



# EDITORIAL

Hi Once again.

Well Easter is almost upon us,  
The Souvenirs are ready, Tee Shirts will be \$20-00 each,  
We have umbrellas at \$5-00 The badges are awaiting collection and will  
be \$6-00 each,

We have sample bags with maps and brochures etc,  
The caravan park has ensured us a prominent spot right at the entrance.  
This will be the main meeting area, and registration point.  
Registration has been kept to a minimum of \$5-00 per adult and \$3-00 per  
child. This includes Sunday Lunch at the Historic Village, and competition  
fees for the concourse. Competition fee for the Observation Run,  
A farewell breakfast at the caravan park is also included in this.

We had a rather anxious phone call just before the last magazine  
was posted. It was from Neville Humphries to say that his Dad had  
been rushed to Hospital with a burst Ulcer. After a couple of weeks in  
intensive care, we are pleased to say he is now home and well on the way  
to recovery

This month I have managed to reprint the continueing story of  
Phil and Pams trip Driving In The U.K.

Thanks to Phil Crowther

We also have a report of a stolen car. This car belongs to Margory Small  
and she has offered a reward for the return of the vehicle.

Thats all I have for now, See you all at Easter in Caboolture.

## Treasurers Report for February 1994

Balance as per previous report :		2453.97
<u>RECEIPTS :</u>	<u>EXPENSES :</u>	<u>205.00</u>
Sale of Gaskets 180.00	Newsletter 25.00	2658.97
Sale of Used Parts <u>25.00</u>	Hall Rent 60.00	
205.00	Badges - deposit 100.00	
	Pola Shirts 551.50	
	Postage 42.30	
	Parts Purchased 105.00	
	Stationary <u>11.59</u>	<u>895.39</u>
	895.39	1763.58
Reconcilliation to cash at Bank		
Statement No 54 as at 28 FEB 94 :		2348.18
Plus cash deposit from Secretary 16.90		
Less unrepresented chq.96 (shirts) 551.50		
less unrepresented chq.97 (secretary) <u>50.00</u>		<u>584.60</u>
Outstanding Petty Cash	M.Schutz chq No 97 50.00	1763.58
(to be accounted for)	P.Rogerson chq No 98 <u>100.00</u>	
	150.00	

Minutes of Meeting held 9th March 1994

The Treasurer opened the meeting at 8.05 pm and welcomed everyone including Gordon Hack who has a Leyland Marina 262.

APOLOGIES : H. Probst.

MINUTES : Minutes of the previous meeting held 9FEB94 were read by the Secretary and accepted by J.Joyce and seconded by G. Rogerson.

TREASURERS REPORT : read by the Treasurer. Balance of previous report 9FEB94 was \$2453.97 and the balance as at 9MAR94 was \$1763.58. moved P.Rose and seconded J.Joyce.

BUSINESS ARISING :

- No. Plate lenses : G. Rogerson contacted Phil Crowther who will confirm the order.
- Badges Easter 1993 : G. Rogerson has ordered badges from Sydney.
- Blinker Lenses : have been packed ready for delivery.
- Public Liability Insurance : have received receipt for payment to Shannons.
- Badges Easter 1994 : have been ordered and ready for pickup.
- Silk Screen for Shirt Emblem has been produced for \$25.00

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE : P76 mags. received from Hunter Valley (Jan) Syd, WA& Hunter Valley (Feb) Vic. SA & NZ. (Mar)

- letter from J. Brett (Vic) change of address for Vic Editor.
- Telecom: list club name in the White Pages in Bold letters.
- Letter from ANKERS : specialising in competition brakes/pads at Underwood.
- Letter from Beenleigh Rum Distillery advertising Boat cruises, smorgasboards & Theatre Restaurants etc.
- Letter from AVALON at Kingston, advertising colour copying, binding etc.
- Letter from APEX CLUB at Redcliffe inviting attendance at 3rd Annual Car Show and Swap Meet 5JUN94 at Redcliffe Showgrounds.
- Letter from Sizzling BBQ's Clayfield advertising catering for functions etc.
- Advert from the Holiday Factory at Rochdale, Special for Indy Weekend, 2 nights for 2 adults \$89 total, staying at Bay of Palms Resort. 07 341-6940.
- Letter from Albion Park Paceway advertising smorgasboard with greyhound racing and social functions etc at Silks Restaurant.
- Advert from Weston Hi Pressure Cleaning, specialising in Wet Sand Blasting for removal of rust and paint etc. 015 116275.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE : letter to Property Committee for Hall Rent \$60 Jan/Feb/Mar

