

# ***IDLE TORQUE***

**MAY 2023**

**Edition No. 251**

**Newsletter of the  
C.ex Coffs  
Sports, Touring & Classic Car Club**

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NSW Historic Motoring Association

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than just a  
car club”*

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The Committee reserves the right to edit contributions for publication.

**JUDY PHEMISTER — NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

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# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Our April calendar opened early on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> with a run to Grafton for morning tea at the Brewhouse Café. We have had several events in Grafton in the past, but this was a new location sourced through the good research of our Events Co-ordinator. It was a great venue with an impressive menu (just ask Dave Norton) and was well attended. The longer run was also appreciated by those members opting to take their club cars.

Our second event was a run to the Valla Beach Reserve for a BYO lunch. This venue is very popular with members and a nice drive down the old highway. Our group sat out in the open under cloud cover enjoying the fresh air, however a brief light shower of rain caused an evacuation to the shelter sheds with sandwiches and coffees in hand. It was also good to see several club cars parked near our group.

May is looking good with a morning tea at the Old Butter Factory at Bellingen on 10<sup>th</sup> (RSVP required by 3<sup>rd</sup> May). Then on 21<sup>st</sup> club member Dave Norton and Penny are hosting a lunch at their property at Dorrigo. This is your chance to savour the best home-made pumpkin soup ever, but you must RSVP by 14<sup>th</sup> May as numbers are limited, so don't delay.

With our club membership continuing to grow and our events very well attended, I again respectfully ask that all members look towards our AGM in August and consider if they can assist with filling any Committee positions for the 2024 club year.

Also, we would like to see more members and partners attend our General Meetings and have input into the running of their club.

Happy motoring and I hope to see you at a club meeting or run very soon.

Regards,  
Ian Ward  
President



A couple of  
very UNIQUE  
cars



## EVENTS CALENDAR

MAY 2023				RSVP
1st May	Mon	<b>COMMITTEE MEETING 6PM.</b>  <b>GENERAL MEETING 7PM</b>		
10th May	Wed	<b>MORNING TEA BELLINGEN OLD BUTTER FACTORY.</b> <b>Depart Bonville Service Station 9:30am</b>	Judy Phemister <a href="mailto:judenruss72@gmail.com">judenruss72@gmail.com</a> 0407937327	<b>Wed 3rd May</b>
20th May	Sat	<b>LADIES BIGGEST MORNING TEA</b>  St Johns Anglican Church McLean Street Coffs Harbour 10 am. Please bring a very small plate of food to add to the share table for morning tea. A <b>donation</b> will be collected for Cancer Council	Judy Phemister <a href="mailto:judenruss72@gmail.com">judenruss72@gmail.com</a> 0407937327	<b>Sat 13th May</b>
				
21st May	Sun	<b>DORRIGO – Lunch at Dave and Penny Norton's .</b> <b>Depart Bonville Service Station at 11am for the run up to Dorrigo for Pumpkin Soup lunch. All provided.</b>	Judy Phemister <a href="mailto:judenruss72@gmail.com">judenruss72@gmail.com</a> 0407937327	<b>Sun 14th May</b>  <b>Limit 30</b>
JUNE 2023				
5th June	Mon	<b>COMMITTEE MEETING 6PM.</b>  <b>GENERAL MEETING 7PM</b>		
7th June	Wed	<b>Morning Tea Raleigh Winery</b> <b>Depart Bonville Service Station 9.30 am</b>  	Judy Phemister <a href="mailto:judenruss72@gmail.com">judenruss72@gmail.com</a> 0407937327	<b>Wed 31st May</b>
18th June	Sun	<b>Lunch at Star Hotel Macksville</b> <b>Depart Bonville Service Station at 11.15am</b>  	Judy Phemister <a href="mailto:judenruss72@gmail.com">judenruss72@gmail.com</a> 0407937327	<b>Sun 11th June</b>

July Events: Wed 5th -Pizza at Joe Baiada`s, Christmas In July Grafton DateTBA





Happy customers  
Brewhouse Café Grafton  
5th April



The short  
and the  
tall !!!





# Picturesque spot for a picnic lunch 16th April







The mad dash for cover as the light rain fell.



Always nice to get the cars out for a run .

