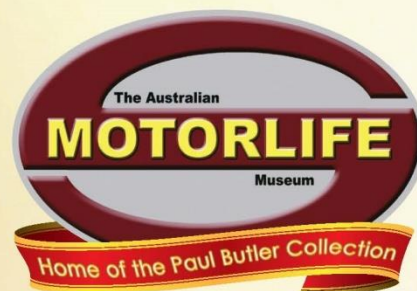


Motorlife News



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Patrons: Pedr Davis OAM, Jeremy Morris SC, Wayne Gardner AM & Warren Brown

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 Facilities & Parking	Opening Hours 09.30 am – 4.30 pm Tuesday – Sunday <i>Monday's & Group visits, & Meals by prior arrangement Only</i>	Entry Fees <i>Prices and entry fees are subject to change</i>	
		Adult \$17.50 Concession & Seniors Card \$15.00 Child (6 – 16 age) \$6.00 Groups fees by Arrangement <i>(Coach Driver & Carer Free)</i>	

A Brief History

- 1992** Opening of Illawarra Motoring Museum following purchase of land from AGA Club Germania
- 2008** Opening of Australian Motorlife Museum
Winner of Wollongong City Council Community Award
- 2009** Paul Butler Collection Awarded to Australian Motorlife Museum by NSW Supreme Court
NRMA Motoring & Services commenced major sponsorship of Australian Motorlife Museum
- 2010** First Motoring Expo
Official Opening of 'The Brabham Room' by Sir Jack Brabham CBE, AO & Mr Ron Tauranic AO
- 2011** Opening of 'Paul Butler Motorhouse' exhibition area.
Finalist South Coast Tourism Awards
- 2013** Australian Motorlife Museum successfully applied for 1904 Innes, an Australian built vehicle, to be declared an Australian Protected Object.
- Successfully applied for funding assistance from National Cultural Heritage Account to purchase 1904 Innes, finishing entrant in 1905 Dunlop Reliability Trial
- 2014** Acquisition of c1906 Spencer motorcycle, built in Brisbane
- Acquisition of 1914 the Victor motorcycle and Melbourne built sidecar, original condition

Membership Benefits

- Members - **Free** admission to the museum
- You don't have to have a vintage vehicle to become a member
- Eligibility to join in Motorlife Club Events, with or without a vintage vehicle. Just come along and join in the fun in your own car.
- Use of the RTA's Conditional Registration scheme for pre-WW2 vehicles.
- Free subscription to *Motorlife News*, our leading magazine
- Access to one of Australia's finest library of technical reference and vintage motoring books
- Connect with likeminded people
- Get advice from widely experienced technical experts
- Working Bees Monday's & Thursday's where you can come along and bond with the crowd to share your knowledge or learn from the experts. A great place to exchange helpful insights for both men & women.



Integral Energy Recreation Park
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2526

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Motorlife News : The Australian Motorlife Museum - ISSN 2209-3834

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LIFE MEMBERS

John Dawson, Don Matthew, Ray Muddell (deceased), Wendy Muddell,
Paul Unicomb, Mark Walton, Marlene Matthew

AUGUST 2020

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MUSEUM LIMITED OPENING DAYS

As virus restrictions are being relaxed the museum will be re-opening with limited opening days. Starting on Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th July, from then it will be opening 4 days per week Thursday to Sunday beginning Thursday 16th July.

CLUB EVENTS

Important Club Run News:

Barry and Sarah Neill have taken on responsibility of coordinating the club runs and confirming the calendar dates in advance. This does not mean they are organising the runs, but if you regularly attend runs, or would like to, please let them know your ideas or suggestions of possible destinations and routes bearing in mind we primarily cater for the older cars. Of course we still need members to get actively involved with helping organising runs.

There may also occasionally be events that do come up that may require travelling in our modern cars too, but it is anticipated this will not be very often.

Dates for future runs will be announced in the newsletter in advance even when the details have not been finalised so you can at least plan your diaries.

For any enquiries contact either Barry 0409 658 149 or Sarah 0409 658 154

Sunday 20th September – Keep the day free for a planned picnic run – Gladys permitting – to be organised by Barry Neill. 9.30 start, route details on the day.