GENERAL BUSINESS :

- The cost to photocopy the monthly magazine is to rise to \$45 per month due to increased costs and use of ink required in a new copier. Moved M.Erickson and seconded A. Schutz.
- Automatic Flex Plates : available Brand New from Eric Walling 03 808-9380.
- G. Morris offered to deliver 2 six cylinder engines to G. Rogersons for the cost of petrol. moved G.Rogerson and seconded A. Schutz.
- John Humphries was in Hospital at Nambour , club to send card.
- Easter Weekend was discussed, see mag.
- G. Rogerson talked about the Beenleigh outing including the tour of the Distillery and the Boat ride. Also the VW Club invited our club to join them in a Motorkana.

MEETING CLOSED : at 10 pm.

# PROGRAMME FOR EASTER

FRIDAY 1/4/94

Register in at The Caravan Park.  
Purchase of Souvenirs, Raffle Tickets etc.

Friday Afternoon, For those who wish, Neville Humphries, will lead a scenic drive through the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. Stopping at various lookout points, And with a bit of persuasion, Stopping at the ETTAMOGAH PUB etc on the way back.

Friday Evening: The usual stand around and chat.

SATURDAY 2/4/94

We have several options;

1. Shop till you drop
2. Trial Introductory flights. Flying in a light plane, \$35-00 to \$40-00 per  $\frac{1}{2}$  Hr
3. Go Gliding, with the Caboolture Gliding Club. \$35-00 for 12 mins  
\$50-00 for 20 mins
4. Go Racing on the Go Cart Track,

Saturday Afternoon Meet outside the Caravan Park at 1.00pm  
for an Observation run, combined Poker Run.

Saturday 4.30 pm Board the Ferryman for a 2 Hr Sunset cruise along the Pumicestone Passage. \$10-00 per head. Returning at 6.30pm for an optional dinner at Sattlers Hotel. Or you may wish to return to base.

SUNDAY 3/4/94

Sunday Morning. Free Time to go to Church. Or alternatively visit the Caboolture Flea Market.

Sunday Noon. Congregate at the Entrance to the Historic Village for a group entrance fee of \$2-00 each.

The concourse will be held in the grounds, And a bar B Q lunch will be provided, for all registered members,

Sunday 7.00 am. Dinner at The Sundowner Hotel. where we will have a 3 course meal @ \$8-95 per head, We will follow this with

The Trophy Presentation,

MONDAY 4/4/94

8-00 am Farewell breakfast, Followed by The Delegates Meeting.

HAVE A SAFE TRIP HOME

# TOP END TROPPO !

## Greetings fellow members !

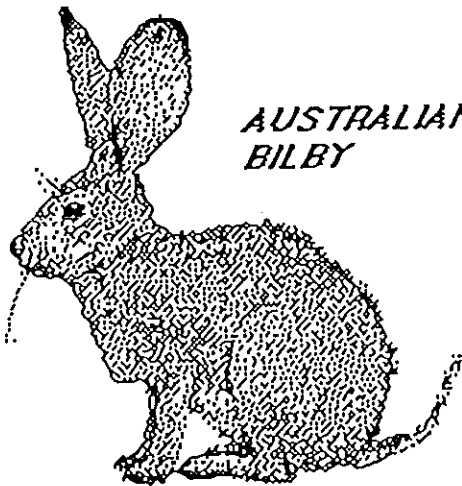
You are cordially invited to a B.B.Q. to be held in DARWIN on the weekend of 9th./10th. APRIL, 1994.

1. B.Y.O. FOOD. ]
2. B.Y.O. DRINKS. ]

**BUT MOST IMPORTANT ----  
B.Y.O. -- YOURSELVES !**

The weather at that time in DARWIN & the TOP-END is absolutely fabulous...daytime temperatures a steady 28-30 with sea breezes and night-time temps down to about 18-20., with magnificent SUNSETS followed by long, balmy evenings.

For those who require it, bookings for van sites or on-site vans can be arranged.  
We can be contacted after hours on 089-46.6691



*AUSTRALIAN  
BILBY*

See the magnificent WILDLIFE PARK  
at BERRY SPRINGS  
Visit beautiful LITCHFIELD PARK &  
swim in pristine deep pools under  
WANGI FALLS  
Enjoy the magnificent & memorable  
SUNSET HARBOUR CRUISE on board  
the BILLY J.  
but mostly come for a relaxing and  
memorable holiday!

