

THE AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIAN

March-April 2022

AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS AUSTRALIA INC

FOUNDING PATRON: Ron Tauranac AO

Our Major 2022 Event!

Wheels Across the Pacific: Transnational Histories of the Automotive Industry

**AUTOMOTIVE
HISTORIANS
AUSTRALIA INC**



**Society of
Automotive
Historians**

A symposium co-convened by Automotive Historians Australia and Society of Automotive Historians.

Date: 18 September 2022 (US time) 19 September 2022 (Aus time)

Conveners:

Harriet Edquist, Professor Emerita, RMIT University, Melb. AHA

**Skip McGoun, Professor Emeritus, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Penn.
SAH**

Simon Lockrey, Associate Professor, RMIT University AHA

Dr. Norm Darwin Phd. AHA

The symposium will be conducted online and we will seek papers that look at transnational histories of the automotive industry - that is, shared histories

that extend or go beyond national boundaries. To this end, the symposium is being co-convened by AHA and SAH in the first of what we hope will be ongoing collaborations between Australian and American automotive historians.

We recognise that the auto industry has, from the late 19th century been a global enterprise although that aspect of its history is often submerged in a national story. Hence, we are looking for papers that explore ways in which the Australian and American auto industries shared expertise, skills, design and studio practices, engineering, people, business structures and management paradigms, advertising, parts and trade practices such as tariffs.

The programme will take into account the time differences between the two countries.

There will be a Call for Papers after Easter. Abstracts of 200 words will be sought that outline the theme of your proposed paper. Note that final papers will be 15-20 minutes in length.

The symposium will be open to all **financial** members of AHA as part of their membership. Newsletter subscribers please note that the financial membership year commences on 1 July for the forthcoming year, although new members joining after 1 April will be included in the next year's membership. New member subscriptions are \$60, if you wish to join AHA and obtain the additional benefits of membership. [See our membership page to join.](#)

The Centenary of Repco

We are still planning a panel discussion to celebrate the centenary of Repco. The panel of former Repco luminaries will discuss Repco's programs and the company's significance for Australian motoring and motorsport. Further details to come.

In This Newsletter

Jenny Fawbert has contributed an important piece about the effect of floods on heritage collections, with some practical and useful information.

There's also some more about Joan Richmond's racing car pictured at Brooklands in 1934.

Doug Young has contributed a fascinating piece about the history of Queensland registration plates.

There's some background from Don Loffler on his new book, *Cars We Used To Drive*.

We also have another video. This one takes us back to Bathurst 1975. Called

Bathurst - Some Sunday Drive, it captures the essence of a great era in motorsport.

We would always like some more articles or short videos from members - two or three minutes would be fine - or some photos, showing us some of your cars, items of memorabilia or other motoring-related activities.

Thanks again to all the members who have contributed ideas, information and feedback for the newsletter.

Tony Lupton
Secretary and Editor

President's Report

Our planned symposium, ***Wheels Across the Pacific: Transnational Histories of the Automotive Industry***, where we join with the Society of Automotive Historians in presenting a combined event, is a first and promises to expand our knowledge of “cars, ideas, personnel and parts” that flowed between our two nations.

We are all aware of GM, Ford and Chrysler’s presence in Australia and many know of Holden and Ford Australia product sold in America, but how many of us know of the components that flowed across the Pacific, for example Australian disc brakes fitted to C7 Chevrolet Corvettes.

The Australian automobile industry has always maintained strong links with the USA, even at the expense of upsetting our former British masters. Some Australian component manufacturers started life as joint US-Australian companies; Trico is one example.

There are also the Australian inventions that were adopted by American companies, the Bishop variable ratio power steering being a good example.

Not least is the exchange of personnel. American Russell Begg led the design of the first Holden integral body and became the GM-H Chief Engineer and Australian Mike Simcoe became the first non-American to head GM’s design studios.

Little has been written on the subject of cross-Pacific automotive endeavours, one text (a modified PhD thesis) is Donald T. Bush’s *American Investment in Australian Industry* (1964) in which he devotes a small section to the automotive segment.

