

SPIT AND POLISH

Journal of the Veteran Car Club of
Australia (NSW) Inc.

August 2021



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ON THE COVER:

Ian Bourke in his 1915 Monroe
2018 National Veteran Vehicle Rally
Forbes NSW

Club Information

Club Management and Contact Details

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Macarthur and Southern Highlands Branch

Chairman	VACANT		
Secretary	Kevin Boardman	02 4654 5499	kboardman13@bigpond.com

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Minutes

Minutes of Monthly Club Meeting held on 22 July 2021. Held via Zoom.

ATTENDANCE: All the meeting was conducted on zoom.

Committee: 7 Members: 23 Family: 4 (Wilga Coutts, Brett Corrigan, Ruth Holmes and Janina Shinfield) Visitors: 2 (Bill Phippen and Ted McDonald)

APOLOGIES: Abbey Newman, Peter Martin, Neville Preston and Graham Weekes

MEETING OPENED AT 8:05PM

PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

The President welcomed members to the meeting. He announced that he is a new grandpa for a baby born between NSW and Victorian lockdowns. She had a difficult start but is now doing well. The format of the meeting will be changed to accommodate the guest speaker Bill Phippen. The President introduced Bill.

Bill spoke for an hour on the construction of the city rail network in a presentation of old photographs entitled By Muscle of Man and Horse – Building the Railway under Sydney 1916 – 1932. Based on a serendipitously located photo album the talk looks at the building of the City Railway and the almost total reliance on muscle to move tens of thousands of tons of dirt. The photographs were of high quality. It was started by John Bradfield in 1916 and two engineers, Albert Humphreys and Keith Fraser, were in charge and the construction supervisor was Bill Farrow. Sydney City was full of unfinished deep holes for years. It was interesting to see the evolution of industrial equipment over the time from men with picks and shovels to a steam digger. Bill's book is available at the Australian Railway Historic Society at Central Station or online. John Hughes, as a boy, remembered his father telling him about all the holes around the city. Geoff Yeomans asked about fatalities. Through his research on Trove, Bill has identified 8 deaths between 1916 and 1932. The President thanked Bill for his engaging presentation.

The President advised that the formal meeting procedure would be suspended to discuss the email from Doug Fulford which he believes could have been sent to other members. Doug is no longer a member of the club. The email was five pages long. After taking the role, the President has tried to make the committee more open and transparent as contentious issues have arisen with more information at club meetings and in Spit and Polish. In trying to address the issues raised in the correspondence from Doug Fulford it appears that matters have escalated and it is causing distress to some members. The President will address the four issues raised by Doug to close the matters.

The President continued that what has happened is unnecessary and sad, especially to lose the membership of Doug. For the first issue, Doug claims that They persisted in publishing falsehoods and lies. It is the committee's view that Doug as President signed off on the Forbes Rally 2018 as part of the financial statement for 2019 which contained the Forbes Rally account. Doug was responsible for

signing off the accounts as President at the time. It appears that Doug was unaware that at the time he signed off on the Forbes Rally accounts. The committee responded factually to Doug. Doug disputes this. The matter is closed.

Secondly, Doug questioned whether the reimbursement of rally expenses would jeopardise the not-for-profit status of the club. The committee sought professional advice on this matter. It is legitimate for members to be reimbursed for expenses involved in fund raising activities and rallies, and it will not affect the not-for-profit status of the club. In regard to the club's tax liability, the committee has also sought advice and thanks Doug for bringing it to its attention. Following professional advice, the club will be liable for some tax on its income derived from non-members and the use of the hall. Discussion is closed on this issue.

Thirdly, Doug questioned the value of continuing to have branches. Greg Roberts claimed that it was scandalous that the Newcastle Branch had claimed expenses for the organisation of the Forbes Rally. He claimed that the organising committee had refused at a committee meeting to produce chits for their expenses. He also said that the organising committee claimed that a precedent had been set for the 2011 rally. Greg said that this was incorrect as minimal expenses had been claimed for the 2011 rally.