Hope to see you!

**Baz & Liz.**

NOTICE:-

STOLEN P76

TAKEN DECEMBER '93

FROM GATEWAY ARTERIAL  
(NEAR MIKE'S PLATTING Rd)

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- \* SUPER; 6 CYLINDER (THAT WAS JUST ABOUT DEAD)
  - \* COUNTRY CREAM (ALMOST)
  - \* AUTOMATIC
  - \* TRANSMISSION-OIL COOLER (FORWARD OF RADIATOR)
  - \* V8 RADIATOR
  - \* "BLACK OUT"; ON HOOD, AROUND WINDOWS, WHEELS, GRILL, SILL, VALANCE PANELS (ORIGINALLY <sup>★</sup>RODIED CHROME)
  - \* ONLY TWO RUBBER GROMMET MOUNTS ON HORN-RING PRESS PANEL (MIDDLE-TOP PVC-TAPED)
  - \* REAR WINDOW TENDED TO SLIDE DOWN; HELD IN PLACE BY A SCREW ON LOW LEFT SIDE
  - \* ALMOST NO CHROME
- 

GENEROUS REWARD FOR RETURN  
OF WHOLE CAR.

(NO QUESTIONS ASKED)

PH: 209-1960 (Margory Small)

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## DRIVING IN THE UK

PART 2 (Part 1 appeared in the October newsletter)

By Phil Crowther

Roundabouts must be a Pommy invention – they seem to love them! Just about every junction on any arterial road means it's roundabout time. And the rules seem to change depending on who's in the biggest hurry!

Pommy police have a sensible attitude to traffic speeds. On motorways and divided "A" roads, the speed limit is 70mph (about 115kph). Most of the time, trucks, big bikes, and cars move along between 70 and 85mph, and the police don't mind, as long as no-one drives really aggressively or dangerously. Frequent lane-changing is frowned upon. Flashing the high beams is a way of telling a driver in front of you that you've seen his blinker, and, he may go ahead and pull into "your" lane. Poms do like to tail-gate other drivers who are slow to move left on A-roads and motorways, but rather than being a hostile act, it's more a way of saying "I'm waiting to get past you, if you'd be so good as to move left, old chap".

Overtaking is a gamble. Poms don't like to be overtaken. Many times we'd swing out to pass some fossil doddering along at 40mph in a 60 zone, and they would accelerate as we started passing. Their behaviour often made it necessary to cut in rather closely across their fronts to avoid arguments with on-coming traffic.

When you get into the more remote regions of the UK, often the only main road will be a single lane road, with "passing places" placed every so often, usually at intervals of a quarter of a mile, or on tight corners and blind crests. These passing places allow you to either pass any on-coming vehicle or overtake a slow vehicle going in the same direction, the rule being that when you approach an oncoming vehicle, you pull into the passing place and allow it to pass. Slow vehicles allow others to overtake by moving to the left and stopping. It's generally impossible to pull off the road at any other point because the side of the road is either a cliff or a peat bog. The roadsides are also unfenced, meaning that sheep graze right beside the road.

In the UK, a Sierra is a big car – 1800 ccl. Their insurance and registrations cost more the bigger your engine capacity. There is a base model Commodore called a Carlton, powered by a 2 litre engine, which is the most common "big" GM car. The up-market 6 cylinder "Senator" is very much a company director's sort of car. The Ford line-up features several versions of the Granada model, which is a cross between a Falcon and a Cortina. The biggest engine in the range is a 2.6 litre.

We saw hundreds of Marinas, including a sports wagon version called an Ital. There are literally thousands of Fiats, Renaults, and Citroens galloping around. Generally, people are amazed that 4.4 litre engines are driven every day by ordinary people in Australia. After five weeks and 6000 miles driving in the UK, I can honestly say that it's a beautiful place to tour, but I was happy to get back behing the wheel of a longrel car – maybe I'm just a wild colonial boy at heart!

## **FOR SALE**

My vehicle first came to light at the SA National Meeting in 1989 where it won Best Original and Best Prepared, since then it has won several Concors Events including People's Choice and has for the last 3 years has been our Club's Best Original Category, 1 outright winner.