Saturday 17th October – TBA

REMINDER

Members using their vehicles on HCRS are reminded to carry with them each time they use their vehicle, their membership card, a current copy of Motorlife News, a Vehicle Movement Slip (if required), the RMS Registration Papers and the Certificate of Approved Operations. Failure to comply with the Guidelines issued to all members for the use of vehicles on Historic Conditional Registration Scheme may result in the suspension of this privilege. If in doubt please phone Waldo on 0408 425 650

NOTE: It is noted that trips to and from the designated 'running in' area and also Australian Motorlife Museum are considered Club Events for the purposes of the use of HCRS.

The trip must be from and back to the place the vehicle is usually garaged.

The Plates Registrar must be contacted before each return trip commences.

Trip must be via the most direct route that is practicable.

The 'running in' area boundary is West Dapto Rd, Illawarra Highway, F6 to Northcliffe Dr, Old Princes Hwy back to West Dapto Rd.

CAR CLUB DIGITAL MAGAZINES BY EMAIL

As many car clubs now distribute their magazines to their members by email the museum office now regularly receives these too. If any members would be interested in having them forwarded to them please let the secretary know by forwarding your email address to; admin@motorlifemuseum.com with the subject line 'Digital Car Club Magazines'. The catch is you either receive all or nothing, you can read what interests you and delete the rest; it is not possible to send separate magazines to individual addresses. If any members receiving the newsletters know of any others who have not yet given their email address to the office could they pass the news on and have them email the office admin@motorlifemuseum.com with their contact details please.

HELP NEEDED

Would any members like to get more involved with the daily running of the Museum? Even if you can only spare one day a month it could be an interesting day to help on duty with visitors, or get stuck in around the maintenance of the building and gardens, or if you prefer maybe working on the preservation of the collection in our workshop. We have a friendly crowd already but we can always use more help. If interested contact one of the committee to discuss the possibilities.

Reminder to all volunteers: Our opening hours are 9.30 to 4.30, as advertised, with last admissions at 4.00pm and anyone on duty in front of house is required to attend within those times; not going off early “because I thought we were not very busy”, or “I only work until three...”.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

I aim to have each newsletter finalised by the end of each month to send to the office for distribution. It would be appreciated if any reports/articles etc. that need to be in the newsletter could be sent in the week prior to the end of the month or earlier. Any reports/articles received after deadline will be placed in the following month newsletter.

Steven Koster

CLUB PLATE REGISTRATION DAY

Saturday 28th November - 10am till 2pm – Rego Day and sausage sizzle. Contact Waldo 0408 425 650

Note: All memberships must be paid up to date. The committee also plans to hold a meeting of all members with cars on club rego on the day to discuss whether we adopt the RMS ‘Log Book Scheme’ or stay as we are. Let us know your thoughts for or against.

MEETING DATES

General meetings are held in the Brabham Room at the Museum on the third Tuesday of the month except December at 7.00pm for a pre-meeting gathering and 7.30pm start.

Supper follows and something tasty to go with the tea and coffee is always appreciated. Visitors welcome.

August 18th, September 15th, October 20th etc

Due to the current situation any members thinking of attending the meetings are asked to check with the museum phone or a committee member on the day to confirm the meeting is on.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

So we are back in business again, or at least we hope so, but as the virus has certainly not gone away everyone is still required to be careful and if things get worse we will not be surprised if museums and other public places have to close again for a while. The committee are watching the news reports and government recommendations daily and if there is any change we will act accordingly.

Any further news regarding whether the museum remains open or has to close will be posted on the Facebook page and website, but hopefully we can carry on for now. We are currently only open to the public for four days; Thursday to Sunday, but the Monday 'working bees will carry on. Members and volunteers who do not feel safe mixing with others can of course stay away but we have taken all of the right precautions necessary to ensure everyone's safety and there is enough space to keep our distance.

For anyone visiting now after a few months away you will find some new exhibits, some things have moved and you can also admire the newly painted floor in Stage Three; I have added my thanks to those responsible elsewhere but while the museum has been closed it is just one example of what our team have been up to getting on with various jobs to keep the place up to scratch.

Another major job completed while we have apparently been 'idle' was the installation of the solar panels on the roof and associated hardware which should see us almost self-sufficient in the electrical supply, and now Phill H. has explained more about how this can be monitored a few pages further along.