Louise Yeomans responded that to her knowledge Doug Fulford had not at any committee meeting or at any time asked the Forbes Rally committee for receipts or chits. Monthly progress reports on the organisation of the Forbes Rally were included in committee meetings for at least 18 months. The committee, when Doug was president, authorised the reimbursement of expenses to the organisers. Doug was questioning the integrity of the committee, the Forbes organising committee, as well as the auditing of the account. A precedent for the reimbursement of expenses was set in 2004, not 2011, when the organisers were reimbursed for travel and accommodation expenses to Cowra.

Greg Roberts asked if an advance budget was received from the Forbes. The committee did not receive a budget.

Graeme Newman said the Forbes Rally organisers made three trips to Forbes and one to Tamworth and produced receipts and bank statements when claiming expenses. It is an assumption that administration expenses were paid to the rally organisers. The President said he supported the reimbursement of rally expenses to encourage members to organise rallies. Legitimate expenses would be supported.

Greg Roberts asked for guidelines on how to organise future rallies and asked the President to publish Doug's letter in the magazine.

The President agreed to developing guidelines for organising rallies. The letter from Doug Fulford will not be published. Louise Yeomans expressed her concerns that the committee has not been able to defend itself and there is misinformation and uninformed opinions amongst members.

In the discussion about the viability of club branches, John Wards pointed out that there was one club

rather than branches. The President recognised that branches were within the group and cater for local needs, are vital for the club and have unique skills to grow the club. The Newcastle Branch was established in 1962 and the MaSH Branch in 1995.

Greg Roberts queried the need for Newcastle Branch to have separate bank accounts. The President said he was aware of other clubs having more than one bank account. The Treasurer confirmed the accounts were reported on in the club's annual report and there was no impropriety. Graeme Newman directed members to the club rules, namely Section 52. Greg Roberts queried the amount of money in the Newcastle accounts. Graeme Newman replied the funds were used to pay for hall rental for meetings, to run events and donations to charities. The accounts operate within club guidelines.

During her time on committee, Andrea Holden has noticed a divide between the committee and members and asked that members vote as the discussion was floundering. The President agreed to open a discussion on branches at another time when all issues could be raised and discussed.

Greg Roberts said that MaSH Branch did not have meetings. Contrary to what Doug Fulford said, the coffee runs continue. The Betts have taken over the coffee runs. The group continues to have social gatherings.

Greg Roberts said he thought that although the President spoke about change, a rally was planned to the Blue Mountains again. The President said that this was the first organised event under this banner. It is planned as a hub rally and will give people a different experience. Different venues will be planned for the future. The rally needs members to support it and volunteers to help.

The last issue raised by Doug Fulford was about bullying of a committee member. The President, as a committee member, was unaware of bullying. No evidence was presented by Doug when asked for more details. It appeared to him that Doug was not selling change effectively to the committee and did not achieve consensus. The committee continues to work together in the interests of the club and wants to move forward. The President invited others to nominate to join the committee at the AGM in August. All matters raised by Doug Fulford in his correspondence are closed.

MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING

Matters arising from minutes: Nil

Corrections to the minutes: CAMS is not the forerunner of the CMC. It should be the Council of Vintage, Veteran and Thoroughbred Motor Clubs.

Moved: Jenny Fawbert Seconded: Robert Fordham

INWARDS CORRESPONDENCE

Email from Doug Fulford re MaSH Branch, response to letter to the Editor

CMC - Shannons Sydney Classic postponed

Anthony Dowler – request for friends to come to zoom meeting

OUTWARDS CORRESPONDENCE

John Hewitt –membership letter

Doug Fulford acknowledgement of emails

Flowers Marilyn Trethowan

Emails: Friday's Fact and Fiction, Spit and Polish and meeting reminder and arrangements.

August 2021

Moved: Neil Martin

Seconded: Jenny Fawbert

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report was tabled.

MAGAZINE

With COVID restrictions and few events, Lauren requested some interesting articles.

EVENTS

Previous Events

- 4 July Northern Sydney Breakfast Run - Tour of the Shinfield Sheds - *Postponed until further notice*
- 11 July All French Day - *Postponed*
- 19 July Garage Crawl at Maxon Machinery at Boolaroo for a tour of the Adams' family restoration projects attended by people who live outside of the Greater Sydney area. Sixteen people attended and there was one veteran.