If you have some knowledge of an aspect of US-Australian automotive co-

operation, please give consideration to sharing at our symposium. The AHA committee are happy to discuss any idea you may have.

Norm Darwin
President

FLOODS AND HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

By Jenny Fawbert

Unfortunately, the recent floods on the East coast not only took lives and destroyed homes, farms, businesses and infrastructure but also many collectors are now confronted by the damage to or loss of heritage objects including manuals, photographs and other automotive related documents, as well as the inundation of their historic vehicles and antique machinery.

Reports indicate that the scale of the disaster was such that even those who had access to their collections as the flooding eased, and critically, the resolve to begin remediation in the face of such overwhelming conditions, were hampered by the lack of basic resources to undertake timely stabilisation of documents, photos and films.

Hopefully there will be, later on, stories of precious objects that survived, documents or images that missed destruction by foul water, sludge and pollutants. And flood affected historic vehicles and antique machinery that will again be lovingly restored to working order.

In 2019/20 the Council of Heritage Motor Clubs NSW found itself in the unenviable position of having members devastatingly affected by the bushfires. Council prepared then some information on recovering vehicles, parts and objects after fire. Within 12 months more members were overwhelmed by the March 2021 floods, and Council responded again with donations to the CWA Disaster Relief Fund, and with practical information on recovering flood affected vehicles and objects.

I hope you never have need of the information in the CHMC's flood and fire recovery documents, but if you or someone you know does then you can find the information at:

[WATER AFFECTED OR FLOOD DAMAGED HISTORIC VEHICLES AND ANTIQUE MACHINERY](#)

[HISTORIC VEHICLES AND ANTIQUE MACHINERY DESTROYED OR DAMAGED BY FIRE](#)

Women in Automotive History

We are including a regular feature in the newsletter about women in automotive

history and this edition features two pieces highlighting the often unrecognised role women have played in the industry.

Joan Richmond

Thank you to to Gordon Hellsten and David Trunfull for their correspondence about Joan Richmond and car 58 at Brooklands.



The photograph shows Joan Richmond (on the right) at Brooklands, 1934. Richmond raced in Australia and across Europe. (Brooklands Museum Collection, courtesy Silodrome).

From Gordon Hellsten:

According to the Joan Richmond book, the car was a Triumph. It was 1,100cc and the registration number was KV6904. She may have used the car in the 1934 Alpine Rally.

You may be aware that our late member (VHRR) John Reaburn arranged the printing of the book (JR Publishing) and my wife (Helen) did the proof reading.

And this contribution from David Trunfull:

My guess is that it could be a Triumph Southern Cross. I think the other lady is Eva Gordon Simpson who drove with Joan quite a few times in 1934-5. I

discounted it being an MG because of the chrome plated air vents which the MGs don't appear to have.

Regarding Joan, my good friend and fellow Riley Club member, John Mole has just published a new book on Joan and the overland trip from Australia to the 1932 Monte Carlo Rally. It is called "Through Dust, Desert and Snow or Deriding Distance". Joan with the help of a relative wrote a book in the 1960's but it was never published. I believe John bought the hand typed manuscript in 1978 at a charity auction. He has combined Joan's words with his collection of photographs of the event. It is the most comprehensive work written on the trip and it is a fascinating look back in time. It is available through the Spares officer of the Riley Motor Club of Victoria.

He has also printed a companion book, which is a transcription of the diary of Capt. Pat Morice. who drove one of the three Rileys who participated in the tour, along with Joan Richmond, Jean Robertson, Kathleen Howell, Mrs. Florence Coldham, and the Riley Representative for Australia, Bertie Beatson. (After the event Jean Robertson married Bertie.)



A 1934 Triumph Southern Cross for comparison with the photo of Joan Richmond's car. (Car-from-UK.com)

[Click here to read the article 'Women in the early Australian automotive industry' by Judith Glover and Harriet Edquist that sparked the debate about the car in the photo.](#)

An Anorak's Guide to the Q plate

Doug Young has provided the following article on a niche but fascinating aspect of automotive history concerning registration plates.

