

THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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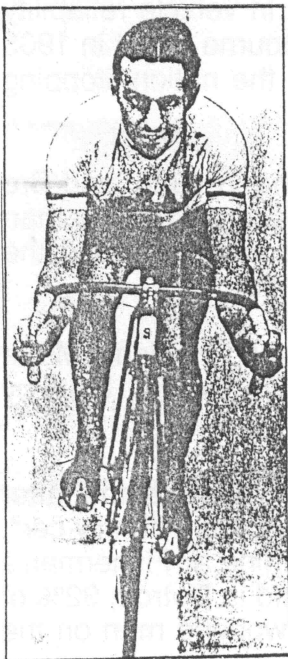
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VROOOM !!!

When I was a boy growing up in wartime Sydney, the family car was still on the drawing board and, as a result of petrol rationing, anyone considered wealthy enough to own a car, had little opportunity to drive it out of the garage.

Bicycles, known to all as push bikes, were the popular means of personal transport for adults and kids alike and there was great rivalry between those of us who rode a *Speedwell* and considered ourselves in every way superior to the "jerks" who had a *Malvern Star*. The *Speedwell* crowd named the others "stovepipes" and there were frequent street races to decide who had the superior bike with great attention being paid to the skill or physical endurance of the rider.

It was *Speedwell* versus *Malvern Star* and that was all that mattered.



EDGAR 'DUNC' GRAY

Fifty years later I learnt that *Speedwell* was the choice of Bro Dunc Gray, the 1932 Olympic gold medallist who had been made a mason at Goulburn on 13 April 1932 in Lodge Duke of Edinburgh No. 76, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

I also discovered that the *Malvern Star* had been made an Australian icon along with professional cycling champion, Bro Hubert Opperman. Sir Hubert had been made a mason at the south-eastern Melbourne suburb of Malvern on 23 December 1925 in The Stonnington Lodge No. 368, United Grand Lodge of Victoria.

With World War II over, the motor car re-emerged and attracted the attention of the push bike brigade who turned their competitive instinct to a comparison of the shiny new American models.

There were makes such as Ford, Oldsmobile, Nash, Chrysler and Willys. Each of the men who gave their name to these cars were Freemasons.

The first mechanically propelled, four wheeled vehicle designed and built in Australia made its first run in 1894 at the South Australian Murray River town of Mannum. Powered by a small steam plant, it was the work of Bro David Shearer who became a mason at Adelaide on 15 June 1893 in Leopold Lodge No. 31, Grand Lodge of South Australia.

On 11 February 1898, he joined Murray Bridge Lodge No. 44 and, on 27 July 1920, he

became a foundation member of Mannum Lodge No. 97.

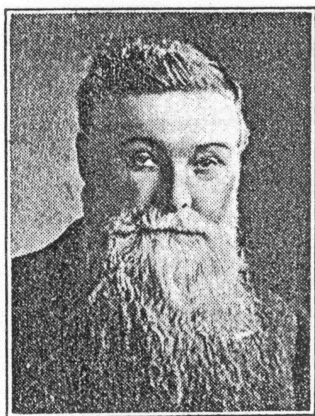


1899 SHEARER STEAM CAR

It did not take long for the competitive edge to emerge. The first race in Australia between two cars took place at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1901 and, in 1904, there was a race on a gravel track at Aspendale near Melbourne.

It wasn't long before two other Freemasons had a marked effect on the motoring world. The first developed macadamised surfaces which were gradually introduced as a result of the invention of Scottish engineer, John McAdam, who was a member of Ayr Kilwinning Lodge No. 65, Scottish Constitution.

The other was the invention of the pneumatic tyre by John Dunlop who was a member of Lodge Harmony No. 111, Irish Constitution of Belfast, County Antrim.



Bro. John B. Dunlop

Even so, Australian roads were considered, then as now, as the "worst in the world". At least that was the public perception and, as a result, great interest has always been shown in vehicle reliability trials which began with the Dunlop Sydney-Melbourne event in 1905 and continued after the second world war with the nation-stopping Around Australia Redex Trials.

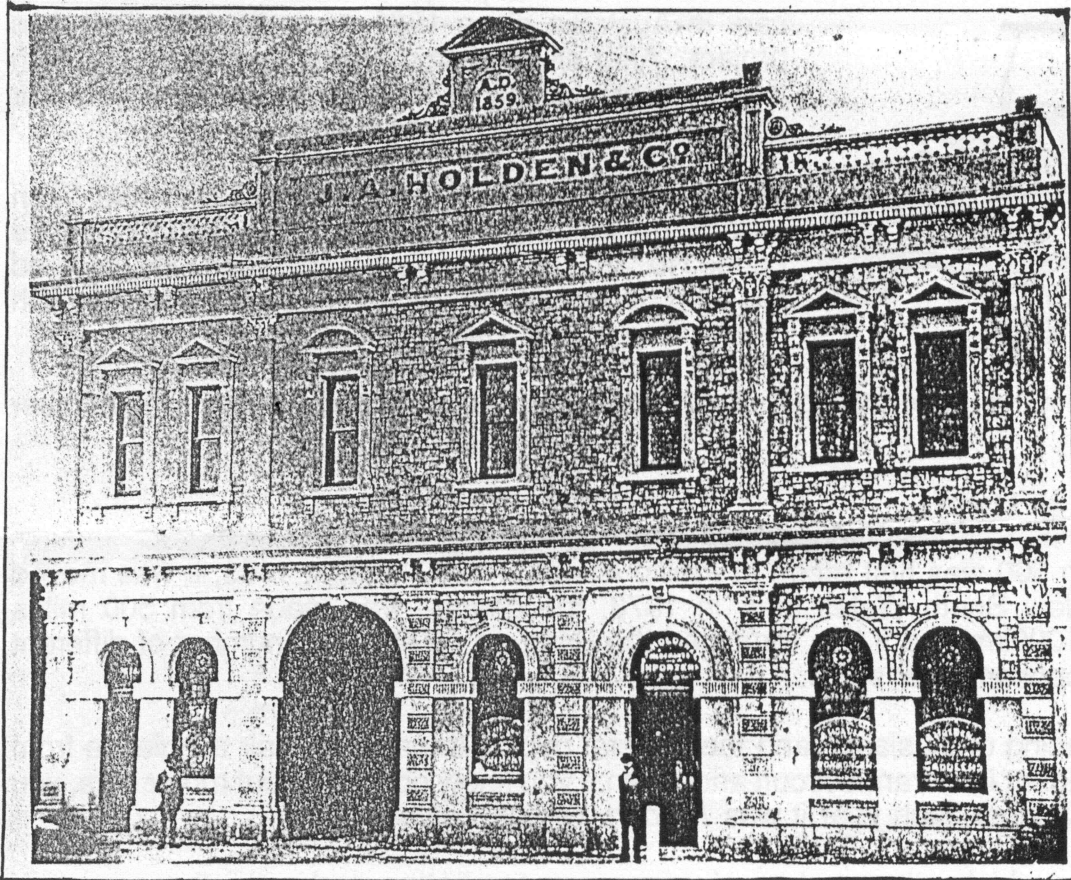
The Australian Grand Prix began at Phillip Island in 1928, and Bro Sir Malcolm Campbell established land speed records, but the man in the street purchased his car based on price, reliability and the availability of spare parts beyond the big city limits.