Of course all of our normal calendar of social events has been wiped clean; but plans are under way to see if we can get out again and try to exercise some of the old cars. To this end we have planned a picnic run for September. As we can not at this point know whether any of the usual public venues or pubs, hotels and cafes will be allowing groups we came up with the idea that a picnic run to some outdoor park or beach might be allowable and anyone can bring their own picnic, or a "running board lunch" as someone suggested.

The committee had taken the decision some time ago that as the future will remain uncertain for a while yet that there was no point in making plans for any events that might not happen so there will be no 'Expo' this year, but that just gives us a chance to plan ahead to an even bigger and better 2021; any thoughts or suggestions for that are always welcome, it is never too early to start working on such projects as time is never on our side.

On a sad note we recently heard of the passing of Ron Tauranac, a true great in the motor racing world, a previous visitor to Motorlife and, many years ago, my former employer, so I have written a brief obituary and appreciation of his career in the following pages.

I had also prepared another story from my old racing days diary but as I wanted to include Ron's story I thought that might be enough racing for one month so that will have to wait until October and to make up for it, (and not wanting to leave the editor short) I had added a story about a particularly rare car I had a few years ago and its creators. As ever, I always had a taste for the odd and unusual!

And on that subject I have to own up to being a bit slack regarding my next set of wheels; to say progress on the Amilcar has been slow would be an understatement, glacial might be more accurate, but my excuse was that the garage had been filled with various unwanted junk and furniture so I can at least report that I have cleared most of that out and can now put the chassis up on stands and start to dismantle and check the motor, gearbox and diff' and try to find someone who can build up the radiator. Stay tuned.

Chris Martin

CURATORIAL REPORT - JULY 2020

Towards the end of the coronavirus lockdown period when a limited number of workshop volunteers were coming to the Museum for Monday working bees the veteran Fiat recently accepted on loan was subjected to the best clean it had received in many years. It is now on display in Stage 3.

Recently the Committee was contacted via a Museum member and offered on loan three children's model cars built by Ray Jones, who restored, rebuilt and raced vintage race cars for many years, all over Australia, Europe and the USA. Two of the cars are modelled on a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost and the third car is a Jeep. The two Rolls Royce model cars are on display in Stage 3 however the Jeep is in the workshop and needs some assembly work prior to going on display. More details regarding these interesting models are contained in a separate article in the magazine.

Advice was received in early June that Up the Creek Workshop has reopened and the panel beater is working on the rear mudguards for the Sunbeam.

The Curatorial Committee greatly appreciates the hard work done by the workshop volunteers during the Museum's closure, particularly in the month prior to the reopening. They have moved all of the vehicles and most of the display cabinets and items in Stage 3 of the Museum to put two coats of paint on the concrete floor. They have also installed sheets of timber panelling on the lower part of the outer walls of Stage 3.

Gardening and mowing of the grounds have also been undertaken. The workshop volunteers were joined on the Thursday prior to the reopening by out-the-front volunteers who undertook a thorough clean of the Museum in preparation for the first visitors.

Curatorial Committee

Big Thanks: To Ted and Phill and their great band of helpers for all the hard work painting the floor in stage three, lining the walls, supervising the installation of additional security systems and the solar panels during the last couple of months while the Museum was officially closed. Great job folks!

Chris Martin

BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPORT MAY - JULY 2020

Solar Panels

Our Solar Panels project is now complete, and with Andrea's assistance the Finalisation Report was successfully submitted to the Commonwealth Government as required by the Stronger Communities Grant conditions.

The installed 'Solar Edge' System comes with an online monitoring function so that we can observe its performance on a daily, weekly, etc., basis. Also the performance of each panel can be monitored as a fault finding aid if need be.

I have attached a screen shot of the monitoring on a good day near mid winter, with no clouds that day. The green parabolic curve area is the Solar production, and the various red areas under the green represent our power usage. On this day it was good to see that nearly all our daytime usage was covered by the Solar production. (I added the notes with arrows to the screen shot).

This monitoring is linked to the Secretary and Curatorial computers so if any Members would like to have a look at it, just ask Andrea or one of the Curatorial Committee when they are at the Museum.

Building Maintenance

The awning above the Brabham Room Fire Exit Door was found to be not sealed correctly to the building wall, which was allowing rain water to run down the outside wall and into the top of the door jamb and then down into the room. It was re-sealed from both above and below the awning.

Also, Royce Ford installed rubber sealing strips on the door to cover the side gaps between the door and the door jamb to inhibit wind blown rain.

