membership Renewal Form and post it to the Treasurer with a \$50 cheque. Postal address: The Treasurer, WDHVC, PO Box 200 NEWCOMB VIC 3219.

Please notify the Secretary if you wish to resign from the Club.

VicRoads considers unfinancial members’ red plate vehicles to be unregistered. Heavy fines apply for driving unregistered vehicles on the roads.

Permit holders can renew permits by mailing the renewal to: VicRoads, GPO Box 1644 Melbourne 3001.

RALLIES & RUNS

A long time ago

- when we are allowed to do things fun things with our vehicles (March 2020.)

My wife Tess and I participated in the Veteran Car Club 1 & 2 cylinder rally for pre-1919 cars and bikes. It was based in Hamilton in mid-March, just before COVID-19 shut everything down.

The four day event started on Thursday with a shakedown run of 42kms around the district, where there had been a German settlement many years earlier, on some very nice single lane roads with very minimal traffic.

Friday was going to be a big day as most of our vehicles only had a cruising speed of 25 mph. We had ahead of us 115 km for our old cars and bikes. We set off from rally headquarters at the Hamilton Car Club and headed out towards the foot of the Grampians. We stopped at a super fine Merino wool farm called "Serena Park". The owner, whose family have been there since the mid-1800s, told us how the wool is grown. Lunch was at the Grampians golf club. We were allowed to park on the course and the wildlife had a look at our vehicles. After lunch we headed off down a bumpy road. Those of you that have ridden in these veteran cars or bikes will know that the suspension is quite inadequate. Unfortunately a couple of cars and bikes lost a few parts along the way. Most were picked up and bolted back on at the end of the day.

We headed to the "Skene" homestead which was originally settled in 1850s and has remained in the family since. We were lucky enough to be able to see through majority of the marvellous bluestone homestead, the huge horse stables and hay sheds. From there we headed back to Hamilton. Unfortunately the heavens opened up and, as most of our cars and bikes do not have roofs, we all got a little damp.

Saturday was our biggest day with 120 km ahead of us. We headed out on back roads towards Coleraine. The weather was much nicer than the previous afternoon, as we travelled down some fantastic back roads. They were a lot smoother, which was nice for

the weary bones after the day before. Once in Coleraine, we had about an hour to spare prior to lunch. The town had opened up for us and we had free access to the blacksmith shop, car museum and the antique shops.

After lunch we were warned of a steep hill on top of the mountain range, on our journey back to Hamilton. Most passengers had to exit and walk to the top, to help the little cars and bikes make it up the steep incline. I'm pleased to say that Indian travelled well and Tess was pleased that she didn't have to hop off and meet me at the top.



Back in Hamilton we were welcomed into Campe's Motor Museum for a little bo peep, but the owners were more excited about the vehicles out in the car park than what they had on display.

Sunday morning was a late start and we assembled in the gardens behind the Uniting Church. We formed a static display for the public and ourselves to have a chat about the weekend adventures and our war stories. A

gentleman came up to me and said: "My name is Mr Belcher and I have a picture of my grandfather on a motorcycle like this." He asked for me not to leave as he was going home to get a picture, because he needed to show it to me. He came back with a big smile on his face and his picture of his grandfather sitting proudly on a 1916 Indian Power Plus, exactly the same as the motorcycle in front of him. He was beside himself, so I made sure he had his picture taken on my bike in the same pose as his grandfather on his Indian back in 1920. This gentleman told me that the 1920 picture was taken in Moriac.



RALLIES & RUNS

From the gardens we headed off to the Pastoral Museum and were showing around the complex which is also the home of the Hamilton Car Club.



We were lucky enough to have 52 vehicles on the event including five motorbikes and four steam cars. The oldest vehicle on the run was at 1898 Louis Renault.



