# HOLDEN VS FORD

## THE CARS, THE CULTURE, THE COMPETITION

STEVE BEDWELL

ROCKPOOL
PUBLISHING



Disclaimer

This book contains many images and despite the author's considerable efforts it has proved impossible to trace the provenance of them all. In any such cases the author apologises, and warrants that any such image/s have only been used relevantly and in context.

This is not an official publication of GM Holden Ltd. and is not represented as such. The use of Holden logos are in editorial context only and remain copyright of GM Holden Ltd. All archival photos remain the property and copyright of GM Corporation Ltd. and must not be reproduced.

**A Rockpool book**

Published by Rockpool Publishing
24 Constitution Road, Dulwich Hill, NSW 2203, Australia
www.rockpoolpublishing.com.au

First published in 2009
Copyright © Rockpool Publishing, 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

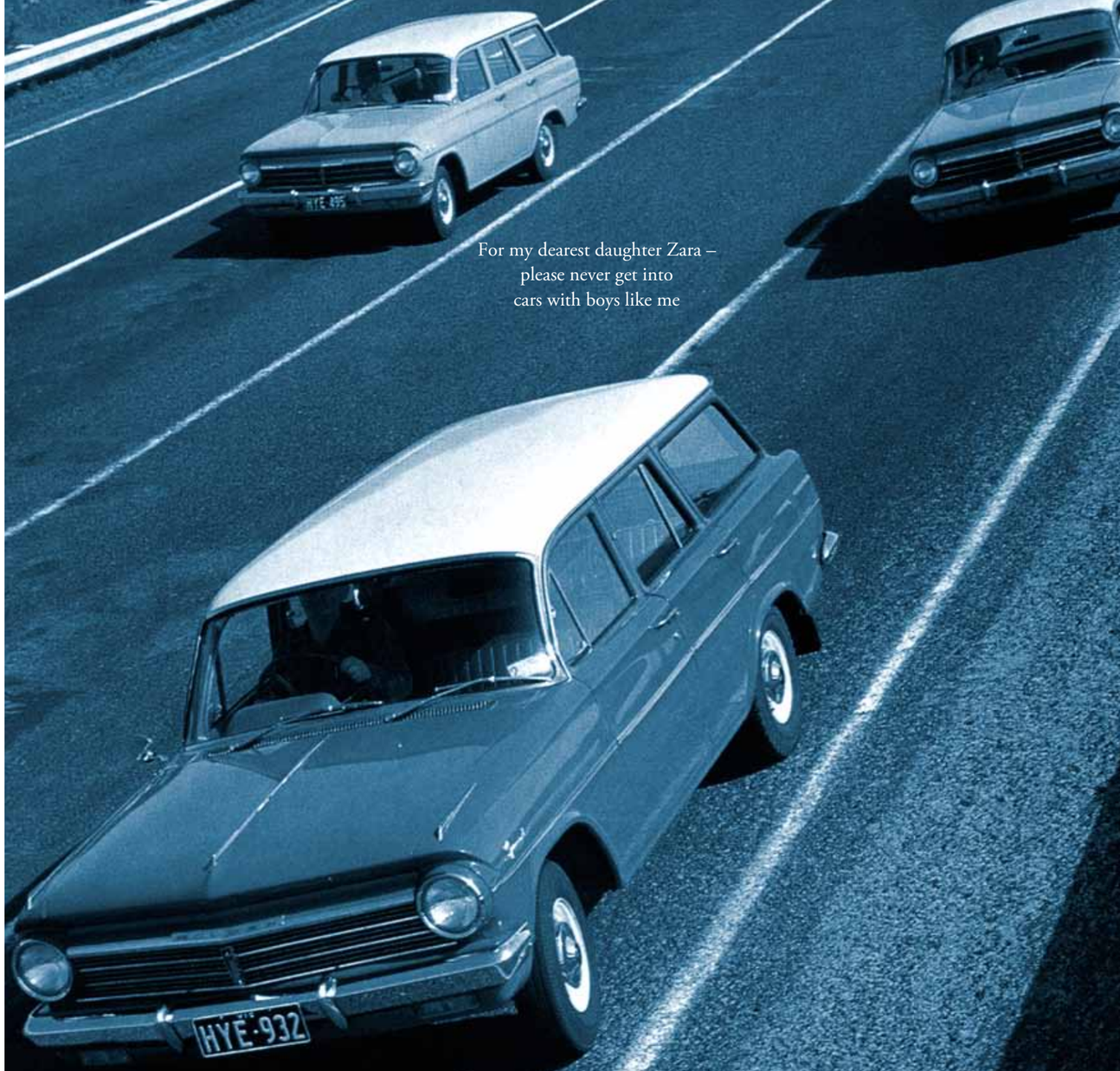
National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Bedwell, Steve
Holden vs Ford: the cars, the culture, the competition.

Includes bibliography.
ISBN 978 1 921295171 (pbk.)

Automobile racing – Australia. 2. Holden automobiles. 3. Ford automobiles.
796.720994

Edited by Jody Lee
Cover and internal design by Debaser
Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro by Kirby Jones
Printed and bound by 1010 Printing in China
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1




For my dearest daughter Zara –
please never get into
cars with boys like me

# CONTENTS


*Introduction*

## *Part 1: It Had To Start Somewhere*

Chapter 1: In The Beginning …
Chapter 2: The Blue Oval And The Lion
Chapter 3: This Year's Model
Chapter 4: Topping The Colour Charts
Chapter 5: The First Real Test
Chapter 6: Breathy And Panting … But Not In A Good Way
Chapter 7: The Winds Of Change

## *Part II: Racing Improves The Breed*

Chapter 8: The Mountaineers
Chapter 9: Who Stole My HO?
Chapter 10: A Comparison On The Mount
Chapter 11: Brock, Bill And Bridgestone

## *Part III: The Human Element*

Chapter 12: Go Van, Go
Chapter 13: Lang Lang And The You Yangs
Chapter 14: Famous Names, Famous-Ish Cars
Chapter 15: Styling Gone Wrong
Chapter 16: Mel, Uwe And That Photo
Chapter 17: The Fuzz
Chapter 18: The Super-Roo And The Prancing Horse
Chapter 19: Old School, New School
Chapter 20: Two From Each Night That Never Made It