Ray Fahey and Warren Hazelwood fabricated the steel framed, wire mesh safety guard, which has been installed over the Solar System Inverter in the Brabham Room.

Gary Pierce and Royce Ford replaced the 9 fluorescent lights in the Typewriter Display Cabinets with LED batten light fittings.

Tony Zuiderwyk and Alan Ford have installed plywood sheeting inside the lower sections of Stage 3 southern and eastern walls. This area was lined as part of the overall upgrading of security following the security assessment earlier this year. Not fully complete yet.

Integral Energy Park Report

13/5/20 to 13/7/20. In these two months I have continued communication with W.C.C. via 2 phone calls, sent 5 emails and received 4 email replies, regarding the lack of water in two of the roadside fire hydrant points alongside the road through the Park. They have not yet been able to identify the root cause of the problem. I will continue chasing this.



Phill Harrigan

LIBRARY REPORT - JUNE 2020

With the shutdown of the museum for four months, access to the library has been restricted to very short visits when there was building maintenance in progress.

We have continued to catalog our magazine collection with over 6,500 magazines uploaded to magazinecollector.net with many having their contents indexed so that it makes finding that elusive article possible.

We are separating our collection of general motoring books onto a separate library management system catalog to make it more efficient to upload and manage the collection. It is work in progress and so far we have loaded over 2,000 books.

We will shortly commence sorting out the previously announced magazine giveaway. This will take some time because of the large amount of magazines to sort through.

Brian Wye, Librarian

NEW DISPLAYS ON LOAN

VETERAN FIAT

The Curatorial Committee had been contacted prior to the lockdown regarding the offer of a loan of a veteran Fiat which was previously owned by Max Pratt and is still owned by the family. Ted inspected the vehicle and the Committee agreed to accept the vehicle on loan. The vehicle is complete and is in good condition considering it has been stored in a shed for a long period of time. It was delivered to the Museum and subjected to the best clean it had received in many years. It is now on display in Stage 3.

The Fiat plaque on the engine block indicates that this is a Type 1A model, which was manufactured between 1912 and 1915. The body was purchased separately.



Max drove this car from Sydney to Melbourne for the International Rally for Veteran and Vintage Cars for the Captain Cook Celebrations in 1970 then continued on to Victor Harbour and Adelaide as part of the South Australia Invitation Tour 1970. They also participated in the VCCA National Rally in Coffs Harbour in 1971, and the Wollongong on Wheels organised by the West Wollongong Apex Club in 1972. This information was found in copies of various newspaper articles written about Max and his vehicles (provided by his family), and the brass plaques proudly displayed on the car.

Max owned 5 cars, including 3 Fiats which he restored, an Itala and a 1908 Cotton-de-Gusse.

A close family friend who helped Max restore some of his cars during his younger years has inspected the Museum's 1910 Type 1 Fiat and, having discussed it with other Pratt family members, they are almost positive that our Fiat was also previously owned by Max Pratt.

HAND MADE MODEL CARS

Ray Jones restored, rebuilt and raced vintage race cars all over Australia, Europe and USA. In his 1929 Le Mans Model, Chrysler 75, he competed in rallies and races such as the Italian Mille Miglia (5 times), the Le Mans Classic 24 Hour Race (3 times), the Silverstone Classic Race, the Phillip Island Historic Races, the Monterey Historic Races at Laguna Seca and the Adelaide Classic Rallies.

Ray also enjoyed constructing, rebuilding and fine-tuning his cars. He re-created the long-lost Malcolm Campbell "Bluebird" 1925 Chrysler, and raced this car at Phillip Island and at the Goodwood Festival of Speed. Ray displayed this car at the famous Brooklands Museum in Sussex, England and test drove it on the original banked circuit where Malcolm Campbell had raced.

Ray wanted to develop his family's knowledge and interest in classic cars, so he decided to create a model car for his two daughters. He aimed to show them how it was possible to build something from scratch in their own garage. So the idea of "The Lanalia" came about. This working children's car was built as a tribute to the 1911 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost "London to Edinburgh" model. The car is powered by a 50cc two-stroke motor and can carry three children at speeds up to 10mph.