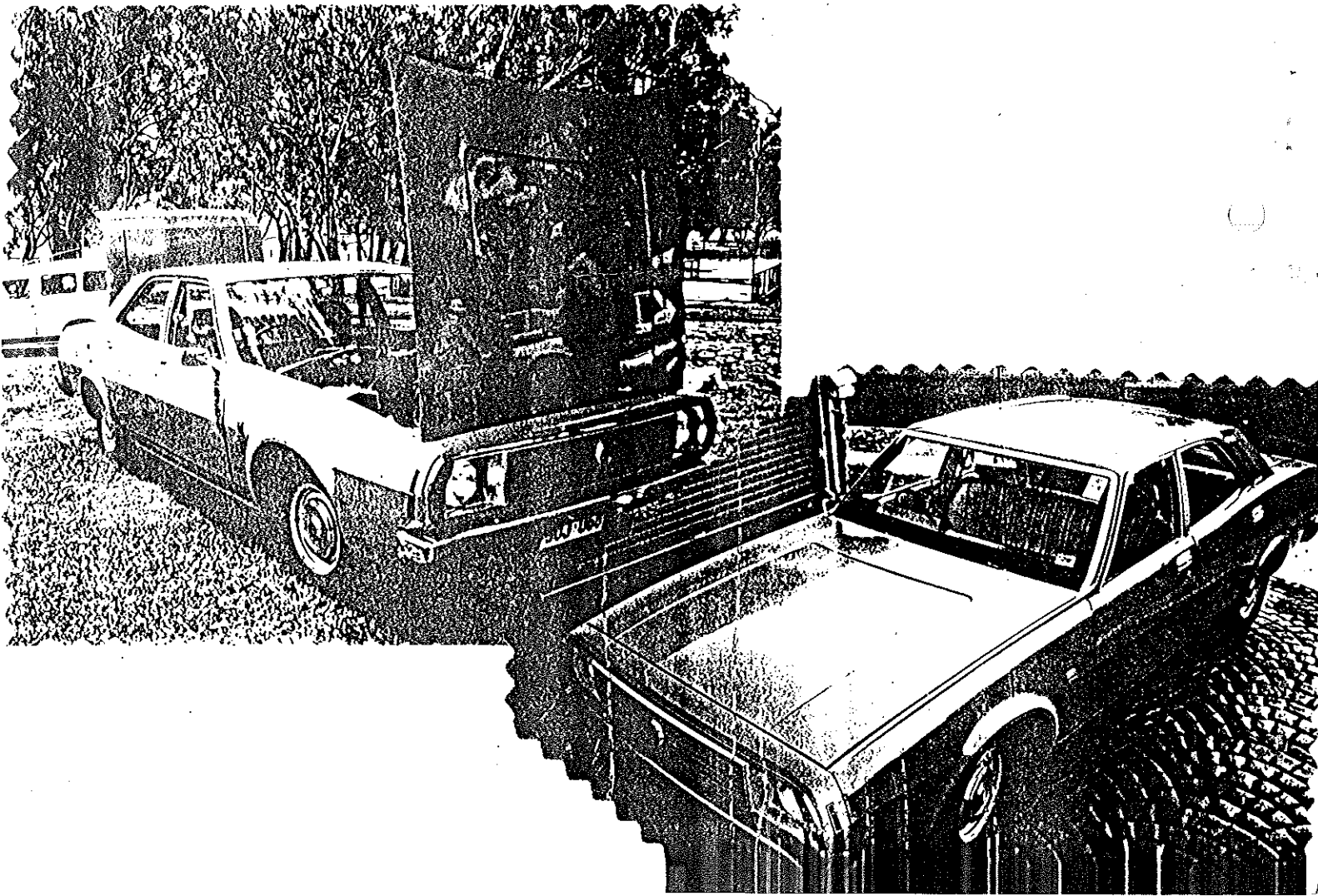
The vehicle I am talking about is a Deluxe 6 cylinder column auto presented in Spanish Olive including books. It has just turned a mere 60,000 original kilometres, drives like a new car and although I must admit the 6 cylinder version has not been a popular choice of most members, I would rate this vehicle because of condition, a rarity.

As most members know I have spent a lot of time and TLC on this car and shall be sorry to see it go, it has come time to rationalise a bit and devote my spare moments to another project car. I have received a great deal of pleasure, pride and sense of achievement with this car and I am sure the next owner will feel the same way. My asking price is \$10,000 (nsg) and within the price band of quality car's that have been sold in recent years.

It is not often a vehicle of absolute original showroom quality becomes available amongst our clubs.. For those members interstate and locally who know of it, I would appreciate that if anyone shows any interest to make them aware of it's show qualities.