Note to self -Do not wash the car— its sure to rain!!!  
( President Ian Ward )





## “CLARA” Steve and Judy Woods

Back in 1981 I came across a MG YT a car which was not a car but more a trailer full of boxes which in a weak moment I brought home thinking, this shouldn't take long to restore to it's former glory. Well how wrong was that, the car sat in my shed in Adelaide while I restored my TC and then the A and finally Jude and I packed it up and shipped it to Emerald Beach where it sat for a few more years while we settled into our new home.

Then about six years ago the restoration began . The body was in a very poor condition with most of the door sills, battery box, running boards (which had been welded to the body) and boot floor eaten away with rust. the mud guards had major dents, it was a real basket case.



Fabricated new battery box firewall and sills.



First the chassis was cleaned, sandblasted and painted and the running gear reinstalled.



The body was at a difficult height so I made a trolley which raised it to a more comfortable position to panel beat and also made it easy to manoeuvre around the shed.

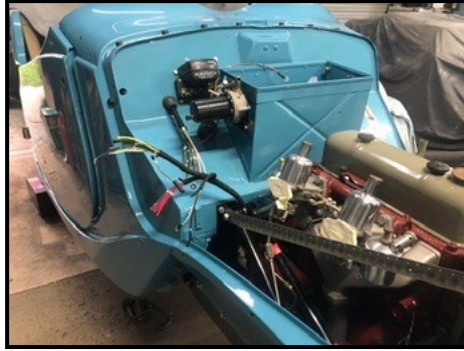


After sandblasting, priming and a lot of panel work, the body was again test fitted to its chassis. This was to happen many times.





Then off to the paint shop. A friend had set up a paint booth and offered his services which I immediately accepted.



Now the fun begins as the panels are screwed together for the last time and the fiddly bits including chrome, dash, brakes, upholstery, windscreen and more, slowly take shape.

That's where we're at ,at the moment, still a long way to go. Jude and I are looking forward to bringing her to a Club run later in the year see you all then .

## 120 YEARS IN 5 MINUTES

Many talented storytellers have narrated the bumpy ride of our car industry and the impact it had on Australian life. There are plenty of non-fiction books and documentaries that delve deep into the industry, the cherished marques and the celebrated cars.

Here, we are going to contribute to a fraction of the literature that's already created. It's our attempt to tell the story of the Australian car industry in as few words as we possibly can.

If you hadn't taken much interest in the industry before, this will paint a basic picture of what it was about.

So, a couple of hundred words to cover a century of Australian car building history.

Let's do it.



## Transport Transformed

We were there from the start. When the motor car snatched the mantle as the best way to travel at the start of the 20th Century, Australian ingenuity saw a number of small-scale manufacturers making cars for the elite. The platform and the running gear tended to come from overseas, but we got pretty good at making the rest.

Early on, the big American marques had an eye for Australia. Ford put a stake in the ground in Geelong and began churning the Model T out of a sizable factory on the hill, with other plants scattered around the country including one owned by Holden's Motor Body Builders in Woodville, Adelaide.

The car industry was here to stay, but momentum stalled when we went to war not once, but twice within the space of two decades. Passenger car assembly lines had to support the war effort, rather than build cars. The Great Depression in the thirties didn't help either. Put simply, we hadn't had much of an opportunity to mass-produce our very own motor car until the late forties.





*Above: Early Australian motoring history on the streets of Sandringham, Melbourne*

## **Our Own Car**

We came out of World War II badly battered, but eyeing a more peaceful and prosperous future. Hurting toward the fifties, there was a renewed push for Australia to produce its own car to shoulder the adventures of a growing middle class. The government invited companies to put their best put forward and show that they could make it happen.

Holden did the best job.

Their functional, elegant and reliable motor car proved a big hit. In fact, they couldn't produce enough examples of their new four-door sedan to meet the cheque books being waved in every direction. It was the perfect car for Australia and conditions were ripe for building motor cars on our shores. This led to some big investments by the dominant automotive companies of the day led by the Americans and the British.

*A Holden FX sedan*





## The Golden Era

Our car industry was booming. By the 1960s, the big three from across the pond dominated the Australian market and the four-door sedan had the undivided allegiances of households as part of the 'Great Australian Dream'. After all, what was a pleasant home in the suburbs without a local car built by your neighbour sitting in the driveway?