In 1984 a Commemoration Rally was held at Randwick Racecourse to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Rolls Royce cars and the historic Silver Ghost AX 201 had been brought to Australia for the occasion. Ray's daughters were invited to drive the "The Lanalia" leading AX 201 and dozens of Rolls Royce cars in a procession around the Course. Vehicle owners dressed in period costume to match the vintage of their cars. It would have been quite a spectacle.

The original model is Seychelles Blue and Ray built a later model with a polished aluminium finish which was driven by his grandson in a children's car race held prior to the start of the 2008 Le Mans Classic 24 Hour Race.

Ray Jones later constructed a model Jeep based on the wartime Jeeps used as transport around the Le Mans Pits while the 24 Hour Race is in progress. This model has a battery powered motor.

We are grateful to Ray's wife and family for generously loaning all three of these models to the Museum for display.



VALE RON TAURANAC AO



Ron left us July 17th aged 95, not a bad innings but what a legacy he left for the world of motor racing.

Born in England in 1925 His father brought the family to Australia when he was three and after first staying in Melbourne, then Newcastle they settled in Fassifern near Lake Macquarie where he grew up building boats for his mates and got a job aged fourteen with the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in Sydney designing jigs and tools and continued studying at technical college in the evenings.

He also joined the Air Cadets and managed to get accepted for fighter pilot training in Harvards during the war although he did not see action. By the late 1940s he was building his own racing and hillclimb specials with his brother Austin and their combined names created the RALT name he would use thereafter.

Ron was known as quite a handy driver having won the 1954 NSW Hillclimb Championship and by now was known as a serious competitor by Jack Brabham. They had been rivals on track but when Ron started making parts for Jack they started a partnership that would result in winning at the highest level. Brabham was already winning in Formula One with Cooper cars when he asked Ron to fly over to England to join him in 1960 and after improving the Coopers as best they could they set up Motor Racing Developments to build Brabham cars.

With Jack driving and Ron designing they soon had enough success to attract many customers for their single-seater and sports cars and when Brabham won the Formula One World Championship in 1966 he became the first, and still only, person to win in a car of his own name. More successes followed until Brabham sold his interest in the team to Ron at the end of 1969 (so briefly becoming Ron's employee) but Jack then retired from racing and in 1972 Ron agreed terms to sell the outfit to Bernie Ecclestone. Some freelance consultancy work followed until Ron's wife Norma found he was at a loose end and getting in the way at home, so he decided to revive the RALT name and set to building cars for various formulae with much success.



He sold RALT to March Engineering in 1988 but stayed on as a consultant for a few years. It was during this time that I had the good fortune to work for him building many very successful Formula Three cars that won races all over the world. We were well paid for this too as there was a bonus of £13 paid to each employee every time a RALT won a championship scoring race and we used to rush to read the faxes on the notice board every Monday

Left: Ron shares a joke with Murray Walker at Silverstone in early 1991 between skiing accidents.

morning to count how many wins we may have had in British, German, French, Italian, Japanese and even Swiss F3 races, it was usually all of them (the Brazilian and Swedish series did not count as to keep costs down these were restricted to using older cars). I learned much from Ron at this time, he was known for having little patience and some strict mechanical principles; “you only turn the nut, not the bolt!” and never had time to draw anything, he just told others what he wanted. I had a tough time shaping (by hand) the improved bodywork for the 1991 Formula 3 car, the RT35 as Ron had an idea to improve the aerodynamics and would try to describe where he wanted the curves to go while I was wrestling with a bucket of resin and filler. We got it done to his liking in the end and when a model was sent to Southampton University wind tunnel on March management’s instruction it proved the exact results Ron had predicted; “I told ‘em, they could have saved some money and not bothered”. He must have liked my work though as he then got me to do a similar job on the RT23, the updated F3000 car.

Early in 1991 Ron took time off from the factory to go for his annual skiing holiday in the Swiss Alps. That was cut short when he managed to break a girl’s leg with his nose! He claims she was learner who had strayed on to the faster downhill pistes reserved for experienced skiers only when he was flat-out and head-down and could not avoid contact. Impatient as ever he discharged himself from hospital and returned to work with two cartoon like ‘panda’ black eyes. He had to go to a local hospital a few days later to have his cheekbones reset and was back at work again the next day. Meanwhile I had left RALT to spend a season working in France and next met him at the Pau Grand Prix the following May. He had come over to help set up the Formula 3000 car that Jack’s son David Brabham was racing that season but was somewhat hampered by having an arm in a sling. “What now?” I asked. Well feeling short-changed by only having had half of his skiing holiday he had gone back for the week he thought he was owed and managed to break a collar bone in another high-speed accident.