# CONTENTS

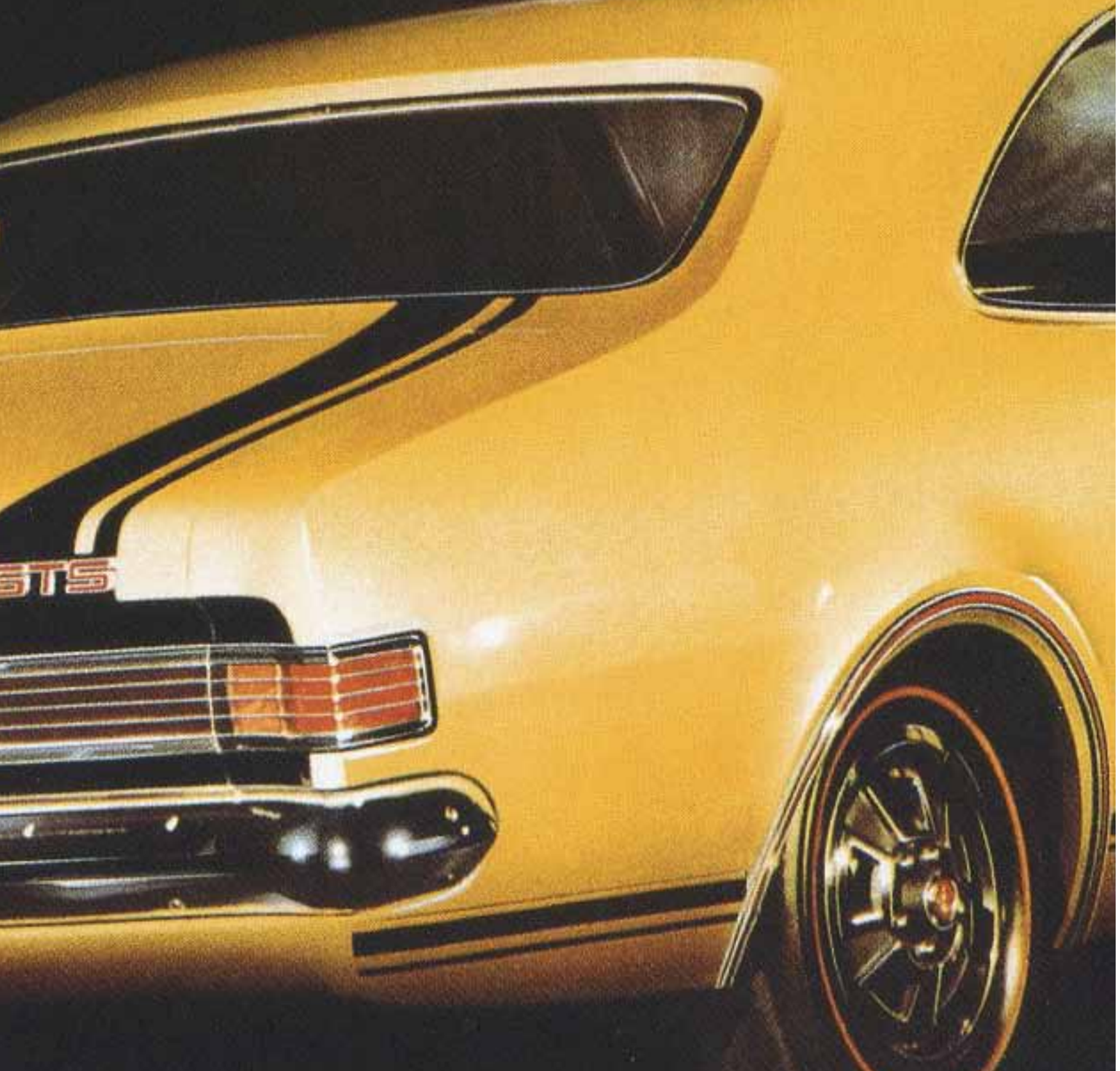


## *Part IV: The Sub-Species*

Chapter 21: The Evolution Of The GT
Chapter 22: Come Fly With Me
Chapter 23: Selective Memory? It Appears Not
Chapter 24: Homegrown Luxury
Chapter 25: Monaro
Chapter 26: Henry's Hardtops
Chapter 27: From Show To Showroom

## *Part V: Hen's Teeth*

Chapter 28: Two Convertibles And A Wagon
Chapter 29: Ahead Of Its Time
Chapter 30: They've All Got To Go
Chapter 31: The Mazda Roadpacer AP
Chapter 32: This Is The Story Of The Hurricane
Chapter 33: The Day The Earth Stood Still
Chapter 34: R.I.P. Phase IV
Chapter 35: XU-2
Chapter 36: How Would You Like Your Torana, Sir? Rare?
Chapter 37: Buying Muscle



# INTRODUCTION

September 1980, Padstow, a south-western suburb of Sydney. It was a Sunday morning in the suburbs like so many others before it, and since, but this particular Sunday morning would prove to be life altering for me. Being a good sixteen-year-old son I was in the yard toiling manfully over the Victa whilst cursing my father for disappearing and leaving me to also do the edges as well as the grass. Then, with still seven months before I could sit for my driver's licence, it happened. My automotive epiphany, the car that would set the pattern of my vehicular allegiances and taste for the rest of my driving life, swung into the driveway with Dad behind the wheel. Consummation of my unrequited love was imminent, once I saw what I saw in the driveway.

Later I learned that Dad had negotiated a deal to buy the car that now sat in our driveway from an old bloke around the corner in Faraday Road. Old Aubrey had owned the car since new and had garaged it under a woollen blanket every night of its life. You hear it often, but in this case it was true: this vehicle had never been driven in the rain. Sadly, for him at least, the old bloke's eyes had begun to let him down, as had the guttering and spouting work on his house. My father was always very quick to seize an 'opportunity', and offered the codger a carefully considered $1000 for his car. As it transpired, Aubrey had $700 worth of guttering work that needed doing and his wife was keen to go to Taree to visit with their eldest daughter. Dad had done his calculations well; he knew that $1000 would cover both needs with a spare $150 for old Aub to split equally between his other two great loves – the pub and the TAB.

The car in question, my first and Aubrey's last, was a 1964 EH Holden Special sedan, NSW registration DHD-726, which had only travelled 60,560 miles. She was Mitchell Blue with a Fowlers Ivory roof. Mechanically DHD-726 was a 179 manual with an HP block. There was no heater, no radio and no carpets on the floor; the epitome of mid-sixties motoring in Australia. Old Aubrey had stumped up for mud flaps though, which struck me as odd for a man who never drove in the rain. The EH was in immaculate condition, you could eat off the motor, the ashtray had never fulfilled its intended purpose and the vinyl upholstery maintained its two distinctive smells, one each for hot and cold weather. She was a peach. There wasn't even a tear in the boot mat.

For seven months I drove the EH up the driveway then backed it back under the carport for yet another wash, gently sponging her curves and edges dreaming of the day when I would get my licence and be able to slip behind the skinny steering wheel that had a circumference not dissimilar to the London Eye and hit the road, supping down as much of that sweet, sweet 29.9 cents/litre Amoco Super as we could handle.

I had become a 'Holden man', and with that realisation came the responsibility, blind loyalty and fervent faith in the brand that had afflicted so many before me – and so many since. Holden versus Ford, Ford versus Holden, Red versus Blue, Blue versus Red, even the order in which you say the names is a firm indicator as to which camp you side with. And you must take a side in suburbia: it's a cultural division wider than any other, yet it does not differentiate between race or religion; it's all about the cars, not who drives

them or where the driver comes from, what they eat or how many arms their God has, it's purely about the cars.

How are allegiances determined in this most Australian of arguments? When does this split in automotive taste first occur and what prompts such a significant and irreversible decision?

For me it was because my first car was a Holden, for others it is a predetermined family bias, not unlike voting Labor or Liberal; Dad did it so I will too. For others it will be a chance sighting in a showroom window of a vision in steel and chrome or the appreciation of the skill and daring of a particular racing driver.

Although both General Motors and Ford had been assembling cars in Australia since the early 1900s it took until 1948 for the first Holden to eventuate and then a further twelve years for Ford to release its first 'Australian' Falcon … it is widely believed that it was the release of the 1960 XK Falcon that signalled the start of the true Holden versus Ford rivalry that has dominated the Australian automotive landscape for nearly 50 years, a rivalry not only of the heart but one which has also influenced the direction and growth of our car industry.

When setting out to write a book with the potential to polarise and divide a nation like no other, the starting point is easy to define; but where to finish? So much of the Holden versus Ford rivalry is predicated on the yearly 500 mile/1000 kilometre race at Mount Panorama, Bathurst, NSW, and has been since the 1960s. Much of that changed at the end of 1984 when Australia's touring car Formula changed from Group C to Group A International regulations. Though under this new formula Holdens and Fords were still thrilling the punters over Skyline, they were increasingly, and ironically, finding themselves behind Skylines and Cosworth Sierras. It was still gripping, but something didn't seem right; like reading the newspaper wearing somebody else's glasses. We had always been able to wander into the showroom on Monday and buy a reasonable facsimile of the car that had won on Sunday – Group A often robbed us of that small piece of patriotic dignity.

For this reason, this book will deal with the glory days of Holden versus Ford, from the infancy of the rivalry to the hairy-chested, balls-out bravery of blokes who threw overpowered street cars around a mountain wearing little more than ice-cream containers for helmets, smoking while they raced.