Inspired by the brawny cars built by our American parent companies, Australia discovered its own automotive flare in the late sixties. Ford Australia squeezed a thumping V8 engine into their fast-selling Falcon. General Motors Holden hit back with the Monaro hardtop and not to be outdone, Chrysler got in on the act with the Valiant Charger. The performance of these models left petrolheads weak at the knees, but the horsepower war was destined for an armistice with growing public concern about what could happen if an ordinary motorist planted their right foot.

The more subdued models held the fort, even as fears of fuel shortages spooked the horses in the seventies. Australian-built cars were everywhere. From the country to the big smoke, one glance at a busy street confirmed their dominance.

They weren't always our own design, but with plenty of protection from price competition against cars that arrived on a ship, setting up shop in Australia made economic sense.

However, it also set up our downfall.



*Perfect for the family. Siblings stand beside a late seventies Chrysler Valiant Regal*

## Twilight

Plants began closing in the 1980s. We weren't as productive as we should have been and despite the protection, imported motor cars kept on creeping into our market. It didn't happen overnight, but the seeds were sowed for grimmer times. Still, tens of thousands of people of many different ethnicities strode into factories on any given morning.

We had to find a way to compete to ensure the future of the industry and the living it provided to working class households. With imports an ever-growing factor in the Australian new car market, the Button Plan emerged. The idea was to get seriously good at producing fewer models, sharing them between local manufacturers and consolidating our efforts to compete here and abroad. After all, being such a small market, scale was our biggest hurdle.

The trimmed range of Australian motor cars continued to attract buyers at dealerships, but the case for parent companies continuing to invest in Australia became harder and harder to make as the playing field levelled.



*A rest stop during a Holden test trip. Image courtesy of Mario Turcarelli*



## The End

Mitsubishi Motors Australia was the first domino to fall in the 21st Century. The South Australian giant couldn't justify a continuation of production at Tonsley Park. At the time, Holden, Ford and Toyota were still atop of the sales charts, but their buffer was being eroded by the month as the new car market became yet more competitive.

Further to this, once so loyal to the local sedan, station wagon and ute, many car buyers' eyes gradually wandered to other products. Some favoured downsizing into fuel-efficient hatchbacks that suited the city and inflicted less financial damage at the petrol bowser.

We weren't making many of those. Others wanted to upsize into four-wheel-drive style vehicles with an elevated driving position that felt commanding and could bash through the bush, just as the commercials promised. Only Ford Australia manufactured one as other local arms struggled to get a business case off the ground. By 2013, the end was nigh.

Announcements filled with emptiness confirmed the impending discharge of thousands of workers on the factory floors. Some workers had never known of any other occupation. Inevitably, many local component suppliers had no choice but to do the same. Ford Australia pulled the pin on the Falcon passenger sedan after an uninterrupted 56-year production run in October 2016. That meant the end of the Australian-built Territory, too. Ford had sizable manufacturing facilities in the northern Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows and in the working class Geelong suburb of Norlane.

12 months later, Toyota Australia switched off the lights at its Altona plant in Melbourne's west. Days later, the last Australian-built Holden Commodore travelled down General Motors-Holden's Elizabeth assembly line north of Adelaide, all but spelling the end of the Australian-built car.

Post 2017, we no longer mass-produce cars. It might not be over forever, but for now, we are left to ponder the ashes of an industry that meant so much to many Australians.





***“More  
than just a  
car club”***

To the Committee and Members

Thank you so much for the flowers and card which I recently received to mark the passing of my  
beloved Grant.

I really appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness.

I know most of you were shocked to find out that Grant had been battling cancer for a couple of years but he had no desire to burden any of you with his troubles. Sadly we thought we had more time but Grant deteriorated very quickly over the last 4 weeks of his life.

We had a fabulous life together, travelling the world was a big passion and of course cars always crept into our holidays! Visiting museums or private collections or just admiring cars on the street, Grant could sniff out an engine or a fellow enthusiast seemingly at will.

His whole life was cars, his passion started as a young child and continued his whole life. Together we shared many fun times in our MGB, an NA Mx5 & the stunning show stopper neo green limited edition Mx5, followed by a Porsche Boxster then a raft of 911s and finally Grants great love, his 1962 Porsche 356.

When moving to Coffs in 2014, the first thing Grant did was join the Cex car club. Many wonderful friendships have been formed and fun times had. The support I have received from some of you is truly humbling and I cannot thank you enough but please know that I truly value your friendship.

Thank you again for your condolences.

Kind regards  
Kerriane George



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