Future Events

- 1 August Newcastle outing starting at Hexham
- 15 August Shannons Sydney Classic - *Postponed*
- 5 Sept Northern Sydney Breakfast Run to Saddles - Please let Louise Yeomans know if you plan to come and pay directly in the VCCA bank account with your name and Saddles. It costs \$35 per person
- 24-26 Sept Newcastle Tour - new venue for accomodation at Morpeth. Enrty form is in June Spit and Polish.
- 9 October Southern Highlands Motor Festival, Bowral. *See Graeme Newman for details*
- 10-16 Oct RACV National Vehicle Rally - Swan Hill, Victoria
- 17-22 Oct National Veteran Motorcycle Rally, Western Australia
- 22-26 Nov National High Wheeler Rally, Mt Gambier South Australia

2022

- 11-13 Mar Premier Rally - Red Leaf Resort, Blackheath
- 20-23 April Brush National Rally
- 8-14 May National 1&2 Cylinder Rally, Narrandera

PERMITS TO MOVE/REGISTRATION No permits were issued and there were no movements.

LIBRARY Nothing to report

DATING Nothing to report

MEMBERSHIP Nothing to report

CMC Nothing to report

HALL There are no users at the moment. The Meccano Club are unable to use the hall on 31 July. Due to his workload, Robert will continue to do the hall administration and Phil will take over the maintenance roll.

WEBSITE When time permits, Abbey will load some more Vehicle Profiles and requested more as the section is popular with members and visitors.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. 1&2 Cylinder National Rally 2021&2022 - Robert Fordham

Robert requested help with the organisation of the rally. The President stressed that Robert would like some volunteers to help him. Wilga and Euan Coutts offered to help.

2. Badges - Louise Yeomans

Anyone requiring a new badge needs to contact Louise by Friday.

3. General Business

- Neil Martin asked if the club had thought of ordering a defibrillator. The President asked Neil to investigate the type most appropriate to the club and costs for the committee to consider. It was suggested that Neil compare battery life and cost to replace batteries. Euan Coutts will find out about possible grants for defibrillators.
- David Norton requested that club rules be loaded to the members area of the website. The secretary to supply Abbey with a copy of the rules for the website.
- John Hewitt queried the number of blockages to the toilets. Phil O'Loan will follow up with the plumber. It was suggested that water flow be increased. Robert will supply Phil with some signs about acceptable waste for the doors.
- Euan Coutts requested a summary of the discussion about Doug Fulford's email be included in the minutes.

The President thanked the members for joining into the meeting via Zoom.

MEETING CLOSED AT 10:20PM

Phil O'Loan
President

Louise Yeomans
Secretary

President's Report

By Phil O'Loan

It certainly has been a difficult period for the Club over the past few months. The reintroduction of Covid lockdown restrictions and the uncertainty of when things can return to "normal", combined this with the unfortunate escalation of issues following the resignation of Doug Fulford, has had an effect on us all.

Hopefully Covid restrictions will ease over the coming weeks and allow us to return to enjoying our cars once again. It would be particularly frustrating to event organisers to have this uncertainty not knowing if all their planning and hard work will eventuate in their event proceeding. I'm certainly looking forward to some upcoming Club events and I very much appreciate the time and effort that has gone into planning events for our enjoyment.

The escalation of events following the resignation of Doug from the President position and ultimately from the Club, has been very unfortunate. The Committee's attempt to be open and transparent unfortunately resulted in some misinterpretation and misunderstandings, intensifying the situation. The Committee has acted in good faith, responding factually and in the interest of the club. As things escalated I attempted to close down any future correspondence as I could see club members being personally effected, unfortunately emails from Doug continued.

In a further attempt to bring this matter to a close, I addressed Doug's recent five page email at the July's general meeting conducted via Zoom. A lot of healthy discussion was generated and hopefully a clearer picture resulted. In the interest of closing down future correspondence and protecting members, I decided not to publish Doug's email in Spit and Polish as we must bring this unfortunate situation to an end. For those members not at the Zoom meeting, you can review the Minutes of this meeting which are included in this addition of Spit and Polish for an overview of the discussion.

In the interest of the Club, the committee will not enter into any future correspondence with ex-member Doug Fulford, all matters raised are now closed.