When the pen first hit the paper on this project I took the view of it being like a court case; a court case with no ultimate verdict. You, the jury, will hear evidence from both the red and the blue, evidence that will be refuted under cross-examination with contradictory evidence from the other side. Of course a jury is meant to be completely impartial, but the fact that you are reading this book already indicates that you have probably entered the courtroom having already made up your mind. There is of course a surprise witness that will be called to give evidence and potentially shake up the cases of both sides – a witness named Chrysler.

This book will take a blowtorch to the soft underbelly of the Holden versus Ford phenomenon, dissecting the eternal argument by not only indulging emotions but also balancing the facts; broaching the debate in its entirety as never before. The Ford versus Holden debate is unique in the world. Nowhere else does a country with such a small population base have two full-scale car manufacturers constantly building and updating world class vehicles, merely to win one race per year, at times. Our R&D centres are regarded as among the best in the world, and the cream of our engineering and design teams are regularly poached to overseas affiliates because of their skill and free thought.

Wherever there is passion, there is humour, points and counterpoints as well as contradictory facts and statistics. Of course, statistics can be manipulated to suit any purpose; nine out of ten Holden and Ford drivers will tell you that. As everyday motorists or car enthusiasts we live in one of the most parochial and technologically savvy automobile markets in the world, and the reasons for that are simple: Ford versus Holden and the competition, and at times hatred, these very words inspired among the manufacturers and their supporters.









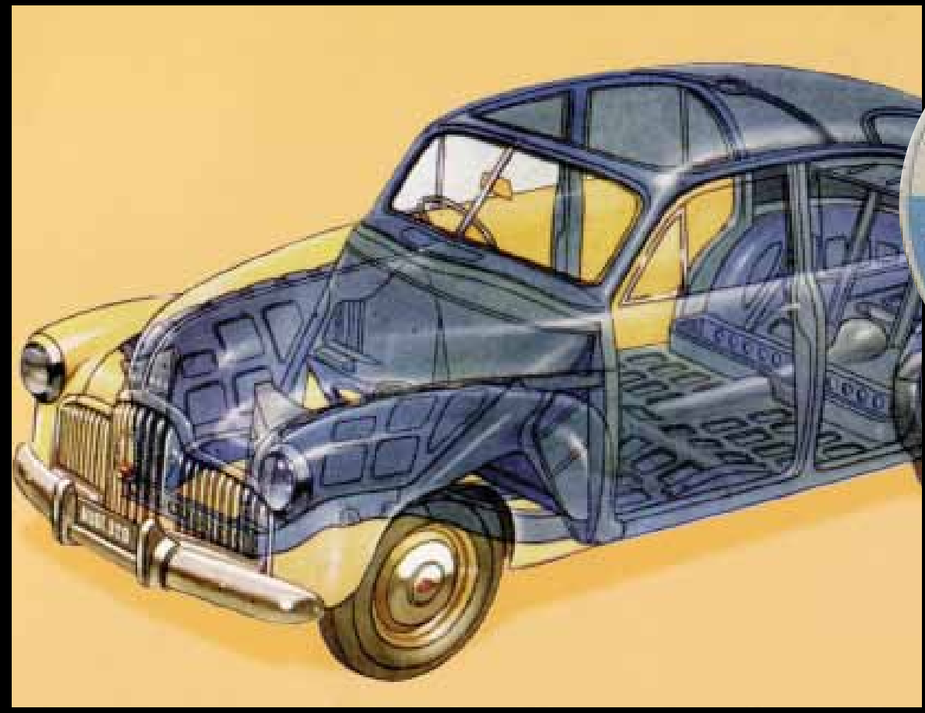









# PART 1: IT HAD TO START SOMEWHERE








CHAPTER 1

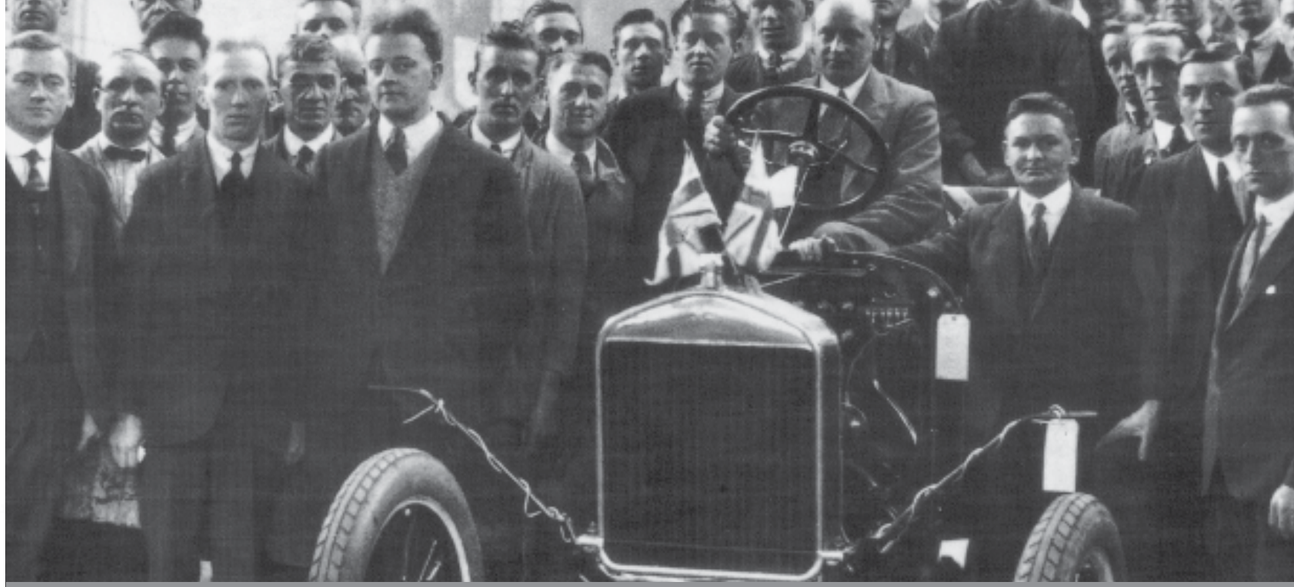
# IN THE BEGINNING . . .

The history and significance of the Ford versus Holden debate can be traced to the famous brontosaurus versus stegosaurus debate of the cavemen; well, not quite, but the passions run just as deep. Battle lines for the two sides were drawn very early in the piece from this automotive patriotism which is not found in any other country. Holden versus Ford, and the passion that it engenders, echoes the Australian spirit, the Australian ethos of picking sides, of making a stand and of staunch loyalty to everything that we hold dear.