("Anorak" /æˈnɒræk/ is a British slang term which refers to a person who has a very strong interest, perhaps obsessive, in niche subjects.)

Those with an interest in cars of the 1920s and 1930s are also often interested in fitting number plates from the same (or an earlier) era as their car.

Australia had a number of very distinctive early designs, none more so than Queensland (Qld), with what have become known as “Q Plates”. These have a black Q on a white background, followed by one or more numerals on a black background.



Single and 2 digit plates as reissued in 1985 (D. Young)



3 and 4 digit plates as reissued in 1985 (D. Young)

Many Australian jurisdictions, Qld included, have now reissued these early plates. Qld began with the “Great Plate Auction” in 1985, where a hairdresser (who else?) reputedly paid \$100,000 for Q1.

Many of us have procured these plates and fitted them to our cars. Queensland enthusiasts are fortunate as “personalised” Q plates can be fitted to historic cars registered under the Special Interest Vehicle Scheme (aka SIVS or Historic rego) in lieu of the SIVS plates. This is not permitted in some other States such as Victoria and NSW, where the historic rego (or permit) plates must be displayed.

Preliminary

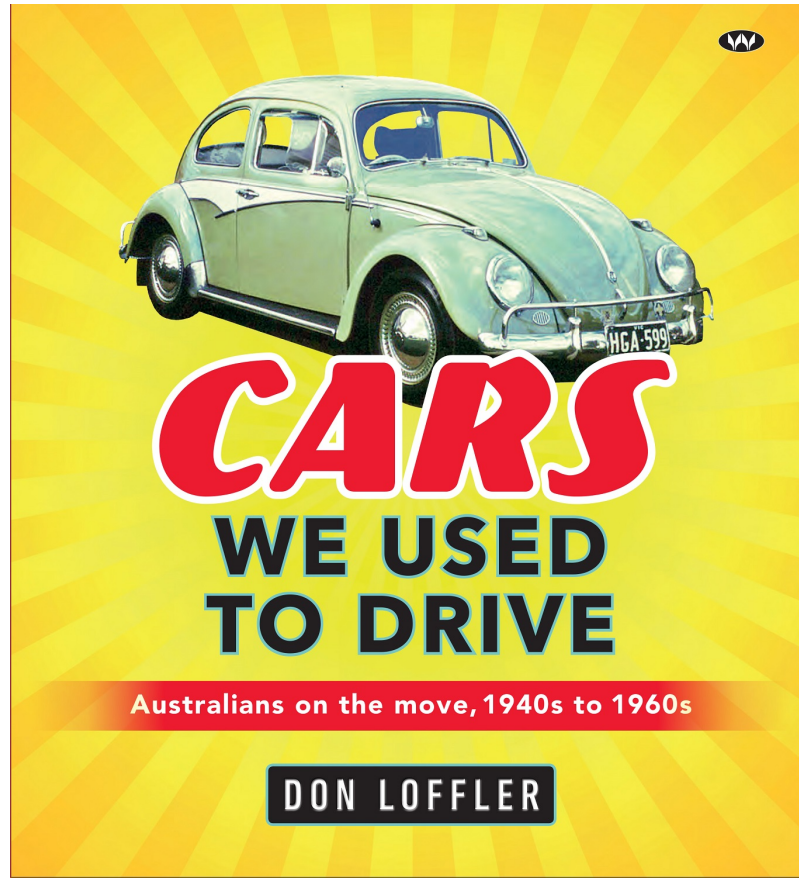
Before 1914, Qld was divided into 15 police districts, and the police in each area handled car registrations. Each district was allocated a letter. To illustrate, Brisbane was A, Toowoomba was C, and Hughenden was P.

The police allocated a number for each vehicle in their district, known as a numeric plate. This meant it was possible for 15 cars across the State to have exactly the same number.

The folly of this was realised as motorists ventured further from home and so in 1914, the district letter had to precede the number.