While all this was going on, an Adelaide firm called Holden's Motor Body Builders was mass-producing bodies for chassis imported from Detroit, USA by General Motors Corporation.

After a take-over in 1931, the firm became known as General Motors Holden's and, after the second world war, on 29 November 1948, the first 48-215 model *Holden* "family car", sometimes erroneously known as the "FX", rolled off the production line at Fisherman's Bend in Victoria. It sold for 733 pounds and, although it was designed in Detroit, 92% of its components were Australian made, so it satisfied the average working man on the matters of price and parts availability.

The *Holden* also performed well in reliability trials and "Australia's Own Car" was an immediate success.

It was a long way from the day in 1852 when a seventeen-year-old James Alexander Holden arrived in South Australia from Staffordshire in England.



THE ORIGINAL
H O L D E N
FACTORY IN
ADELAIDE.



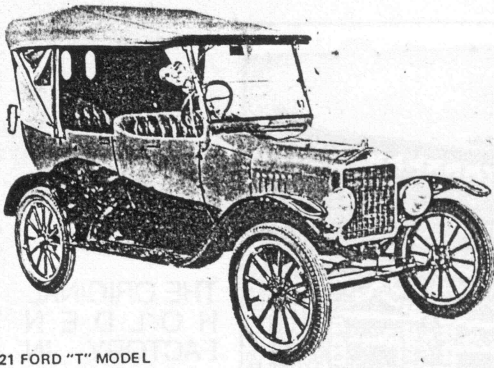
Four years later, he started a leather-working and saddlery business in King William Street, Adelaide and, in 1879, he took his 20 year-old son, Henry James into the business and, later, Henry's youngest son William became a partner.

In 1914, the firm began production of motor car bodies and in 1924 they were granted exclusive rights to build General Motors car bodies in Australia.

Bro James Alexander Holden was made a mason at Adelaide on 14 September 1869 in United Tradesmen's Lodge No. 583, English Constitution. This lodge became No. 4 at the inauguration of the Grand Lodge of South Australia in 1884.

Bro Henry James Holden became a mason at Adelaide on 8 October 1903 in Emulation Lodge No. 32, South Australian Constitution and his son, William Arthur Holden was made a mason at Adelaide on 24 January 1922 in St Andrews Lodge No 19, South Australian Constitution.

No red-blooded American outfit could be expected to take Holden's success lying down.



1921 FORD "T" MODEL

The Ford Motor Company, which had been assembling cars in Australia since 1921, embarked on their own project. After all, they said, Ford had started it all with the mass-production of their "T" model in any colour you wanted provided it was black.

The Company's founder, Bro Henry Ford, had been made a mason at Detroit on 28 June 1894 in Palestine Lodge No. 357, Grand Lodge of Michigan. He received the 33rd degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in September 1940.

To compete with the immensely popular *Holden*, Ford launched the *Falcon* in September 1960.

That's when it all started.

The Armstrong 500 was first raced at Phillip Island in 1960 but, in 1963, it was moved to Bathurst, New South Wales and, in 1973, the change was made from 500 miles (807.4km) to 1000km and it has remained the Bathurst 1000 with a number of different commercial sponsors ever since.

Many motor racing enthusiasts, and the general public, transferred their allegiance from rallies to the Mount Panorama circuit and, even if you knew nothing about motor cars, you knew that in October each year it was *Holden* versus *Falcon*.

It didn't matter which other makes of cars were competing and even the names of Australia's most prominent drivers took second place as the nation cheered its favorite car with the excitement, the thunder of powerful engines echoing around the mountain, the enjoyment and, sometimes, the disappointment that such epic contests can provide.

All this was too much for Chrysler Corporation. The firm had been founded by Bro Walter P. Chrysler, who became a mason at Ellis, Kansas on 2 June 1899 in Apollo Lodge No. 297, Grand Lodge of Kansas.

Chrysler Australia Ltd. introduced the *Valiant* in 1962 but its stylish body and powerful engine, although popular, did not captivate the public to quite the same extent as *Holden* and *Falcon*.

It was *Speedwell* and *Malvern Star* all over again and some of us re-lived that competitive spirit of half a century ago.