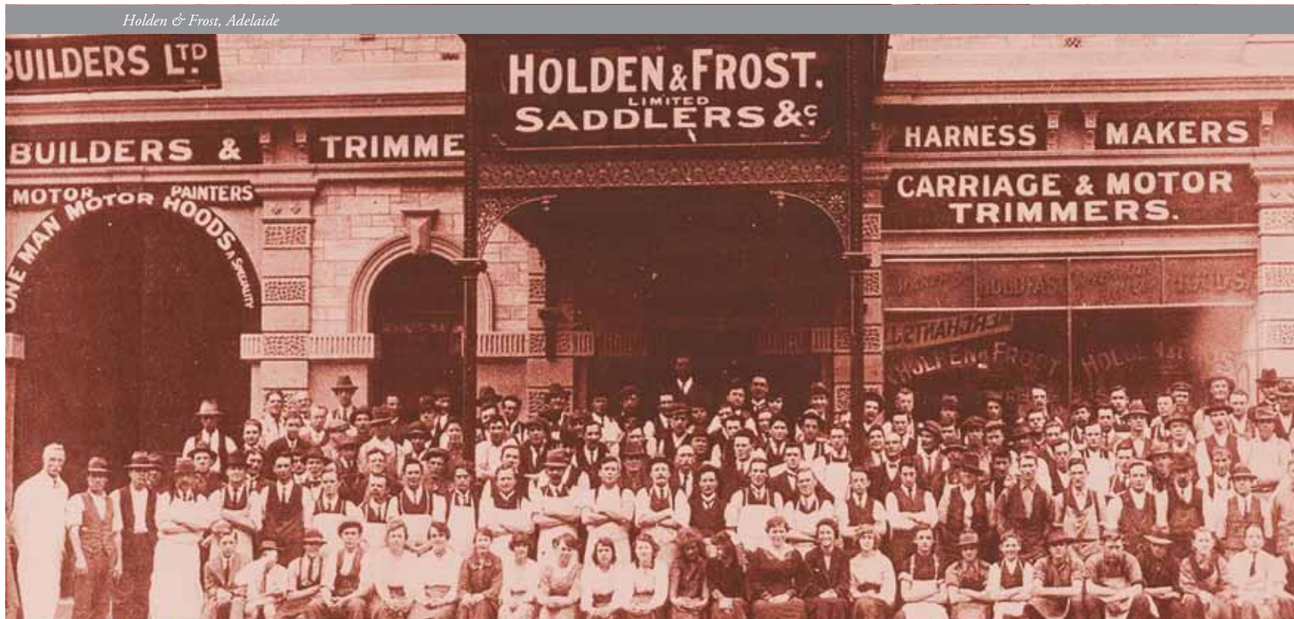
Holden versus Ford was a polarising enough concept for people outside either organisation, but what must it have been like for those at the coalface, company employees, particularly in sales and marketing, who were only one step behind the sales managers in the battle for sales that took place daily on the forecourts of dealerships nationwide?

The Ford versus Holden war for the consumer was never fought head-to-head. Punters may have driven both cars, but never at the same time and certainly never with a salesman from both companies together putting their case. This never happened and evidence suggests that even if it did there would have been little chance of the customer changing their mind. The predisposition for one brand or the other was there before they left the house. Chances are they only test-drove the other brand so that they could say how lousy it was compared to theirs.

If sales executives from both sides of the fence who were there in the mid-1970s are to be believed Holden and Ford had a rivalry and an intensity of hatred in one another unlike any other industry. This is the essence of Ford versus Holden. The hatred they felt for the opposition was only matched by the loyalty they felt for their own company. Holden executives might leave the



*Early Model T leaving the Geelong Line in 1926*




*Holden & Frost, Adelaide*

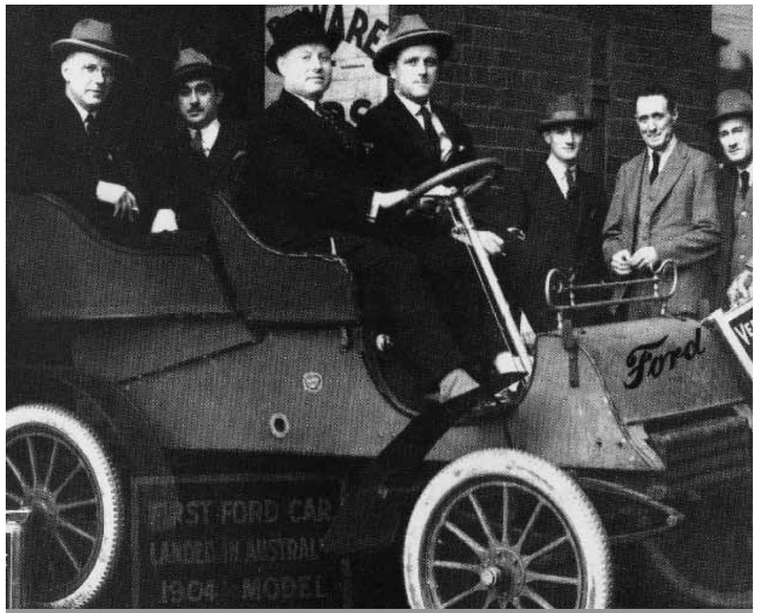
company, as might Ford executives, but they invariably would end up at a 'neutral' brand. Holden men never crossed to Ford and Ford men never crossed to Holden. It was an unspoken, fiercely enforced law.

During this period Ford and Holden, while both essentially car manufacturers, were remarkably different companies, in both staff and attitude. Holden clung to a more traditional approach to sales and marketing, and a 'gentlemanly' approach exercised by men who largely were not tertiary educated and who relied on acquired knowledge and relationship building as opposed to 'book smarts'. This was the way Anglo-Australian business relationships had always been conducted, and you can afford to do business that way when you command better than 30 per cent market share.

Ford, on the other hand, took a far more aggressive approach, using university educated executives and innovative dealer development strategies to keep things moving. It was rare for Holden sales managers to be given equity in the dealership, not unlike the way partners are made at law firms, but Ford found a way to lure good salespeople to them through creative dealer development. It should be pointed out that the fierce loyalty and hatred I mentioned earlier was mostly the domain of both companyies salaried executives, generally speaking. The men who worked the showroom floor were a more mercenary bunch, and a sale was a sale and a car was a car to them. Ford attracted at least a dozen of Holden's top-flight sales managers by offering them a deal whereby they mortgaged their house for 20 per cent equity in a new dealership that Ford would back.

*Ford Geelong expansion, 1938*






*First Ford to come to Australia, 1904*

Everyone was a winner; Ford poached a top-flight sales manager, who was now a happy franchisee and Ford opened a new franchise.

Ford and Holden were constantly watching each other to the exclusion of all others. All company sales chiefs were spies. They would check on the Holden dealerships in their territories to make sure things were fine, then they would drop by the competition to see what they could glean in terms of volume, prices, floor-plans, etc. It was all cloak and dagger stuff, mostly without the cloak.

Here were two giant companies, acting and reacting to each other, punching and counter-punching to the point where if Ford appointed a managing director who was seen to have a big personality, you could guarantee that the next man to warm the big seat at General Motors Holden (GMH) would also be large of character. Corporate hospitality tents at Bathurst (the term marquee had never been used west of the Great Divide) in the mid-seventies were celebrations of beer and Jatz crackers where inter-brand rivalries festered and grew by the can, and the hatred swelled with the reflux to the point where executives from both companies would confront each other, exchange expletives, make ridiculous bets on the race outcome, almost come to blows and then retreat for party pies. While this was happening the executives from Japanese car companies would sit quietly, watching, waiting.

Holden and Ford wanted nothing more than to beat the living daylights out of each other, so much so that they didn't pay any attention to, or take seriously, anyone else in the market. In the late 1960s the former Ford MD, the American Bill Bourke, summed up his thoughts,



*James A. Holden*

and indeed the thoughts of many in both camps, on the Australian car market when he said, 'You will never see a Japanese car parked out the front of an RSL.'



*Profile Painting of GMA prototype 2008*



*48-215 body number 1, and some pipe smokers*

How did these two corporate giants from the United States get to be so entrenched both in market share, and in the automotive psyche of Australia? How and why did they embark on their antipodean car colonisation?

To answer these questions, we have to start from the beginning. Two companies, two different beginnings, two different stories, both on a collision course. I have tossed a coin and it came down tails, tails was Holden, so that is where we will start.

The story of Holden begins in 1856 when James Alexander Holden, an English immigrant who arrived four years earlier, established J.A. Holden, the saddlery and harness business in Adelaide that bore his name. No other automotive company in the world can trace its name back so far and have such a historical connection to three centuries of transport.

By 1865 business was booming for J.A. and the business shifted to larger premises in Grenfell Street and took on a partner in 1872. The new company was named Holden & Birks but it appears that Birks offered little more to the company than his name and the partnership was dissolved in 1875 and J.A. Holden & Co. was re-established.