Editor's Report

By Lauren Newman

As lockdown unfortunately continues for another few weeks, there aren't any events happening in Greater Sydney. A few members of the Newcastle Branch were able to visit the Adams' family and see the progress on their collection. If you have something you are working on, don't forget to take a couple of photo's and send it to me for an article. Or if you are out of the Greater Sydney area, let us know what you're up to and how you are enjoying using your veteran.

Stay safe!

Remembering Michael Trethowan

By Barry Shinfield

I first met Michael and his brother Terry on the first day I started in business for myself at Dural in 1963.

We became friends and started a tractor and machinery company. We used to buy second hand Ferguson tractors, repaired as needed, then sold them on.

We were offered the Fiat tractor dealership which we successfully built to a very strong dealership known as Hills District Farm Equipment. It is still operating today.

Michael, Marilyn, Dorothy and myself formed a firm and strong friendship travelling together to Europe and Japan and also closer countries such as New Zealand and of course Tasmania.



In 1987 I purchased from a deceased estate the Talbot motor car which I still know and use. In the late 80's Michael purchased from South Australia a 1913 Talbot which he fully restored.

We attended many national and state rallies together.

Michael always had a leaning towards English cars, especially Jaguars. He built up an impressive collection of Jaguars plus Morris Cowleys and Morris trucks. One of his trucks had a differential ration of 29:1 coupled with a 13.9 horse power motor - it was very steady on the hills.

After being diagnosed with terminal cancer early this year, it was stressful for his family and friends to see the suffering that he endured. When he passed away with his family present it was sad but a relief to all.

Farewell old friend.



Newcastle Branch Garage Crawl

Tour of Maxon Machinery. Boolaroo, NSW. 19th July 2021. By John Burke.

Following strict COVID rules, many NON LOCKED DOWN members of the branch had an enjoyable visit to the Adams Restoration Workshop, formally known as Maxon Machinery.

Neil, Stewart and Brian Adams were most welcoming and provided a very informative morning discussing the veteran cars under restoration in the workshop. The boys have been very busy carrying on their fathers legacy, and even adding some cars that Peter would be proud to own.

Cars currently being worked on include a ;

1913 FIAT Zero

1914 FIAT Type 2

1914 METZ

1904 Vauxhall

The standard of restoration being carried out is thorough and nothing is being overlooked, The mechanical work, timber body and sheet metal work being conducted in house, with minimal work outsourced.



Members attended

John and Max Burke

Neil and Maria Heilbrunn

John Brumby

Alan Dunlop

Chris Duncan

Doug and Dianne Marshall

Peter Nevell

Peter Cockbain and Kay Goode

Jeff Palmer

Neil, Stewart, Brian Adams

Following the tour of the workshop some members enjoyed lunch at the Macquarie Club. Neil and Maria attended in the Renault.



Newcastle Branch: Hexham to Stockton

Sunday 1st August. Photos by Mick Duncan.

Due to the COVID restrictions and other commitments, only one car attended the Newcastle Outing for August, and three generations managed to fit into one car. Looks like it was an enjoyable day!

In attendance: Chris, Katrina, Mick and Georgina Duncan in the 2400 FN



Events Calendar

Club Events

All listed events are scheduled pending potential COVID restrictions that may be in place at the time. Please contact the organiser of the event if in doubt of the event occurring.

AUGUST

Tuesday 17th **Newcastle Branch Meeting** - Westlakes Mining Museum, Teralba. 7:30pm
Thursday 19th **Committee Meeting**
Thursday 26th **AGM and Monthly Club Meeting** - 134 Queens Road, Canada Bay. 8:00pm.
TO BE HELD VIA ZOOM
Guest Speaker: Dr Daryl Hogkinson - renowned plastic surgeon, intrepid sailor, and friend of Ron Hattersley, Daryl will be sharing some of his extensive collection of car mascots.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 5th **Sydney North Breakfast Run** - Saddles, Mt White
Please let Louise Yeomans know if you plan on attending.
Thursday 16th **Committee Meeting**
Tuesday 21st **Newcastle Branch Meeting** - Westlakes Mining Museum, Teralba. 7:30pm
Thursday 23rd **Monthly Club Meeting** - 134 Queens Road, Canada Bay. 8:00pm
Friday 24-26th **Newcastle Tour** - Morpeth NSW