For further enquiries contact

Geoff Cutting 21 St Helena St Flagstaff Hill SA ph 2703799





## ENGINE MISFIRING PROBLEMS IN P.76 ENGINES.

Have you had a miss in your P.76 engine? Don't neglect the spark plugs, their condition and even the brand. You will find that most spark plug manufacturers recommend their replacement at around 10,000 miles (16,000kms). This mileage can be exceeded without much difficulty if the spark plugs are cleaned and checked at regular intervals. When all said and done spark plug manufacturers are in the business of selling spark plugs. If the Leyland workshop manual is consulted it specifies "Clean and check every 6,000 miles (10,000km) and replace as necessary.

The most effective method of cleaning spark plugs is by sandblasting using the proper plug cleaning machine. However, a small portable sand blaster available at most spare parts and accessories shops are quite adequate. After cleaning, the centre electrode should be filed flat and gap set to the correct specification of .025" (0.635mm). The use of a spark plug wire setting gauge is far superior to feeler gauges to set the gap. The result will be far more accurate as feeler gauges do not compensate for wear on either electrode.

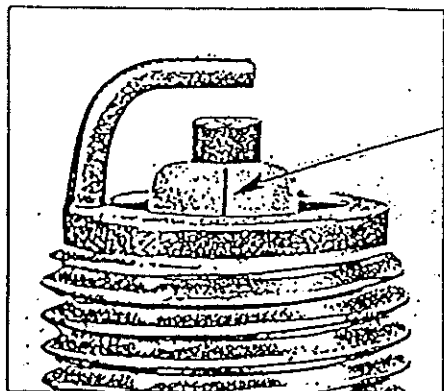
Champion brand spark plugs are recommended for Leyland P.76 engines V8 and 6 cylinders. Unfortunately many members have experienced problems with Champion spark plugs. Within the last year I personally experienced misfiring and on inspection of the plugs found hair line cracks in the insulation of the centre electrode.

I approached Champion with a collection of troubled spark plugs asking for their help and advice. They said they would give me a report, however, after many phone calls and many months a report was not given. I can only assume they are not interested in giving us any help or advice with our Leyland problems. With that I approached a well known tuning organisation who recommended N.G.K. spark plugs; so for this month I have included information on N.G.K. spark plugs, I hope it will help members keep their P.76 vehicles operating efficiently. I found N.G.K. most helpful and eager to assist.

I am not suggesting you should use only N.G.K. spark plugs in your vehicle, if you are satisfied with the performance of other brands there is no reason why a change should be undertaken, use the brand that suits you best whether it be performance or cost. I hope the article will be helpful.

HAPPY & SAFE MOTORING

TONY DE LUCA



Crack in insulation  
on Champion spark  
plugs.

Recommended N.G.K. spark plugs for Leyland P.76

6 cylinder BP6ES  
V8 BP6HS

# Why it sank

People love to laugh about the P76 these days, but was it the lemon everyone seems to think? Geoffrey Bewley sets the records straight

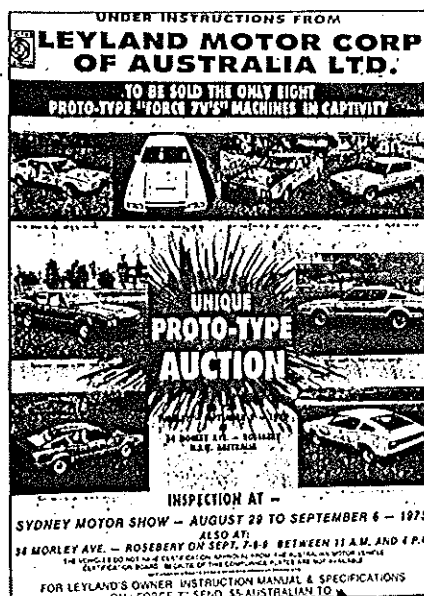
**I**N THE early 70s the Leyland P76 transited the Australian motoring scene like a meteor. There was the same sort of initial flash, blaze of brilliant light and swift plunge into darkness. Few new cars can ever have won more applause. But inside two years, Leyland Australia was in retreat, the P76 coupe and station wagon versions were aborted and the P76 was stone dead.

The Leyland management had known they were taking a risk with the P76 project. Ventures into the family car field by Leyland's forebears hadn't been terribly successful. This time they studied past errors, planned carefully to avoid repeating them and tackled the technical side thoroughly and from a fresh angle. They wanted to build a car that would surpass its opposition, not just match it, and to a great extent they succeeded. But their reach exceeded their grasp.