James Holden decided that family was the way of the future and in 1879 he brought his twenty-year-old son, Henry James into the business and then in 1885 accepted German-born Henry Frederick Frost as a junior partner in the business that would eventually bear both their names. James Alexander Holden died in 1887 aged 57, leaving son Henry as the senior partner. Business was booming at this time, with the company having expanded well beyond its traditional base of leather goods and moving into the vehicle business, building and repairing horse-drawn carriages and coaches.

Henry Holden's son, Edward Wheewall Holden, joined Holden & Frost in 1905, at a time when the company was making a name for itself in the car business, repairing car upholstery and before long was manufacturing hoods and side curtains for the new-fangled automobile. Frost passed away in 1909 and Henry Holden bought his late partner's shares in the company and set about branching out into the manufacture of motorcycle sidecars. The pendulum had swung and Holden was growing ever closer to being more like the business we associate the name with today.

In 1914, H.J. Holden took an order to make a custom-built car body to suit a Lancia chassis: it was laborious work that utilised painstaking carriage building techniques that produced an outstanding result. This was Holden's entrée to the auto building industry. Word got around and one custom body led to another and over the next three years Holden & Frost continued to build motorcycle sidecars, and custom automobile bodies, and in an ironic twist they even built T-Model Ford bodies.

While Holden & Frost were busy establishing themselves as the builders of quality car bodies, on the other side of the world William Crapo Durant, having recently founded the General Motors Corporation (GMC) with Buick as its backbone, went on a buying frenzy adding Oldsmobile, Oakland (later Pontiac) and finally Chevrolet to make GMC the biggest automotive manufacturer in the world and the largest corporation in the United States. Durant had even bigger plans afoot, and with exports in mind he formed the GM Export Company in 1911 and shortly after appointed a field representative in Australia, with an office in Sydney. The exports began in 1912 first with Oakland and Buick, Oldsmobile followed in 1917 and Cadillac, GMC and Chevrolet in 1918.

World War I took an unexpected turn that saw Germany employ mass submarine warfare. Australia was deeply affected as this new form of warfare cut international shipping lanes bringing Australia's international trade to a virtual and near overnight halt. The government response to this was to introduce trade restrictions that, among other things, placed a covenant on the number of motor cars that could be imported, or more correctly complete motor cars. Only one complete car could be imported for every three chassis. Holden & Frost, like several others, saw this as an opportunity and in 1917 they moved into motor body building on a large scale. Holden & Frost seized the opportunity to purchase another Adelaide motor body builder, F.T. Hack, to increase its production capabilities. This new enlarged company built 99 car bodies in 1917 mainly for imported Dodge and Buick chassis. The expansion was as rapid as the demand was fierce and in 1918 Holden's Motor Body Builders (HMBB) was set up as a division of Holden & Frost and produced 587 bodies in its first year of



GMA Melbourne Head Office, 1937



Clay modelling the 48-215



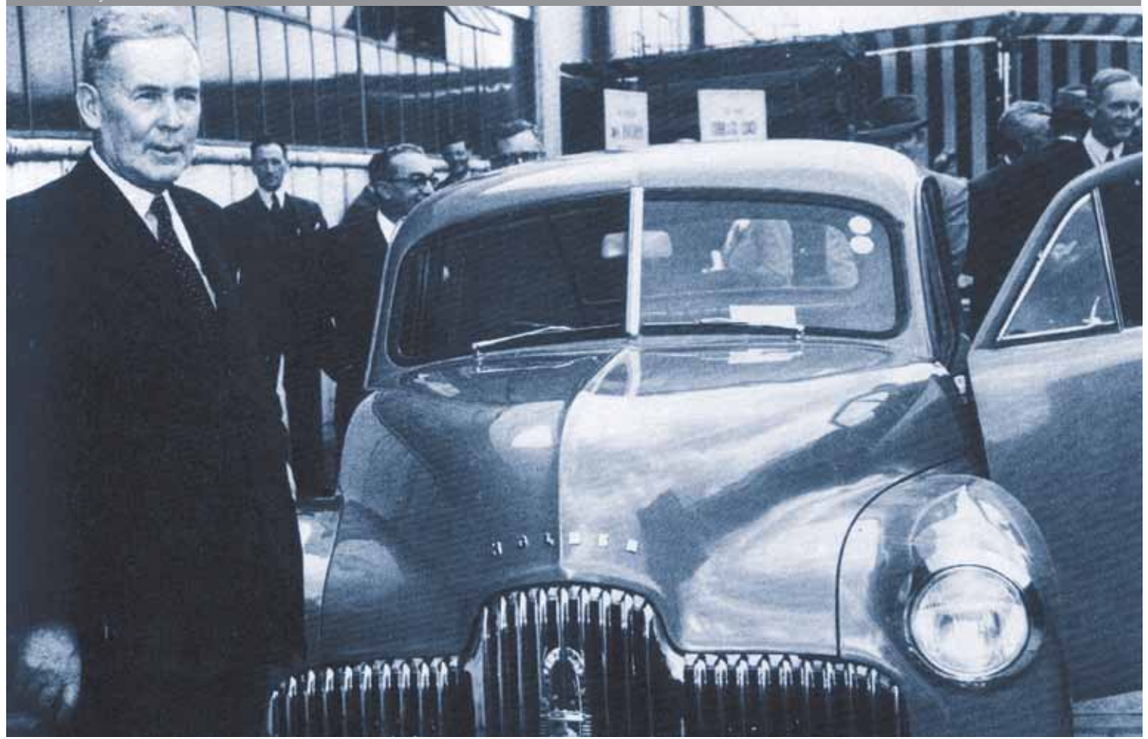
## Road testing in the suburbs

*This is the route e given to the test drivers: Travel up Salmon Street, Port Melbourne, along the beach front and St Kilda Street and into North Road. Up North Road to Wellington Road, to Rowville. Turn left into Scorseby Road, to Ferntree Gully Road, then right to Upper Ferntree Gully, to Belgrave, Kallista, Monbulk, Fairy Dell, Emerald and back through Clematis, Selby, turn left into Belgrave South, then to Lysterfield to Hallam, then down the Princess Highway to North Road, to St Kilda Street. Turn right into St Kilda Street and travel along the waterfront to Williamstown Road, then down Salmon Street to the GMH plant on the corner of Salmon and Lorimer Streets. The full circuit was 138 kilometres.*

production. Just one year later that number had swelled to 1600, amazingly achieving this with the country on a war footing. To achieve this number Holden had invested heavily and revolutionised the industry by introducing state-of-the-art production machinery and designs that took a minimum of hand finishing, both decreasing the unit price and increasing quality.

In 1923, with its production line fully operating, Holden produced 12,771 car bodies, in a wide varies of styles and marques to keep pace with what was happening in the United States. In 1924, after purchasing 22 acres of land and building one of the most modern production lines in the world, Holden opened its Woodville plant. At this point, General Motors struck a deal with Holden that would see them manufacture bodies exclusively for GM chassis. The deal also allowed HMBB exclusive access to the blueprints of forthcoming GM models and allow them to have bodies designed and built by the time these new chassis had cleared customs. In 1924 Holden produced 22,150 units across 65 body styles. This represented nearly half of all

'She's a Beauty!'



domestic body production. Apart from automobiles Holden at this time also built railway carriages, bus bodies and 59 of Melbourne's iconic W-class tram bodies.

By 1925, Holden's body building operation was the largest in the world outside of North America and continental Europe, employing 2600 people and building more than 34,000 car bodies. In 1928 the famous lion and stone badge was used for the first time (see Chapter 2: The Blue Oval and the Lion, p. 28), and then the Great Depression hit, seriously affecting HMBB, who were caught off-guard after completing a major expansion phase.

The downturn continued and HMBB was closed for much of 1931, producing only 1611 bodies for the entire year. At the start of 1931 General Motors already sensed trouble and desperate to protect its Australian interests put together a £1.2 million 'rescue package' that merged General Motors Australia with HMBB to form General Motors Holden's Limited (GMH). This new company was presided over by Sir Edward Holden.