OCTOBER

Saturday 9th **Southern Highlands Motor Festival** - Bowral. *Contact Graeme Newman for details*
Tuesday 19th **Newcastle Branch Meeting** - Westlakes Mining Museum, Teralba. 7:30pm
Thursday 28th **Monthly Club Meeting** - 134 Queens Road, Canada Bay. 8:00pm

*Michael and Marilyn
Trethowan in their 1913
Fiat at the 2018 National
Veteran Vehicle Rally in
Forbes*



Major Events

SEPTEMBER 2021

Friday 24th-26th **Newcastle Tour** - Morpeth, NSW
Entry form in June Spit and Polish. *Enquiries: Graeme Newman*

OCTOBER 2021

Sunday 10th - 16th **RACV National Veteran Vehicle Rally** - Swan Hill, Victoria
Enquiries: Michael and Claudia Holding

Sunday 17th - 22nd ****CANCELLED** National Veteran Motorcycle Rally** - Manjimup, Western Australia
Enquiries: Sharon Rudler. Hosted by the Indian Harley Club (Bunbury) Inc.

NOVEMBER 2021

Monday 22nd - 26th **National Highwheeler Rally** - Mount Gambier, South Australia
Enquiries: Noel and Sue Holbrook

MARCH 2022

Friday 11th-13th **2022 Premier Event** - Blackheath, NSW
See July Spit and Polish for details. More information to come.

APRIL 2022

Wednesday 20th-23rd **Brush National Rally**
Postponed from 2021 Contact Alan for an entry form
Enquiries: Alan Miller (0417 283 897)

MAY 2022

Sunday 8th - 14th **National 1 & 2 Cylinder Rally** - Narrandera NSW
Event information available on the VCCA NSW website including EOI form.
Enquiries: Robert Fordham

SEPTEMBER 2022

25th Sept -1st Oct **National Model T Ford Rally 20T2 Dubbo**
www.modeltfordclubnsw.org.au

OCTOBER 2022

Sunday 23rd - 28th **National Veteran Vehicle Rally** - Dusselton W.A
Enquiries: Peter and Pauline Hume

The Blue 1909 Fiat

By Barry Shinfield

In the mid sixties Hills District Farm Equipment was founded with Michael and Terry Trethowan and myself. We were appointed the Fiat tractor dealership. We started a collection of vintage and later veteran motor cars.

We restored two 1924 Buick tourers and started to expand our collection. Being the largest Fiat dealer (not in size but in number sold) we thought to expand our collection to include a veteran.

A veteran Fiat came to our attention and so we purchased the 1909 Fiat type 1 from a Mr Wrenford from Gladesville.

The car was a semi finished project. The motor ran and all of the major mechanicals seem to work. The body and chassis, springs etc. were all painted white. There was no upholstery, as I said semi finished. We proceeded to change the colour, ending with black running gear with green body and yellow wheels. We had the car upholstered in leather by a Mr Jack Lett from Carlingford. We didn't devolve the cost to our wives as couldn't afford three leather lounges as well.

The Fiat and the other cars were used in the Galston 100 year celebration's where we were dressed in period clothing. Also it was very well received by the head of Fiat Tractor Australia to have a ride in the car (P.R. Work). When I sold my interest in the tractor business to Michael and Terry the car collection was broken up. Some were sold. I bought the Fiat from the tractor company.

In 1999 I started some restoration work on the car in preparation for the 2000 national tour. I renewed the radiator and a fully reconditioned the motor. I sometimes despair at the old self taught repairers such as filling the big-end and main bearing caps. Bad enough when they are flat but when stepped ARG!!!!

The 1909 Fiat is a full pressurised oil system something some other manufacturers didn't change till very late in production. Anyhow in the 2000 rally my 2 Talbots and the Fiat were driven successfully by my family, they all enjoyed the experience.



The Fiat before re-restoration

After the 2000 rally I started to re-restore the Fiat. The wheels had been cut down and re-rimmed to take 30x3.5 tyres. This was a common practice they were the only size readily available the wheel restoration cost considerable time and money.