John Macey’s Brabham BT18 which he kindly loaned for our Expo display last year is a typically efficient Tauranac design and this model was very successful in international Formula 2 races in the 1960s.

Ron did not agree with March’s idea that Formula Three cars should have carbon fibre chassis as he felt they could not be built sufficiently engineered down to the price necessary to sell to customer teams and again when he was proved right in the early ‘nineties he stepped away from the company.

The following years saw many other projects including consultancy work with other F1 teams and designing a car to be used for Honda's racing school in Japan.

He moved back to Australia after Norma passed away in 2002 and settled for while in Bondi where even in his eighties he would swim laps of the pool every morning. Soon after I moved to Australia in 2003 some friends of Ron's including racing commentator Will Hagon organised an 'Evening With Ron Tauranac' at the Canada Bay Club and I went along. Ron was never much of a talker and if they expected him to regale the audience with some interesting stories they soon found it hard work. After a brief film and some commentary from Mr Hagon Ron was happy to answer questions but needed persuasion to go into much detail about his long career and racing successes. Things livened up a bit when it was thrown open to the audience to enquire further or add comments at which point I spoke up to remind everyone about Ron's helicopter. Met with a blank look and the answer "what are you talking about? I never had one of those, an old 'plane yes, it was Harvard trainer, but never a helicopter" I had to explain. When I first started work at RALT I was warned by more than one person about the 'helicopter' which was what everyone called Ron's habit of waving his arms around above his head when he lost his temper with someone; it seems everyone was aware of it except Ron himself; "I never knew that" he replied, apparently nobody had had the nerve to let him in on the joke.

He was awarded the Order of Australia in 2002 and inducted into the Motorsport Australia Hall of Fame in 2017. Many members will of course remember Ron came to Motorlife in June 2010 with Sir Jack at the official opening of the Brabham Room.

Sir Jack Brabham signs yet another autograph while Ron talks to visitors in the foyer at Motorlife in June 2010.



Ron had stayed fit and active well into his 'nineties and only moved north to Sunshine Coast to be near his daughter in the last couple of years. A statement from the family said; "In keeping with his 'quiet man' reputation, a small private funeral service will be held for family and close friends. His life and achievements will be publicly celebrated in the coming weeks with a memorial service in Sydney, details of which will be confirmed in the near future."

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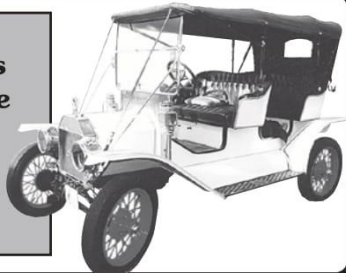
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Sunrise Morning Show Promotion

On Sunday 12th July Marlene and Don, Jillene and Ivor, Diane and Ted and Paul Unicom travelled to the HARS MUSEUM as a promotion for Destination Illawarra with the SUNRISE MORNING SHOW.

It was great to be able to take the Rugby for a spin and it drove beautiful. We lined our cars under the wing of the 747, what a great photo. Coffee was on the agenda followed by an interview about the cars. Don was over the moon when they picked the Hupmobile to drive off into the sunset. It was a great day and a good bit of publicity for us.

Ted Hutchison



CRAYFORD COACHBUILDERS

And The One That Got Away...

Not as well known as Pininfarina, Bertone, Weymann or Hooper but just as creative with what they had to work with, Crayford Auto Developments Ltd of Westerham, Kent was an innovative business started by David McMullan and Jeff Smith in the early 'sixties. They developed the first convertible version of the BMC Mini and this resulted in the Heinz food company ordering 57 versions of the Mini-based Wolseley Hornet to be converted and given away in a competition.



Left: The Wolseley Hornet as built for Heinz. Right: A Ford Corsair with the Crayford treatment.

They then had considerable success with various convertibles based on the then current Ford range; Cortina, Corsair and Capri. They later went on to more ambitious projects including taking the roof off Mercedes 280E Coupes as by this time the only open cars offered by Mercedes were the W107 SL series, and making station wagon conversions based on the S-Class W116 Mercedes in the 1970s.

The latter aimed to fill a gap in the market for a luxury load hauler as the marque did not produce their own station wagons until the T123 arrived in 1978.