GMH began an aggressively pursued policy to use more and more locally sourced materials in their manufacturing of bodies for the Vauxhall and Bedford chassis arriving from England as well as the full range of GM chassis being imported from the United States. Although this plan was keeping costs down as well as supporting the local economy, things got worse for GMH in 1932. With the industry as a whole haemorrhaging both sales and money, GMH sales had dropped 90 per cent since 1928 with the company manufacturing fewer that 4000 bodies in 1932.



*Fisherman's Bend, 1936*

This situation was most unpalatable to Holden's American overlords and Vauxhall Director and GM trouble-shooter Laurence Hartnett was dispatched to GMH with a simple edict, 'Fix it up, or shut it down'. Whether it was an economic upswing or genius management or a bit of both doesn't matter because within twelve months Hartnett had picked the ailing GMH up by its boot-straps, returned a profit and lifted sales by 600 per cent. Buoyed by success Holden purchased 50 acres of land in Fisherman's Bend near Port Melbourne to build a head office, manufacturing plant and warehouse. There were also provisions for foundry and engine plant. Holden was leading the world in car body manufacture and in 1935 built its first all-steel bodies for Plymouth chassis. General Motors in the United States would not have this capability for another twelve months.

By the time the first completed cars had rolled off the Fisherman's Bend production line in September 1936, Hartnett starting quietly mustering support for an all-Australian car. With the facilities at Fisherman's Bend, GMH had the capability. Hartnett increased this capability by installing a 1000-ton press, the largest in the country, at Woodville in 1938. This would make the manufacturing of all steel bodies more efficient (and help the mighty press almost pay for itself).

In 1939 things were moving along nicely for Hartnett's plan for the all-Australian car, he had the support of the company locally and its key executives and tentative approval from GM in the United States. The one thing that he didn't have was the ability to predict war in Europe. The plans were put on hold indefinitely. The flourishing GMH car assembly plant was turned into an equally busy war-effort mass production plant. The design of the plant meant that it had incredible versatility in the types of machinery it could produce. GMH produced aircraft, marine and land engines, bomb casings, armoured cars, troop carriers, semi-trailers, boats, amphibious craft and gas masks. In retrospect I had an EH that I think I used for at least four of the above purposes.

The engine plant that GMH had built at Fisherman's Bend meant that they were the first company in Australia to mass-produce internal combustion engines, for planes, boats and automotive purposes.

At the end of 1943 and into 1944 the general feeling was that the war was coming to an end. With the winding down of military contracts helping to foster this assumption, Holden and Laurence Hartnett began to revive their plans to build the all-Australian car. In fact, Hartnett called his top five engineers into his office on 20 December 1943, and told them to get cracking. The first 'Project 2000' prototype was completed using Willy's mechanical components. It was during the construction of the prototype that the federal government requested, as part of its post-war industrial strategy, submissions from companies interested in an Australian-made car project. Holden responded to the request and undertook to carry out the work without assistance or subsidy, and using funds raised within Australia.

In 1946, a working prototype of Holden's preferred prototype 'Project 2200' which was aimed at simplicity in tooling and construction was completed. Holden engineers were sent to GM headquarters in Detroit with their styling models, drawings and engineering ideas. Work began in earnest on the US design proposal, and Holden's engineers received instructions on the setting up of the manufacturing plant and its operation.

Three handmade prototypes were produced in the United States, and these cars ultimately bore a striking resemblance to the car that would eventually see production. These cars were tested in Detroit then in late 1946 they were packed up and shipped to Fisherman's Bend with the Australian boffins and 22 of their American counterparts. Prototype number 1 was registered in Melbourne in February 1947, bearing the registration number JP-480.

With the Lang Lang proving ground still nine years away and wearing no camouflage, the three American built prototypes were extensively tested on the outer suburban streets of Melbourne.

Structurally the cars were good but their handling at times left a lot to be desired, as evidenced by the numerous reports from test drivers of the cars spearing off into the bush. Steering and suspension were the two major areas identified for improvement before production, and work was painstakingly carried out to rectify any shortcomings. There was a massive investment at stake should the new car demonstrate any mechanical deficiencies.

It was all well and good to lay plans for series production and for the official public launch by the then Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, but what was the new car to be called? Before Holden was finally settled upon as the name of 'Australia's Own Car', the styling and marketing departments at GMH put their two bobs' worth in. Some of these included Austral, Cook, ANZAC, Bligh, Emu, Melwood and Boomerang. Other indigenous names include Woomera and Pangali (male kangaroo). One particularly imaginative individual suggested GMH.

On 29 November 1948, with 18,000 advance dealer orders held sight unseen, the Holden 48-215 was revealed to 1000 invited guests at Fisherman's Bend. Forty-four radio stations broadcast Ben Chifley's speech launching the Holden; his description must go down as the most famous words in Australian automotive history: 'She's a Beauty!'

The Ford Motor Company's Australian history really began in late November 1904 when two current Model 'A' Tonneaus rolled off the docks and onto Sydney's streets. The arrival of these bright red Fords in Australia was the work of New York export agent Robert M. Lockwood.

In 1903 Lockwood was responsible for foreign sales of the Daisy Air Rifle Company. The Company Chief of Daisy, Charles Bennet, was one of Ford's major stockholders, who was also on good terms with Henry Ford. Ford asked Bennet who was handling his export business and if they were a reliable operator. On 24 October 1904 Henry Ford engaged Lockwood to handle all of Ford's export business outside of Canada.

These early Fords were, up until 1907, shipped via Canada avoiding the additional duty and taxes imposed on imports from non-Commonwealth nations. These tariffs would have made it uneconomical for Fords to be imported from anywhere outside of the Empire. At the end of 1907, Australia was Ford Canada's biggest export market.

A company named Davies and Fehon in New South Wales appear to have been the first company to actively take up the selling of Ford Motor cars in Australia. Arthur Davies procured the Australian agency for Ford cars in 1906, and began receiving Model Ns in batches of a dozen at a time. Davies and Fehon were acting as the import agents and appointed a selling company that was controlled by Dr A. Marks and Mr F. Gordon. Sales business was conducted from their office at 133–137 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

The Ford Motor Company Canada Ltd was run by Gordon McGregor and had been since its foundation in 1904. In 1909, McGregor travelled to Australia to set up his first overseas office. Although he already had Davies and Fehon as agents in Australia, there is speculation that he didn't entirely trust them.

McGregor, although encountering initial reticence towards the purchase of American vehicles, signed up Tarrants of Melbourne, an engineering and low-level vehicle manufacturing concern, shortly after his arrival in Australia. When Durance arrived in Australia in 1910, effectively becoming McGregor's eyes and ears, his first order of business was to establish a Victorian sales network for Ford vehicles. Durance went on a 'tour of duty' through rural Victoria with Tarrants' principal Frank Roach in tow. Upon their return Durance cabled to Canada an order for 200 Model T Fords. In the first year of sales the Model T found its way into the driveways of 400 Australian customers.

Things kept moving briskly for Ford in Australia with sales agents becoming established across the length and breadth of the country. By 1911, Ford had an agency in most major towns. The Model T was tough, reliable and excellent value. It was sold with a passion and pioneering spirit that reads as though it was a cross between Steve Irwin and Burke and Wills. In 1914 the Model T Ford was the most popular new car in Australia with 1142 registrations.

### The Ford plant

*The Geelong plant was a copy of Ford Canada's newly built Toronto plant, in fact, a copy of plant that had been constructed. Apparently Henry Ford reasoned that he had paid one architect once and that was enough, the plans could be sent and every detail replicated around the world. During the construction of the Geelong facility some questions were raised about the structure, relating to the over-engineering of the saw-toothed roof of the plant. These queries were dismissed outright. If 4 feet of snow ever falls in the Geelong region, the roof of the Ford assembly plant will be able to hold it.*

Despite the myths and their incredible popularity Australia never had to adhere to Henry Ford's 'any colour as long as it is black' paint decree. American production of the Model T had climbed to such a level that there were hold-ups occurring in the paint shop due to the time the paint was taking to dry. At this point Henry Ford introduced Black Japan Varnish for all cars due to its exceptional quick drying characteristics. Australian cars came from Canada where production didn't reach the same output as it did in the United States, so slower drying paints of a wider (though only slightly wider array of colours could be used.