I made and fitted a new fire wall/dash. I also fitted a AUSTER split windscreen. I had all the pieces/fittings cast. If anyone has dressed the bronze castings (as delivered from the foundry) will appreciate the

August 2021

hours of work getting them ready to install. The whole car was virtually rebuilt: new differential bearings, new wheel bearings F&R, relined brake shoes and I rebuilt the universal joint. This job entailed many hours and put my mechanical knowledge to the test. I had new rear mudguards made. I then had the colour changed to a blue (no name) but a paint number has been created it is the only car at this time using this colour.

The wheel mounting was very crude so again a lot of time was consumed making new front hubs and rear wheel mounting. When the rear wheels were fitted they looked awful, a gap between the wheel and brake drum, a result of re-mounting the wheels. A large aluminium spacer was made to fill the gap. I was able to use existing holes in the flange of the brake drum to fix the spacer that I had made. To the unknowns the car appears to have very large brakes. Another stuff up happened when I was machining the spacers as I was called to the phone. On returning to the job I set the lathe to take another cut. On measuring it was not necessary so another piece of aluminium was purchased. I didn't make the same mistake again.

I had a new fuel tank made and I fitted it at the rear of the car between the rear springs. It looked much better but then it was necessary to mount an electric fuel pump with an adjustable pressure valve to stop the 110 year old carburettor from flooding. The original fuel tank was pressurised by the use of exhaust gas, a special valve was fed from the exhaust manifold by a small tube to the fuel tank. It operated at a pressure of between 1/5 to 2 lbs. After the body was refitted of course I had to renew the floor boards and new running boards were made and fitted all with additional brass beading (more to polish). I had previously converted the head lamp to electric using 100watt globes so an additional wiring was easy, I latter fitted an electric starter, much easier if the car was stalled the passenger didn't have to get out of the car so it could be started using the crank handle.

I spent a lot of time and money bending , polishing, fitting brass beading around the leather trim. To save polishing I had it gilded, it looked so good. I then had the brass mudguard bolted together with the firewall bolts and nuts gilded also. I guess all the effort paid off in being awarded the Veteran of the Year in 2012. As I was renovating the body I made provision for fitting a hood. I never finished that job. As time progressed and I got older I found I only needed one veteran car. I advertised the car through the veteran movement but to no avail.

I finally advertised the car in the unique car sales. Only after the second edition of the magazine did I get an offer to purchase . The car has been sold and it is going to a proposed museum in Coolumb in Queensland.

It was an expensive but enjoyable exercise to re-restore the Fiat. I built the car to keep. The reason I sold the car it was that it was surplus to my needs.

Trip Report: The Homecoming (Part 4)

Catherine Strutt & Chris Duncan. 1911 FN2400. By Catherine Strutt

The road on the other side of the caves was much like the road down into the caves but greatly reduced in the severity of its incline. We slowly followed the snaking narrow bitumen up and around the gullies reaching the summit and then found a quiet and very enjoyable back road which took us through farming land and scrubby bush for about sixty kilometres. After a beautiful warm day the weather was now closing in and spits of rain were starting to hit the windscreen. For the first night in our week away we decided to go posh and called ahead to make a booking at a motel at Wallerawang, a small village just outside of Lithgow. It was not going to be a nice night to camp and our food supplies had run low.



Leaving Jenolan Caves

We arrived at Wallerawang, picked up our room key and pulled the FN up in front of our room as the rain started falling heavily. We threw the silver tarp over the car until there was a break in the weather and we could unload the contents of the car into our room. Workers from the nearby power station sat outside their rooms drinking their beers and watching us as we performed our usual routine of arriving somewhere for the night in the FN. An Asian couple in the room next door came out to admire the car and ask questions, and before long Chris and Steve, the young Vietnamese mechanic, were talking in depth about the car and the engine. Later we enjoyed a great hearty meal in the warm COVID-safe restaurant of the motel while we chatted to Maggie and Stan Bone who had called to see that we were safe for the night and to hear about our day's adventures in the FN.