Although no factory records survive this writer corresponded with Mr McMullan a few years ago and it is thought less than twenty of the S-Class wagon were built, not surprising when the cost of the conversion was added on to what was already a very expensive car; the Autocar magazine – 21st June 1975 - tested one based on the (relatively) cheapest 280SE which was listed at £9,894 while the Ford Fairmont Estate listed at £4,506 and a Range Rover cost £4,316 and the standard 280SE sedan was 'only' about £5,000. By 1977 the top of the range 450SEL wagon was up to over £16,500.

The conversions were built using the tailgate and rear side windows from the Ford Granada Estate without the tailgate was cut off just below the window and welded to the back edge of the original boot lid, so although it appeared to be a full-size wagon it still had the high closing panel at the back making lifting heavy loads in awkward. The story of how they chose these parts is amusing; David McMullan asked his wife to go to the car park at Gatwick Airport with a tape measure to see which cars might make suitable donors, I guess they were probably thinking it was the largest car park nearby that would have a suitable mix of cars.....anyway, she nominated the Granada and it all fits very well.

Of the few sold at the time, one was bought by Sophia Loren to ferry her poodles around her home in Geneva, it is thought she may still own it. Another was bought by (now disgraced) artist and broadcaster Rolf Harris which was brought to Australia to use for filming a TV series Rolf Goes Outback and the sorry, very rusty, remains of that one still exist in Sydney awaiting restoration. A few went to America and there were two others known here, both at one time owned by John Green the proprietor of a Mercedes service and parts business in Canberra.

So, when I was looking for another old Mercedes back in 2008 my wife Karen spotted something unusual on eBay and as it was only up the road in Moss Vale we decided to take a look.

What we found was a 1975 280SE Crayford converted wagon (or so we thought) in sound but slightly scruffy condition for the bargain price of \$3,000. I thought it was worth a go so did the deal and drove it

home. So far, so good. The seller seemed to be having trouble with his partner about having too many cars and I detected some friction about the price etc but decided to forget it; none of my business. The car originally had been fitted with Mercedes self-levelling rear suspension but this had been removed for some reason and the seller said he had the parts somewhere and if I came back a few days later he would give them to me so I drove back up to Moss Vale to meet him at a local garage at an agreed time but he did not show and was not answering his phone. I gave up and drove home thinking he was a bit strange but it was not that important as I had a backup plan anyway. I did manage to get him on the phone a while later and he said his wife threw a fit at him giving away parts for free! As if they would have been any good to her anyway, but there you go!



'Wasabi' is a closer match than 'Kermit' for the colour, although there were more than one shade of green used over the years as you can see.

As luck would have it I had a rough old 280E sedan that had been nothing but trouble and was using for parts for other cars and this had the optional suspension parts so they were removed too. This system was a lot simpler than the Citroën pressurised hydraulics; there was a small pump driven off the front of the camshaft and the rear shock absorbers were replaced by clever double acting parts that both acted as regular shockers but also had a pressurised cylinder that maintained the ride height – a simple lever attached to the floor opened a valve according to how low the floor was compared to the suspension. I later had a chance to test this fully. Next, I took the wagon over to Dave Phillip at Philstar Motors in Wollongong, a Mercedes specialist, and asked him to refit the rear suspension in place of the standard springs and shock absorbers and at the same time give it a complete service and re-gas the air-con. It also needed a small patch welded in the front floor where the drain for the condenser had leaked on to the carpet but otherwise it cleaned up pretty good. The car had been resprayed sometime in the past after a minor bingle, it had been a pale green metallic and was now gleaming in a very bright green which had attracted the nickname 'Kermit' in the Mercedes club although later comparing the exact shade to the famous TV frog I found it a little lighter and renamed it 'Wasabi' instead. The off-white interior trim and green carpets cleaned up quite well making for a pleasant drive although the bodywork could by now have benefitted from a complete restoration and repaint.

Research through the Mercedes club, the Crayford Register and with John Green in Canberra (who had known my car in the past) proved mine was one of two not actually built by Crayford but rather assembled in Australia by a sub-contractor who had the necessary parts and jigs sent over from Crayford. It was featured in Motor Manual magazine of June 1977 (page 26).