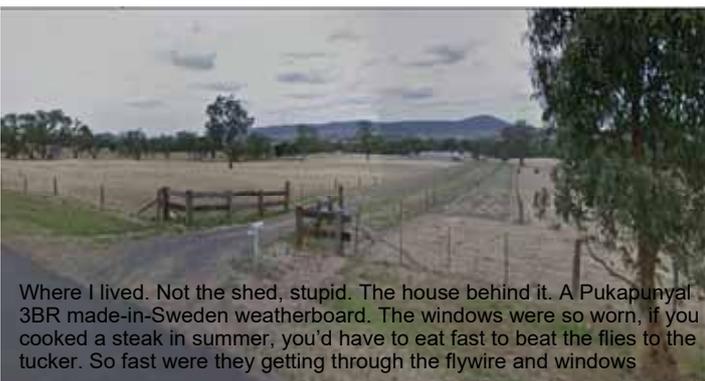
Our 1916 Indian motorcycle was the most modern vehicle. Overall the event was fantastic with a great bunch of like-minded, crazy folks that enjoy veteran motoring at its finest.

- Simon & Tess Anderson.

(Thank you to Callum Welsh for the photos.)

An Accidental Observation

The best vintage car rally I ever saw was by accident. I lived for 20 years on 50 acres on Sugarloaf Creek Road, Broadford from 1990 to 2010.



Where I lived. Not the shed, stupid. The house behind it. A Pukapunya 3BR made-in-Sweden weatherboard. The windows were so worn, if you cooked a steak in summer, you'd have to eat fast to beat the flies to the tucker. So fast were they getting through the flywire and windows

The alignment of the road was North-South, starting at Broadford (you could say it was a continuation of the Broadford-Epping Road), some 2km on the west side of the Hume Freeway for the part I'm talking about.

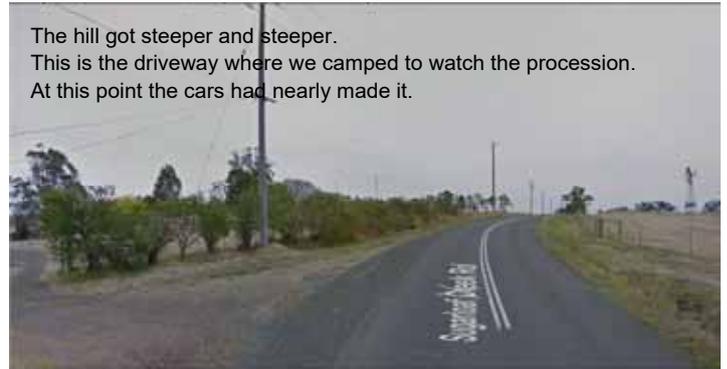
Leaving Broadford, the road ran north through the township on a slight down grade to McKenzies Bridge over Dry Creek. Then up the hill, a steep climb up the escarpment to the grazing country. Half way up the hill on the west side was a driveway .

Around early January, I'd say it was 2007 or so, my son Hayden and I were working on his VL Commodore in the shed. Where I lived, the climb up the escarpment was done by about a kilometre of flat running and the road was on an even to slight down grade.

The unmistakable purr of a vintage car went by. Then a second, followed by a third.

I realised by then this was no accident; this was a vintage car rally. Let's forget working on the car and park ourselves half way up the hill and watch the day go by. This has to be one of the most inspired decisions I'd ever made.

For the next two or three hours my son Hayden and I were treated to a procession of over 100 vintage cars making their way, groaning and shifting, and sometimes stopping in our wayside for a rest, to cure their overheating.



The hill got steeper and steeper.
This is the driveway where we camped to watch the procession.
At this point the cars had nearly made it.

What we'd stumbled upon was the RACV annual vintage and veteran car rally, having left from the Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne and due to camp in Seymour.

The procession was awesome. The grind of gears, the note and scent of exhaust from machines doing the best they could to "make the grade".

Some significant examples included what I'd guess were turn of the century "home-mades". Bullet shaped aluminium bodies shaped over chain drive rear ends. Air and water cooled's. If I'd been a bit smarter I would have videoed the lot. So many of them (well at least 10-20 of the 100) had to stop for a rest and a natter.