We awoke the next day to a quiet morning and a sky of low dark clouds with spits of rain. It was our final full day of travel. The predicted inclement weather had arrived and we had no choice but to go out into it so we pulled the tarp off the FN and loaded it, erected the hood and dressed in our wet weather gear. Chris offered Steve, the Vietnamese mechanic from the room next door, a go at cranking



and starting the car and the young bloke jumped at the chance. He was completely intrigued with the whole car from the moment we had arrived. With a few instructions from Chris, the stocky guy heaved and lifted the crank and away it started, first go. He grinned from ear to ear. It had made his day. We waved goodbye and rolled down the gravel driveway and back out onto the road.

Climbing out of the Lithgow Valley in second gear we observed more horrific evidence of the destruction from the January fire

storm. The landscape was black, and through the burnt sticks lay rusty crumpled bits and pieces of what once were once people's paradises in the bush. We reached the summit of the valley as a fine misty rain started. The FN caught its breath and we rumbled on down the mountain ridges of Bell and the apple growing area of Bilpin. Day trippers at cafes pointed and waved to us as we passed them enjoying their cuppas and fellow motorists fed up at travelling at FN speed behind us roared passed us and down the road with fury whenever the road turned into two lanes. Numerous times Chris pulled over to let the build up of vehicles pass until finally we escaped onto a lovely quiet sealed bush road that took us down into the Hawkesbury River area of Lower Portland. After a short ferry ride we turned left onto River Road and putted along through private river residences and farmland and had great views of the Hawkesbury River until we arrived a short while later at Wisemans Ferry.

The place was jumping with tourists, probably all escaping for a few days out of their COVID lockdown. Gangs of motorbikes, lines of grey nomads towing caravans and Sydneysiders in flash sporty cars all lined up together down the hot road waiting to get on the two small ferry barges that were kept busy constantly ferrying vehicles back and forth across the river. It was the only way across the river for motorists avoiding the freeway to travel north and south and it was also a very scenic drive, and as such, very popular. After fueling up, we parked the car under the cool of some trees, flicked off the engine and stretched our legs while we ordered a coffee and a milkshake and stood and observed the traffic, debating which way we would take next. Watching how many caravans turned right once getting to the other side of the river, we decided confidently that we would turn left.

Down the road from where we stood we could see the FN parked under the trees. It was busy posing for photographs with young families and Asian tourists while it waited for our return. Thankfully the tourists were admiring but not touching and we waited until a few more had taken their photos before Chris cranked the car and we joined the line of vehicles eager to cross the river. The day had become humid and stormy feeling and we had to get along if we were going to stop and set up camp for the night before the storm dropped.



Reaching the other side and turning left as planned, we were rewarded with a beautifully quiet narrow sealed road that led us through the flat areas alongside the river, across old timber bridges and past numerous large rock caves that hung precariously over the road. We had the hood erected because of the unpredictable weather but it was one of those roads that would have been thoroughly enjoyed travelling hoodless as there was so much to see not only alongside us but above us. The sealed road ended at the historic tiny village in the bush of St Albans, noted for its convict era sandstone pub. The road we were following was the convict built Great Northern Road, the original route from Newcastle to Sydney. We stopped for a comfort break in the small park and as I waited for Chris by the car a young couple in their twenties spotted the car and shrieked with excitement. Finally after standing together giggling for a few minutes, the young girl gathered up the courage to walk over to me and the car, asked if she could honk the horn, honked it and then ran squealing and laughing back to her boyfriend.

Job done.

Moving on, the road was now relatively smooth gravel with only the corrugations at the bends to be cautious about when trundling over them on tall skinny wheels. Otherwise, it was a great road and one the FN motored along very comfortably on as we scoured the pretty landscape eyeing off every flat small area looking for a quiet place to camp for the night.



Our final camp. Mogo Creek, Laguana, just before the deluge

The day was getting long and it was starting to get essential that we stop if we were to make camp, eat and get the car covered before the afternoon thunderstorm fell. It seemed that we were not the first to want to camp along this road as every area we considered that looked perfect for us had a sign "Private Property, No Camping". Our last resort was to stop in the next small village sixty kilometres away, historic Wollombi, in the grounds of the local pub. This did not seem a like an attractive option to

us. We were getting used to our privacy and peace and camping next to a pub wouldn't give us that! So we persisted along through the bush until finally we rounded a bend, and just before the road crossed a creek, a perfect site appeared to the side and we slowed up and turned in. It was just what we needed; flat, grassy, spacious and with enough scrub at the entrance to the clearing to hide the FN and our tent from the occasional car that rattled past.