Selling techniques and territory division in the United States were far ahead of anything ever seen in Australia when it came to automobiles, and Ford led the way. The methods of the 'home country' were transposed and adapted to the Australian market with great success. America was the home of applying forumulaic systems and practices in the workplace, and why not, it works! Early salesmanship was equal parts skill and desperation. The Victorian dealer in Beaufort, John Wotherspoon, recalled the story of the farmer who told a salesman that he couldn't buy a Model T because it wouldn't fit into his garage. The next day he woke up and rubbed his eyes in disbelief when he saw a gang of men widening his garage. The sale was made.

The popularity of the Model T was unprecedented: prospective buyers were lining up and orders were flowing in at such a rate that the order to Canada was to send as many cars as they could; thousands if possible.

Then World War I hit. Prices went up, most prospective customers went to the front and sales plummeted, and cars sat around. Eventually there were 5000 Model T Fords in Australian dealerships that no one could afford. In the end rebates were offered to purchasers and combined with the fact that there were no imports of new Fords from September 1916 to August 1917, the backlog was cleared in less than twelve months.

Ford had been exporting complete vehicles from Canada to Australia, but in 1917 with the same tariff protections that influenced the way Holden was conducting its import business, Ford found itself exporting vehicles in completely knocked down (CKD) form to avoid the duty on fully assembled vehicles coming into the country.

By the early 1920s, the infrastructure that delivered Fords to customers in Australia had become a shambles. The instructions, articles and maintenance releases that were contained as recommendations in *The Model T Times* were treated with scant regard by Australian operators who were fitting their own bodies in their own way and cutting corners where ever they could. The advice coming out of Ford Canada was all but ignored and considered overkill by Australian distributors. Things were going downhill quickly for Ford in Australia as their once respected brand was being plagued with penny-pinching and ineptitude beyond Ford Canada's control due to the unscrupulous Australian dealers.

Eventually word filtered back to Canada about the situation in Australia, and in 1923 two of Ford's top men were dispatched downunder to conduct some investigations. What these men discovered was so bad and the reports they filed were so damaging it led to a complete change in the way that Ford conducted business in Australia. They toured the country extensively and were generally horrified with what passed as a Ford dealership. Of one they reported, 'His premises would offend any self-respecting animal as a housing. This man has no conception of his responsibilities as a Ford dealer, knows nothing of salesmanship or merchandising and I sincerely question if he is even a fourth-class mechanic …' This was the story, with a few exceptions, right up and down the eastern seaboard and west across the Great Dividing Range. After the visit, Wallace R. Campbell, Head of Ford Canada, wrote to Edsel Ford in 1924: 'A great number of considerations have therefore led us to this conclusion that the time is now ripe to establish ourselves to carry on business in Australia with our own organisation.'

Ford Canada quickly set about the business of setting up a manufacturing business in Australia. Suitable sites were examined, and ultimately Geelong was chosen with 100 acres purchased adjacent to Corio Bay, in keeping with Henry Ford's insistence that all of his plants should have direct waterfront access. With a £3 million pound budget, work began on the head office and production facility in late 1924.

On 31 March 1925, the seeds of debate were planted when Ford incorporated two companies; the Ford



Manufacturing Company of Australia and the Ford Motor Company of Australia Pty Ltd.

The establishment of these companies meant that the distributors who had previously also been in the business of chassis assembly and body-building were no longer doing so, whether they liked it or not. This ensured a continuity of design and quality in Ford products that had previously not existed. This meant that the new manufacturing company had to launch into production almost immediately. The building and assembling of bodies began, along with the organising of bodywork for the soon-to-be-updated cars. To cope with this extra load, the Geelong Wool Store of Dalgety's was rented and Model Ts were assembled there at a rate of seventeen per day. The first Model T left the Dalgety production line on 1 July 1925.

In August of 1925, America was gearing up for a model change and Ford Australia operations sensed that there was no use starting work in the factory, unless the product being produced could enjoy an economical life. To go to the trouble of setting up assembly methods and tooling for a product cycle that may only last six months made no fiscal sense. So Ford Australia decided to use the US style 1926/27 steel body. It would be another three years before Ford Australia's own body plant would be in operation and the use of imported panels kept a lid on costs as well as giving Ford the latest automotive style available in Australia. The Geelong Ford Model T was born.

Ford held a 14.7 per cent market share in 1925, GMA held 16.9 per cent. The Model T was in decline; that trend would be reversed with the release of the Model A, unveiled to the Australian public on 15 May 1927. The public response was huge with 7000 people converging on the Geelong plant to inspect the new model. The Model A helped cement Ford's automotive future in Australia. Then the Great Depression bit hard. Through the period of 1930 to 1932 Ford were forced to close down huge sections of production and workers worked piecemeal.

On 25 August 1932, Ford Australia's performance history began when the Model B debuted the venerable side valve V8. As the economy and the auto industry began to climb out of the depression car sales continued to climb as Ford announced major extensions to the Geelong plant. Ford now had 159 acres of land at Geelong, and the cost of buildings and plant equipment had topped one million pounds 1300 people were employed by the company.

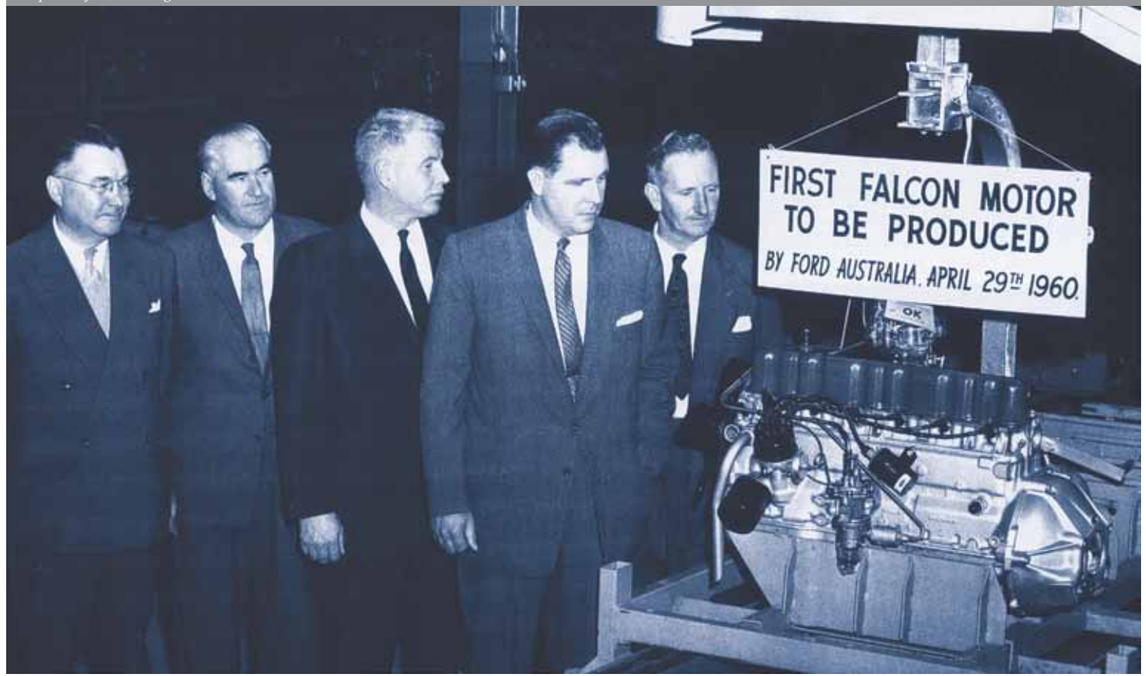
### Birth of the ute

*Lew Bandt recalled the birth of the ute. 'Slim Westman came to me one day and said that he wanted the front end of a V8 sedan combined with a utility tray. He said Australian farmers needed a vehicle with more passenger protection and comfort – a vehicle that would give them all the comfort and economy of a family sedan and still have the carrying capacity of a light truck.We drew up a design which seemed to please everyone and Tom Carrie made a sample body in 1933.' The rest is automotive history.*

*Lew Bandt's 1934 ute after being restored*



*It's probably still running*




May 1934 was a landmark month for Ford as it released the Coupe Utility. It was at the request of a customer that the Ford design office in Geelong, under the control of Lew Bandt, set about producing a vehicle which could provide passenger car comfort, yet still carry goods.