If I was to make a recommendation for a future rally, I'd have to suggest taking advantage of the spectacle of another club's hill climb.

- Victor Gestautas

A Holden Reminiscence

In the bicentennial year of 1988 the Sydney RSL taxi company put a 1955 FJ Holden back into service.

The car had belonged to one of the older cabbies on the firm. He'd used it as his personal car since the Sixties and when the time came to sell it he offered it to the firm to do up and use as a cab. A bicentennial year gimmick.

Management thought it was a neat idea and spent over \$7,000 refurbishing it. Now it cruises the streets of Sydney along with RSL's 570 other cabs. For Barry it's his cab: nobody else drives it. "My dad had an FJ and it's the car I learnt to drive in. I've got a real soft spot for it. Built before I was born, y'know."

Barry reports that compared with his previous modern Ford cab it's a real he-man job to drive. No power steering or power assisted brakes means that it's tough stuff driving an FJ Holden for a living.

You have only to ride through the city to see the reaction that this very special Australian car gets.

Heads turn inside cars alongside and you see the occupants mouthing "Gee it's an FJ Holden!" A stop at traffic lights is guaranteed to draw a comment from the car parked alongside. Thumbs are raised and lights flashed to acknowledge this car which is remembered by Australians with great affection.

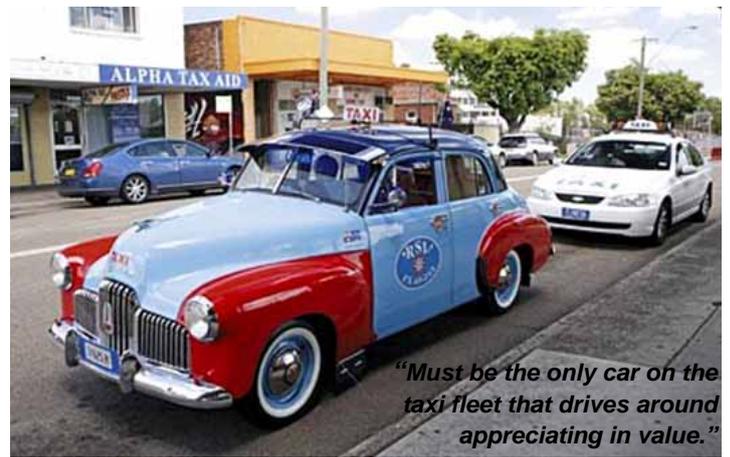
This one is quite special. With just over 100,000 miles on the clock it still has its original engine and gearbox and until a month ago it was still running on its original clutch. Now the FJ, as you will have gathered, isn't just another Australian car. It's a very special Australian car and one that holds a special place in local automotive history.

The original Holden [man, not motor car] was a pom, James, who originated in Staffordshire and arrived in Australia in 1856 to set up a saddlery and leather goods business in Adelaide.

In 1885 he was joined by one Henry Frost, a carriage builder, and together they became Holden & Frost Ltd and combined the saddle and harness making with coach building. A neat way of covering all ends of the market since in those days if you went anywhere you either legged it or were horse drawn or horse borne. Holden was a man with an eye to the main chance and, come the Boer War, he set up a special workshop with a production line and impressed the government of the day with the speed at which he could churn out a kit for the famous Australian Light Horse Cavalry. Before long he'd put most of his competitors out of business.

His son Edward went to University and emerged with a degree in science and engineering and a strong interest in the motor car. Initially Father Holden said that motor cars were a waste of time. Indeed he was half right. Stupidly low speed limits had been imposed on these "maniacal devices" and cars that overtook cable trams [top speed 9mph] were booked and fined.

Eventually common sense prevailed and the motor car became semi-acceptable in polite society. In 1914 Holden built their first body for a motor car. This was the era in Australia when the majority of American manufacturers shipped out rolling chassis, and bodies



were built and fitted locally. By 1917 Holden had tied up a deal with Dodge Brothers and in that year supplied and fitted a stunning 5,000 bodies. Throughout the Twenties the body building business boomed, along with the rising popularity of the motor car. American cars, with their large capacity engines, high ground clearance, soft suspensions and generous body size and seating capacity, were ideally suited to the Australian roads-or lack of them.