The dark green of the FN camouflaged the car perfectly into the bush, and pitched beside it our bright orange tent was totally hidden from passing traffic on the road. I set up our chairs, poured a glass of red and started preparing dinner. Relaxing back I looked at the ground and discovered that we were surrounded by inch sized Jack Jumper ants. The pain from a bite from these guys is incredible so I up and moved our "kitchen" away from where their nest may have been only to move a third time when they surrounded us again. On closer inspection of the tent I discovered that they were all over the top of the tent. They lunged and jumped at me aggressively, holding up their little fists displaying why they're aptly named Jack Jumpers. They weren't invading us from their nest in the ground but falling from the dense scrub above us like painful little bombs.

As we finished dinner and packed up, the first big splats of rain started to drop. Thunder had been rolling around above us and we hastily stretched out the silver tarp across the ground and threw it over the FN. The rain became heavier and it was a race against the weather to grab our chairs and table and cooking gear and stuff it all into the small kitchen vestibule of the tent. As we pushed ourselves into whatever small space was left and zipped closed the tent door, the sky opened. Thunder and lightning crashed through the bush and the rain bucketed down, drenching the ground and the tent. We sat and waited talking loudly over the noise of the storm. The floor of the tent began to rise. It was like sitting on a waterbed. I zipped down a corner of the door and looked out to see that the ground all around us was covered in water about three quarters of an inch deep. We sat it out getting wetter and wetter from the water seeping up through the floor of the tent until we abandoned the situation and crawled into

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bed at 6:30pm. At least this part of the tent was totally waterproof on the floor. Chris had got smart on this, the final night, and now the magneto was not parked over a bald patch in the ground, or over concrete, or wrapped in newspaper. He had fully removed it and it came to bed with us in the dry bedroom of the tent. There was no way it was going to fail us this time come the morning.

The next morning revealed a sodden bush. It had rained for most of the night and at some point in the early hours I had heard an incredible crack and crash from somewhere in the scrub and I thought to myself "that's why we never camp under big trees". It was the last day of our week long trip and we only had about eighty kilometres to home so we had a quick breakfast and packed up the camp. Almost everything was wet or damp or muddy, and we knew it would all be back out in a few hours so we stuffed it all into the FN, pulled off the tarp, and Chris returned the dry maggy to its position beside the engine. Two heaves on the crank and the engine returned to life. A dry maggy is a happy maggy. Chika, chika, chika, the FN responded.

Driving along through the wet misty bush we followed the gravel road, a massive operation that was built by convicts and which was once the original route to Sydney. Light rain had begun to fall and the morning was turning dark and damp. The FN again was covered in water and sandy mud but it seemed to revel in getting its feet wet and dirty. After all, it would have endured conditions just like this back at Binalong nearly every day of its life 100 years ago and so along it robustly carried us through the bush



until we arrived at the historic village of Wollombi. This quaint village with its buildings made of sandstone blocks, was normally a tourist trap for day trippers from Sydney keen to sample the area's wines, and pick around in antique shops. But the little village was unusually peaceful with just a handful of folks and trendily dressed couples in their RMs and aviator sunnies wandering along the main street. COVID was making its presence felt here too. We chugged up the main street and through the village and on to the old coal mining town of Ellalong where we stopped for our final cuppa at the cemetery before home. My phone rang. It was our check-up phone call from Maggie and Stan Bone calling in to see how we survived the storm and wet weather alone out in the bush overnight. After a run down of the past day's events and a good chit chat about most other things, we finished our call, packed up what was left of our diminishing food supplies and climbed back into the familiarity of the comfortable old FN to motor the last fifty kilometres of our 1300 kilometre trip to home.

Happy and satisfied with what we had accomplished over the week, we now know, and have seen, the early history of our 1911 FN 2400. Its story has come full circle from the very day it left the FN factory in Belgium, right to the present day. However...we still have two more FNs and two more early histories and homesteads yet to explore so it looks like there will be more solo FN adventuring coming up in the future. See you on the road!



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