Anyway, I used the car regularly for a year or two, it drove well and always attracted attention wherever it went, there must have been something about it as even people who may not have been interested in cars seemed to recognise they were seeing an unusual car – or maybe it was just the colour?

Since moving here from England in 2003 we had left a lot of crates of various belongings in a lock-up unit at Storage King in Albion Park and decided one day to clear the lot out as we had been paying rent for a few years. I managed to get everything in the wagon and driving home I initially took it easy as I expected the weight to make a difference to the handling but no, it just pumped up the rear end and drove as it always did; not bad for thirty-plus year-old car with near 200,000 miles on the clock.

One day John Green who had set up a register of these cars on his website forwarded an email from a Mercedes collector in Malaysia asking if any were for sale. I had not intended to sell it urgently but as we had just bought a very clean 450 SLC coupe I thought of a number and replied with a lot of photos and details of its condition. Strangely he agreed to pay my asking price (double what it owed me by now) and arranged a shipping agent to collect it from Sydney docks, so one very hot day I drove it up there followed by Karen in another of our Mercedes, removed the rego plates and said “goodbye” to old Wasabi.

And yes, I did miss it, still do, but the money came in handy and last I heard a year or so back, it was advertised for sale for some outrageous asking price in Malaysia and described as ‘needing restoration’ so I wonder where that is now?



Left: Note the compromised tailgate opening. Right: Farewell at Sydney docks in Botany Bay.

Meanwhile, of the two that John Green had, one is now in New Zealand, painted black and working as a hearse while the other, a silver 450SE which was in good clean condition, except for some minor front end accident damage, was bought and fully restored by Wayne, an acquaintance in Gerringong who had also owned both my old green one and the ex-Rolf Harris car in the past.



Left: This 280SE wagon was formerly used by MB Spares of Canberra as a parts delivery car. It now resides in Hamilton New Zealand and earns its keep as a hearse at Woolerton's Funeral Home.



Wayne's restored 450SE wagon shown at a Gerringong car show in 2019.

He has done a great job on that one and it is often seen around at local car shows; keep an eye out for it, rego 450WGN. Another Crayford oddity that may yet surface locally is one of the 'Heinz' Wolseleys last heard of in a garage in Kiama painted black needing some work; maybe someone from the Minis In The 'Gong group know of it?



Left: The Wolseley Hornet convertible last seen in Kiama. Right: David McMullan on an Argocat.

Crayford was by the 'eighties best known for its off-road Argocat machine and following Jeff Smith's death in a motorcycle accident David McMullan sold the company and went to work for Oxfam helping install fresh water wells among other things in African and South American countries for which he was awarded the MBE by the Queen in 2007. He has since moved to Javea in Spain to enjoy a well earned retirement. For more info on the known examples of Crayford Mercedes models John Green has put a registry on his website at:

<https://www.mbspares.com.au/Registry/Crayford-Register.aspx>

Chris Martin

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORIC VEHICLE CLUB RALLY

The Berrima District Historic Vehicle Club held their 44th Rally 15th and 16th February. I attended as a spectator to view the rally cars assembled in the grounds of the Mittagong Public school on the Saturday morning. The cars ranged from veterans to 1980's.

Keith Gaymer



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1929 Buick



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An American racing enthusiast hauling his racing car to the track aboard a Ford TT in 1930's.

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TAMM is managed by an annually elected committee and our membership takes a keen interest in the life of the Museum by attending meetings, events and by volunteering time to assist in the running of the Museum in some way. The aim is to use your skills and some time to help achieve its goals.

TAMM offers several different types of membership. Membership plus partner with full voting rights for both. Applicants who are not known by Members will be offered membership as Friends of TAMM (without voting rights) for 12 months when upon agreement of both parties' membership can be transferred to full membership.

We require applicants to attend either a General meeting or another event before this process is completed.

A newsletter is published **6 times a year** with an update news sheet alternate months

Members meet for General Meetings at the Museum on the 3rd Tuesday of the month @ 7pm for 7.30pm (except December)

The TAMM runs a lively calendar of motoring, social and special events which is open to all.

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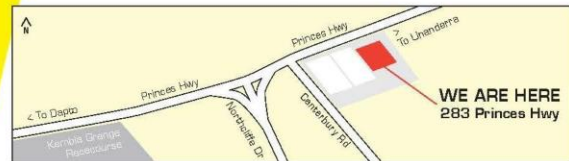
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