1926 Holden had established a strong link with General Motors and together they boomed along producing 30,000 bodies a year.

Then came the big depression of '28 and by 1931 production had slumped to a mere 2,000 bodies and the company was in severe financial strife. The solution was a merger between Holden and General Motors and the all-Australian family business fell into the control of the American giant. [It would have been good to know the staff numbers before the depression and how many people had lost their job by 1931.]

The firm survived the war years producing military vehicles and in the early Forties returned to the passenger car business, assembling Buicks, Chevrolets and the convertible Vauxhall Caleche rag-top from Luton.

All of this time Australia didn't actually have a car of its own. It made do with whatever England and America decided it would send out in knock-down form for local assembly. In 1946 Ben Chifley, then Prime Minister, and Laurence Hartnett, Managing Director of Holden, hatched a plan to create a locally-made motor car – Australia's first domestically produced motor car.

Early prototypes showed just how strong the Detroit influence was but Hartnett leaned heavily on his American masters in order to produce a car that was by American standards modest, small, simple, unchromed and sensible in its body shape.

The very first Holden was launched to an eager public desperate to support Australia's first motor car- and to own something that wasn't just another import. It did the job superbly and had everything the Australian buyers wanted – except a name! It was the Holden 48-215. Can you imagine today telling your friends that you've just got a new green forty-eight two-one-five? It ran from November 1948 until October 1953 when a new model was introduced. Well, sort of.

It was the same body, the same engine with a few interior tart-ups and a new Detroit-style "lots-o-chrome" grille, but it had a name – well almost. It had initials. This was the FJ Holden.

Now at this point you have to understand that Holden have never been very good with words in all their year of making cars. They never ever gave their cars names – just initials. The initials didn't stand for anything – or anything that the public could understand. In fact they meant little to anyone other than a devoted Holden genealogist. The FJ was followed by the FE which in turn was followed by the FC. Geddit? No. Anyway, lack of names or not, Holden became the motor car to own if you were a true blue dinkie die Aussie. It was promoted unashamedly as Australia's Own Motor Car and by October 1958, almost exactly 10 years since the first 48-215 hit the showroom floor, half a million Holdens had been produced.

The FJ is a classic. Handsome in its way for its era. It has that Fifties mid-Atlantic compact jelly-mold shape, split-screen and high-waist so that only its over-chromed front end and the Detroit inspired hub caps give away its American heritage.

The bench front seat is typically Fifties – remember these were the days when not everyone owned a car and those who did had at least five mates. The three speed column-mounted gear shift is also pure Fifties, but still precise and efficient. Disturbing to think that there's a whole generation of young motorists out there who don't know about column shifts and bench front seats and driving along with your arm around the shoulders of your young lady.

When it rains we are quickly reminded of the lazy charm of vacuum-operated screen wipers and the complete lack of any sort of demisting equipment, no holes, no vent, no air. The only way to solve the problem was to open the quarter lights to direct an air flow across the screen – and a continuous dribble of rain water into your lap.

The 16in wheels give 9in of ground clearance. This was a car designed for the rough roads [and complete lack of roads] in the country areas.

The straight-six 2.2-litre engine produces 60bhp and when new the car had a top speed of around 80mph and accelerated from 0-to-50 in 12 seconds. Not designed for traffic light drag contests but strong and rugged and reliable.

Yes Aussies are proud of their first very own motor car and are just beginning to value them accordingly.