[Click here to read the complete article.](#)

This is Don Loffler's latest book. Don is well known for his work documenting Holdens. This book is a departure that takes him further afield.

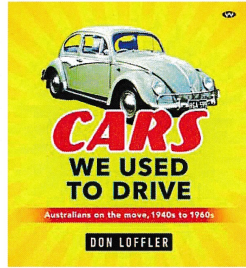


Don has given AHA some thoughts about why he wrote this book and his ongoing plans.

"Although I've become well-known as a Holden author, my interest in all makes of car on the road began even before the Holden was announced in 1948. Fast forward to the 1960s when my first cars were not Holdens, but a string of VW Beetles.

I'm now on a mission to 'rescue' people's old black-and-white photos and colour slides before they are thrown out, because those photos and slides often feature cars people used to own, and they record more than just cars. They are social history documents from an era far different from present times, showing how people dressed, for example, and how their picnics were so basic, with travelling rugs laid out on roadside grass for a sandwich lunch, and perhaps even chops and sausages cooked over a small, open fire."

Thanks for those comments Don. We wish you well on your mission. Below is a flyer for the book with further information.



Cars We Used To Drive

Australians on the move, 1940s to 1960s

DON LOFFLER

HB • 264 PP • 230 x 210 • Full colour t/out • ISBN 9781743058565

• Cars / History • \$54.95 • ~~10 August 2021~~

late

In Cars We Used to Drive, Don Loffler, well-known Holden author, reveals his lifelong interest in all makes of cars on Australian roads in the years 1946 to 1966.

Don Loffler has assembled a remarkable collection of 280 colour slides and black-and-white photographs of owners and their cars, from Austin to Zeta. Makes like Morris, Vanguard, Wolseley, Oldsmobile and Hudson, which have long since disappeared from the new car scene, were once household names, with owners making sure their favoured make was included in a photograph of a beautiful Australian scene.

The images record the social history of an era very different from today, when people were content to sit on travelling rugs by the roadside to enjoy a picnic lunch brought from home, perhaps with the addition of sausages and chops cooked over a small open fire. Caravan holidays were also popular at a time when motels were not yet in vogue.

Older readers can be assured of a great nostalgia trip into times they remember, while younger people will gain an insight into what it was like living in those times.

Don Loffler, much to the surprise of many, is not the son of a Holden dealer. He has never been a Holden factory employee, nor has he ever worked in the motor trade. He is a former German, Latin and Chemistry teacher, who in his retirement has the luxury of writing books on his lifetime interest in early model Holden cars, their history and the social setting into which they arrived.

Key selling points

- A perfect Father's Day gift from the popular author of the Holden cars series, also published by Wakefield Press.
- Aimed at car-lovers and the nostalgia market.



Wakefield Press

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Phone: +61 8 8352 4455

Email: admin@wakefieldpress.com.au

Website: wakefieldpress.com.au

Third European Conference for Automotive History

Turin/Torino

October/ottobre 2022

Our committee member Roger Beattie will be attending the postponed conference, now planned to be held in Turin on 15 and 16 October, 2022. Roger is President of the Fiat Car Club of Victoria and is interested to know if any other AHA members plan to attend the conference.

Anyone thinking of attending can let us know.

Bathurst - Some Sunday Drive

This documentary includes footage recorded the day after the 1975 Hardie Ferodo 1000, with winners Peter Brock and Brian Sampson, along with Harry Firth, Colin Bond and John Walker.

Directed by Annabelle Colville and written by Les Beard it was produced by Les Beard and Associates and Cinesound Movietone Productions.

I happen to be returning to visit Mt Panorama after Easter and by coincidence it will be my first time back at the track since the day after the 1975 race, the day when this documentary was filmed.

I hope this film brings back some terrific memories from a great era. Click on the photo to watch the film.



More On Longford

ABC television program *Back Roads* has recently broadcast an interesting program on the town of Longford. It includes some excellent historical and contemporary footage along with interesting interviews.