Ford's growth and diversity of models continued through the 1930s as the production of buses, trucks and cars kept pace with the model updates being seen in the United States. World War II severely inhibited domestic vehicle manufacture as factories turned their plants over to the war effort. At the end of 1940, Ford held 20 per cent market share and GMH 40 per cent, with the remainder being shared by some ten other companies of minor significance. Although the percentage held by Ford and GMH were high, they were of a significantly deflated market. Because of their significant dominance in the market Ford and GMH found themselves the beneficiaries of considerable federal government defence contracts.

As the war ended and production began to refocus on passenger vehicles Ford Australia was celebrating 21 years of existence, however it was no real time for celebration at Ford with GMH having taken up the federal government's plan to build an Australian car. Midway through 1946 Ford announced that it would be a long time before Ford was able to undertake the construction of an all-Australian car. They instead decided to start a series of programs that would see them manufacture various previously imported components. By 1950, the plan was in full swing with localised components including radiator, inlet manifold, clutch assembly, exhaust, fuel tank, chassis rails and the majority of most front suspension components.

Ford's manufacturing and assembling operations continued to grow at a rate matched by the company's own expansion

throughout the 1950s. Body styles were drawn from both the United States and the United Kingdom and each was assessed on its merits and suitability to Australian conditions and customers' needs. Customlines, Zephyrs and Consuls were commonplace on Australian streets as Ford Australia assembled and manufactured increasing numbers of cars. All of this activity was increasing Ford Australia's bank balance as they set their sights on building their own 'Australian car'.

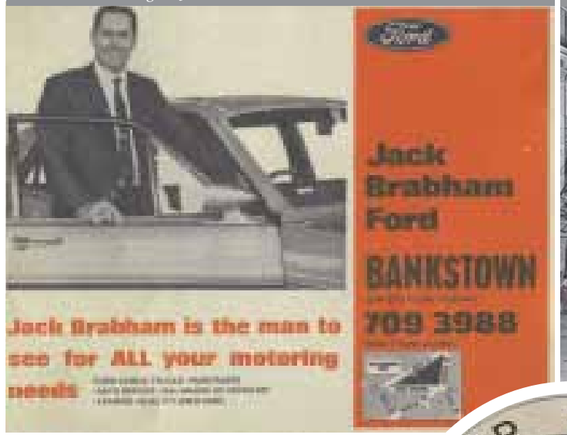
In 1955 Ford Canada finally saw the light and understood the tremendous benefits in building an All Australian Ford car. The original plan was for the construction of an 'Australian Zephyr' and the design plans were drawn up and taken to the US design studio in 1956.

A review of the proposed Australian Zephyr and a full-scale clay model had been completed however, when the Australians arrived they found their clay Zephyr alongside a clay model of the upcoming US Falcon. It was agreed that Falcon was a better-looking car than the Zephyr, but lacked a certain robustness of design that Australians had become used to. After many misgivings and much vigorous discussion the team from Ford Australia decided to change horses mid stream and pursue the Falcon alternative.

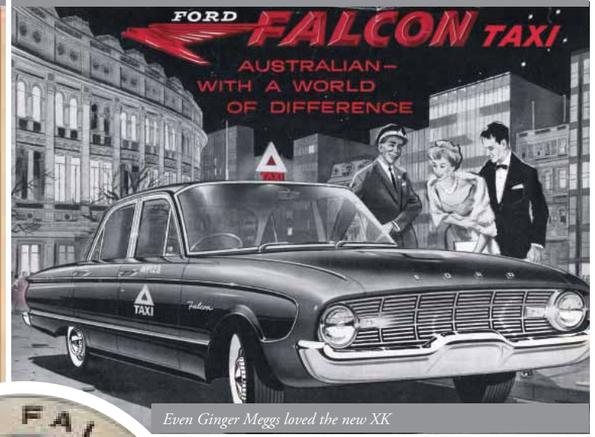
*Unfortunately the feathers at it's launch proved stronger than the XK's front suspension*



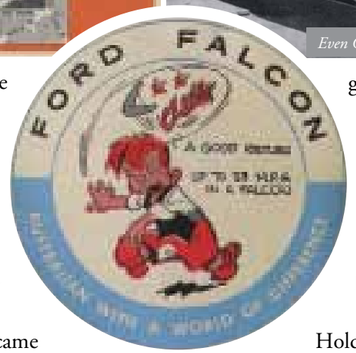
*Ford even coaxed the great Jack Brabham to become a dealer*




*Taxi!*




*Even Ginger Meggs loved the new XK*




The deciding factors in switching to the Falcon were ease in construction, weight and cost – three pretty good reasons. The first announcements of the new Falcon were made in 1960. No specific details were provided by Ford, but most in the industry were quick to realise that the specifications of the new car would not vary hugely from its US brethren.

The Australian release of the XK Falcon came on 14 September 1960. The Holden versus Ford rivalry had officially begun, and journalists were quick to fan the flames, seeing the Falcon not only as a new car, but also as a genuine alternative to Holden. As one industry scribe wrote, 'For the first time since 1948, Australians are being offered the type of car they want without it having to be a Holden. The Falcon is a car designed for this year, unlike the Holden, which is a rehashed version of an already long established model.'

Blows would be traded between Ford and Holden for the next 50 years, model for model, feature for feature as they fought, and continue to fight, for the motoring hearts, minds and wallets of middle Australia.

CHAPTER

# 2

# THE BLUE OVAL AND THE LION

They rank as the most familiar symbols on the Australian automotive landscape, and one of them, Ford's Blue Oval, is one of the world's most universally recognised corporate logos. Both Holden and Ford's corporate identities have evolved subtly over the years, and no doubt will continue to evolve keeping pace with contemporary design trends, but remaining true to their heritage.

In 1903, Henry Ford sent a note to his right-hand man Harold Willis, suggesting that what he needed was a corporate identity. As luck would have it, when Harold was a teenager he made extra money printing business cards, so he pulled out his old printing set, grabbed the font that he had printed his own cards in and wrote 'Ford'. Job done. This was great for intra-office communications, but when it came to the first Ford car, the Model A, the lettering was surrounded with a high fashion Art Nouveau border.

In 1906, the Ford script was modified again, increasing the tail of the 'F' and 'D'. This was known as the 'script with wings' and was used on cars up until the end of 1910, when the lettering was slightly revised and is used to this day. The Ford script trademark was registered at the United States Patent Office in 1909.

But what is the script without the oval? The first Ford oval was actually used by the British agents for Ford in their advertising. The 'hallmark for reliability and economy' is how they advertised their Ford products, and the blue oval represented these virtues.

In 1912, Ford moved away from the oval and had a brief dalliance with a winged triangle with the script inside it. This was designed to symbolise speed, lightness, grace and stability, and under the Ford script were the words 'The Universal Car'.

In 1927, Ford released the Model A and sitting proudly on its radiator was




Ford 1903




Ford 1906




Ford 1912




Ford 1927




Ford ????




Ford 1976




Ford ????




Ford ????