*- Compiled by Graham Pretlove,
from "Thoroughbred & Classic Cars" - February 1989*



**Gary Mellington's
1955 FJ Holden**

Stories From the Shed



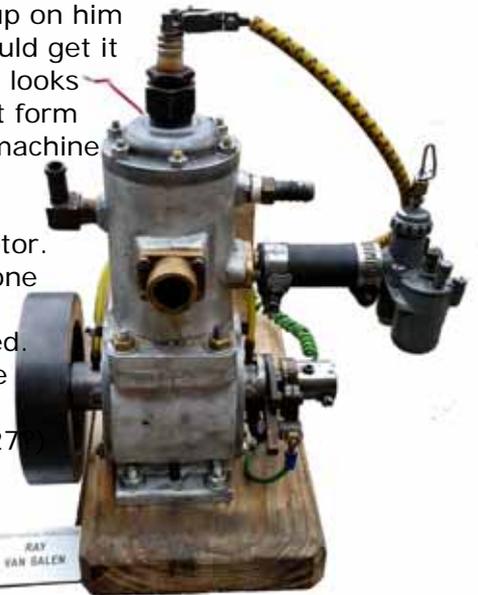
Mystery Marine Engine.

Quite some time ago, a good friend of ours in the Austin A40 club of Australia, Grant Wallace, gave me a scale model marine 2 stroke engine. He could not recall what the engine was a copy of, or when it was originally bought, or what it was named. It may have been an original one off design. It had been given to him a long time ago and he thought that he may be able to get it running.

Old age caught up on him and asked if I could get it running again. It looks like it came in kit form and you had to machine up all the parts yourself to complete the motor.

This had been done many years ago but not completed.

I think it is of the model "T" Ford era (1908 to 1927) because it uses a "Model T" Ford spark plug which has a tapered thread.



I was given a small Bing carburetor by one of our lovely WDHVC club members to modify and fit as the original homemade carburetor spilled fuel all over the place and nearly set fire to my work bench and me and my brother in law, whose jaw dropper dramatically at the sight of all the fireworks.

I started by stripping down the engine and taking photos of the parts as I went to make sure that I put them back the same way again. The piston showed signs of soot as to indicate that it must have fired up at sometime in the past.

I did not need to repair anything inside the motor, but the gas ports are so small that it could never supply any power worth having. It is just a model. Well it is running now and I have used a Ford type "trembler" coil for ignition. It gives a spark like an arc welder.

You will all get to see it running at a tinker day at my place in the future.

- Ray van Galen

Keep Up the Good Work

Your response to my call for stories to fill our Covid 19 affected Backfire has been most encouraging. Not only do we have a full 16 page May edition, but I actually have some of your stories up my sleeve for next month.

But don't desert me now! Hopefully the variety of interesting and varied stories in this month's Backfire will inspire and encourage others to contribute. Think about the headings I have suggested or invent your own.

Get in touch - emailed copy is best but photos & notes in my letterbox will also do. Give me a call to see what can be arranged.

Some ideas:

1/. **Little Treasures** Tell us about the smaller gems you found at a swap meet. Bargains and unexpected finds. The part you really needed to finish a project. A book, an ornament, a painting, a tool. (Thanks for the idea Geoff.)

2/. What about some **"Stories from the Shed"**? Tell us about the projects that are occupying you during "self isolation". Or your favorite resto story from the past.

4/. **"My Favorite Vehicle"** Tell us about that dream vehicle. Perhaps you already own it? Or did. Or plan to. Or perhaps it's just a pleasant dream.

4/. **"ISO Changes"** What unusual thing have you seen, heard or experienced as a direct result of the pandemic? How are you staying in touch? Any new ways to keep yourself amused? Naturally, positive stories are preferred.

Over to you. The deadline for the May *Backfire* is **5pm on Monday 25 May**, but don't wait that long to get in touch and plan your contribution - big or small.

Meanwhile, take care of yourself and those who matter to you.

Cheers,

Jon (0417 311 441) editor@wdhvcgeelong.com

WDHVC MEMBER PROFILE



Name?

Sharyn

Where were you born?

Ballarat

Family?

Husband Fred, 1 son & 1 daughter, 2 grandsons

Number of years in the WDHVC?

26 years

Other interests?

Quilting and travelling

What was your first vehicle?

Hillman Minx

What vehicle would you love to own?

Brand new black convertible Mustang

What vehicles do you have now?