[Here's a link to the ABC site where you can watch the episode.](#)

(You'll need to scroll down through the list of episodes).



(Photo: Tony Lupton)

AHA Resources Page

Previous articles from the newsletter and other resources are available on the **AHA Resources Page** - click on the titles below to read the articles or [click here](#) to be taken to the Resources Page.

Recent articles:

[An Anorak's Guide to Early Q Plates](#)

[Marion Bell. Round Australia in a 1925 Oldsmobile](#)

[The Queen of Whale Cay](#)

[Women in the Early Australian Automotive Industry - a Survey.](#)

[Australian Women's Automobile Club](#)

[AGM Michell and the Crankless Engine](#)

[Horace Washington Harrison, an Australian Automobile Pioneer](#)

[Early Ballarat Motoring - Part 1](#)

[Early Ballarat Motoring - Part 2](#)

[A History of Steenbhom Ltd. Coach and Motor Body Builders](#)

Information Exchange

Armstrong Siddeley Exterior Light Switch

Andrew Christophersen is restoring a 1952 Armstrong Siddeley Hurricane that was first registered in Victoria. It has a switch on the bodywork positioned by the taillights.

Friends in The Armstrong Siddeley car club in Victoria have advised him it was a legislative requirement that the tail lights be independently controlled by such a switch. He has left the switch in place for reasons of historical integrity.

He's curious to know:

(1) When this requirement commenced and ended. A 1928 Armstrong Siddeley from Victoria has such a switch. However, no Armstrong Siddeley Sapphires seem to have featured this, suggesting that by 1953 the requirement no longer existed.

(2) The reason this was introduced - some have suggested it enabled a policeman to activate the taillights if the car had been left parked in a dangerous location.

(3) What legislation dealt with such matters.

Any information that can be provided would be most appreciated.

Database of Digitised Magazines

Subsequent to discussion of documenting collections that have been or are being digitised, a list of Australian sites was quickly developed. They are listed below. Should you know of others, please advise. This is now being extended to include a list of all Australian Automotive magazines regularly published and sold or distributed publicly.

[Click here to see the database of digitised magazines.](#)

Newsletters on Historic Motoring Themes

Some of our members and friends produce very interesting and informative newsletters of their own. Many cover events and history with a rural and regional focus.

Here are some newsletters you may wish to subscribe to.

Johannes "John" Schuurman produces *The Australian Chrysler Narrator*,

which focuses on all things to do with pre-1960 Chryslers in Australia, including Dodge, De Soto and Plymouth. John's email is plymouthpalace@gmail.com



David Vaughan produces **Country Motor**. David's publication focuses on historic vehicles, collections, events and personalities in regional Australia. All back copies are available through a link on the AOMC website here <https://www.aomc.asn.au/country-motor-australia>. The email for subscriptions is countrymotor@aussiebb.com.au



Members are encouraged to send in contributions or ideas for inclusion in member updates. Whether it's something about motoring history you think members may be interested in, a project you're working on or have finished or a suggestion for AHA, let us know about it.

Local Links

Websites for some of our Australian motoring friends

[Association of Motoring Clubs](#)



[Veteran Car Club of Australia \(Victoria\) Inc.](#)



[Victorian Historic Racing Register](#)



[Royal Historical Society Victoria](#)



[Council of Heritage Motor Clubs \(NSW\)](#)





[Vintage Sports Car Club of Australia](#)



[Vintage Sports Car Club of Victoria](#)



[Historic Sports and Racing Car Association](#)



[Australian Motor Heritage Foundation](#)



Any other organisations wishing to be included are asked to contact AHA.

International Friends



The Society of Automotive Historians

In Britain

Information about SAHB is available at their website: <https://thesahb.com/>



Information about SAH (USA) and their events can be found on their website:
<https://autohistory.org/>

Automotive Historians Australia can be contacted by email at info@autohistoriansaustralia.org, by mail at P.O. Box 319 Balaclava 3183 or via our website at autohistoriansaustralia.org

AHA would appreciate you distributing this newsletter to your friends, networks, clubs and associations.