1991 Ford Capri

Profession?

Grandmother

Skills?

Organising trips, cooking

What bugs you the most?

Drivers that don't keep to the left

What makes you happy?

Family and travelling

To go to the grocery store, they said that wearing gloves and a mask was enough. They lied - everyone else had clothes on.

No Mars Bar Competition

With the Mars Bar Competition in hibernation, why not use your period of enforced "social isolation" to rummage through the old photo box and send Ray a baby photo? That way he can be ahead of the game when we get back together.

Photos URGENTLY needed

Please sneak in your photo submissions to:

Ray van Galen

Ph 52789 368,

or

email rbvangalen@gmail.com



FOR SALES, WANTED & CLUES

Wanted:

4^{1/2}" square jar with 6 volt pump on top for windscreen washer. I believe similar to early Holden FX or FJ.

One only semi sealed lens for Lucas SLR 700 spotlight. 7" diameter, to complete the restoration of my 1946 Buick Special Model 40. I also wish to make contact with like-minded owners.

Call Ron Wade 0401 965 008. **5/20**

Lights Early British vehicle round tail and indicator lights (approx 50mm diameter)



Door Handles

Early British door latches, left and right hand. Early sports car type with no exterior handle. Similar to or same as photos.

Call Dallas on 0432 172 171. **5/20**



Exhaust pipe bending press, wanted to borrow or buy. Call Leigh on 0468 763 054. **3/20**

For sale/wanted ads are free to Members and appear for **two issues** of *Backfire*. To remove advertisements from the [newsletter](#) earlier, email editor@wdhvcgeelong.com (Ph 0417 311 441).

Reminder: All vehicles in the "For Sales" must have VIN number & Price or Registration Number & Price, otherwise they will be listed under "Clues". Ads for the 'Clues' section must not refer to any payment that may take place by mentioning an amount or 'best offer', etc.

All ads for cars also appear on the **club web site** where greater detail and photos (where supplied) can be viewed. To see ads, go to <http://www.wdhvcgeelong.com/wdsale.html>

All ads remain on the website until you request their removal. To remove an ad from the [website](#), email webmaster@wdhvcgeelong.com (Ph 0418 587 415).

FOR SALES, WANTED & CLUES

For Sale

Datsun 200B windscreen, brand new \$100.
Steering column \$30

Datsun 200B station wagon: rusty and dented passenger front/side. Motor running, transmission and running gear OK, rear lights, interior OK. \$300 (Located about 225 km from Geelong.)

Anyone collect Farfisa Compact Electronic Organs? \$100. Call Col 0425 822 026. **5/20**

Free to good home (or even a not so good home) Coopers 1 HP stationary engine with a blown camshaft. This is good for spare parts only, most parts are there and some are usable too, but does not come with steak knives. Ring Ray van Galen for pick up. 5278 9368 or 0411 954 865

Austin Loadstar drop side tray. 3 ton 6 cylinder petrol. Hardened valve seats, 4 speed on the floor crash box. Totally rebuilt in 2010. Tyres 80%. Extras: spare engine, spare parts, tow bar, hand winch, extra wipers, indicators plus original hands, 2 manuals. Reg 11585-H. Negotiable at \$15,000. Call Roger 0409 020 021. **4/20**



1996 Ford Capri Club Sprint. Soft top. Reg QAT-635, VIN 6FPAAAULAURT. Good top. \$2,400. Call John 0448 123 544. **4/20**

2013 Nissan X Trail. Small 2/4 wheel drive. Excellent condition. Reg 1KF 9QV. VIN JN1TANT31A0208446. \$10,000. Call Ivan 0400 660 387. **3/20**

Folding Trestle Tables Laminated chipboard tops
Approx. 3' X 6' (900mm X 1800mm). Good condition. \$10 ea. Call Jon 0417 311 441. **4/20**

Clues:

Copying Service. Those wanting old movies, tapes, records or cassettes copied. \$10-\$15 ea. Call 0417 430 263.

The views/comments expressed in the publication of this newsletter are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily endorsed by the current Committee of the Club. Whilst every care is taken to determine the safety of any technical information provided and the accuracy of the information supplied for inclusion in this newsletter, it is printed in good faith and neither the Committee nor the Club accept any responsibility for any loss or injury incurred by any application of such information.

Just Idling

Random observations from Isolation



Do you have lots of magpies around your place this year, or is it just us? I counted eight beautiful birds taking turns to get a drink in our bird bath the other day. We don't feed them but still they are regular companions in the garden, totally unconcerned at our presence. We live in an older, tree-lined area near parkland, so perhaps it's the environment that has caused them to breed up? Their melodious warbling song entertains me at all hours – from the middle of moonlit nights to anytime of the day. Magpie droppings stain the bitumen white below their roosts in our street tree. This dissuades the teenagers who visit next door from parking in front of our place – an unforeseen benefit! (I may have to trim the branch above our letterbox though.)

It's amazing how much patience you can develop when restoring an old car. Or not! I have been following my nose when dismantling various bits and pieces. Even after consulting the manual (or Mr Google) I find myself assembling and reassembling parts several times before working out the right way to put it back in place. Still, it's very satisfying when something works again after stripping down and reassembly. Getting the wiper motor and drive to work again felt really good. And I am learning – for the next time I take apart a 1953 Morris???

My wife is a yoga teacher who found herself suddenly out of work thanks to the virus. This prompted a crash course in basic video for her technical assistant (me), so we could create an electronic yoga lesson to give to her students. Firstly I filmed her giving a lesson, using a mobile phone taped to a tripod, did some basic editing, then copied the result onto USB sticks – 18 times! There were also cover letters and notes to draft and copy. Then into Australia Post.

Next she joined the throngs flocking to Zoom and other similar Internet platforms. While her own classes are suspended for now, a session at a neighbourhood house streamed live to air today. It seemed to work well: a great result since the students there range in age from their 50s to 80s and were also trying this new-fangled technology for the first time. Who says we are too old to learn something new?

My fitness has improved since being “quarantined”. We live beside a walking path and have been clocking up 2-3kms each morning for the last four weeks. And we are not alone: a by-product of Covid 19 is the increase in the number of people walking, running and riding through the park. Especially heartening is the number of family groups – kids on little bikes, both mums and dads with pushers, and the inevitable dogs.

Hope you enjoyed my little “road trip” video recently. This was a direct spin off from the video lessons referred to earlier.

I have especially enjoyed the “footpath art” that has sprung up as the local kids send colourful messages in chalk to passing walkers. I have been encouraged to “Be Happy”, “Have a Happy Easter and “Take Care”, as well as observing old fashioned hop scotch grids on the path. This morning I spied a small card on top of a gateway post: it said simply” “You are funny”. Made me smile. I guess the kids need something else to do when taking a break from being “distance educated” at the lounge room table.



The present situation is forcing many to focus on simpler things. Less hurried and more basic. Which prompts me to wonder: will the focus on family and amusing ourselves continue on after we are again allowed to mingle and mix? Will strangers on the path continue to say: “How are you?” and mean it? I hope so, but fear that the pace and the anonymity will pick up again as the coloured tape at 1.5m intervals disappears from the supermarket floors and the economy recovers.

A special thank you to those members who have responded to my call for stories to fill the Backfire. I have enjoyed reading your contributions – and I trust others will also find them of interest. I hope they will prompt you to contribute your own stories and photos. Like I said in my email: a large house can be built by putting many small bricks one on top of the other.

Until next month: take care of yourself and those who matter to you.

Cheers

Jon

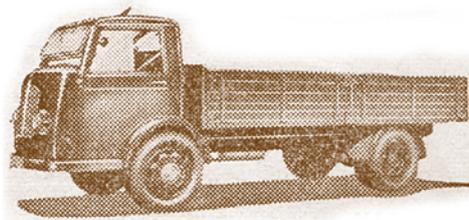
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1950 Karrier CK 3 3-4 ton dropsider