In the first place, it took decades of argument to convince a succession of parent managements in England that big family cars were wanted out here. Australian motoring wasn't at all like British motoring. Australians had to cover much greater distances over much worse roads and they looked for big, strong cars to do it in.

Yes, the Morris Minor was a great little car. But it was a little car, and that put it out of the picture as far as most Australian buyers were concerned. Warmed-over British designs might dominate the small-car market, but British car-makers could only increase their share of the total market if they started building against Holden, Valiant and Ford.

One early shot, the Morris Marshall in 1958, was not a great success. A couple of years later a proposal for a longer, wider and modified Austin Freeway was killed off on orders from England. In 1962 the local BMC management set up a study group to see about building a genuine Australian BMC car. The group's report recommended a large family model,



September 1975 and the only eight Force V8s "in captivity" go under the auctioneer's hammer. The Vs were V8-powered

powered by something like the new, light, alloy V8 engine from the Buick division of General Motors.

But things had changed while the group was deliberating. The BMC Mini had become a great success and more light, front-wheel drive designs from England were in the offing. It seemed unnecessary to experiment with a large local design and the report was put aside.

For some time it seemed that warmed-over British designs were actually the ideal way to go. But the later front-wheel drive models didn't do as well as BMC hoped and presently it became clear that the company would have to build bigger cars after all if it were to make any profits.

A new study group went to work in 1966. It came up with an ambitious plan for two new model lines, with engine swaps providing a wide range of cars. There would be a V8 and a slant four derived from it, and eventually a V12 and

a slant six derived from that.

This was a terrific plan, but for technical and financial reasons it wasn't practicable. So a scaled-down version was sketched out, still involving two production lines, one for Model A light cars and the other for Model B family cars. Meanwhile, in England BMC had merged with Leyland, so the Australian management had to win over a new bunch of senior executives.

This time the parent company gave the thumbs up. It also provided plans of the projected Leyland Marina for the Model A line in Australia. From farther up the corporate sleeve they produced the superb 3.5-litre Rover alloy V8, based on the Buick engine recommended by the 1962 study, to power the Model B car.

At first the Leyland engineers under David Beech thought in terms of another front-wheel drive car and they tried a V8 in a modified Austin 1800. This was a technical success, but it made the car too expensive to market in the Holden class. They decided on a front-engined, rear-wheel drive car instead and started drawing on a clean sheet.

In the early 70s the new car came together. The Rover engine was developed to a point where it was almost a new design. The block was made deeper and stronger and the stroke was lengthened to square so the pistons displaced 4.4 litres. It was fed by a Bendix Stromberg two-barrel carburettor in place of the twin SUs used in Rovers. The power output was said to be 161 kW.

Leyland stuck to the idea of offering a choice of engines. The alternative to the V8 was the six-cylinder unit from the Austin Tasman and Kimberley, enlarged from 2.25 to 2.6 litres. It kept up the percentage of local content and filled the gap while the Leyland engineers produced a new V6 based on the alloy V8.

The body design parameters were strength, simplicity, ease of maintenance and plenty of passenger and luggage

# THE P76 STORY

space. The styling was by Michelotti, with a wide, flat wedge shape giving a low nose, deep hip-lines and a big, squared-off tail. There were fewer body parts than usual for a car that size, which added strength and saved on welding time and cost.

Front suspension was by vertical struts and coil springs, with an anti-roll bar. Rear suspension was by coil springs, a four-link live axle and telescopic dampers. Power brakes were a standard fitting, working 27 cm discs forward and 23 cm by 3.8 cm drums aft. Steering was by rack and pinion, with power steering for V8s.

Meanwhile, specifications and details had appeared in the motoring press. In February 1973, WHEELS had the first photos of P76 prototypes under test.

Great things were expected of the alloy V8 and it was claimed car thieves already had lists of clients seeking examples to power 'specials' and boats. The body was praised for its clean, original style. Light weight and excellent fuel economy were rumoured. A WHEELS editorial said the new car was "keenly awaited".

The P76 was discussed in a big feature in the July WHEELS. "P76 is the most important new car this year," it began. "For Leyland it is the most important car in the company's history. It has cost \$21 million and taken 500,000 miles of development and five years to get into the showrooms."

The writers found the V8 gave plenty of power, as expected, and performance with the six was surprisingly good. The steering was accurate and well-damped and the driver had a good view out. The ride was good without much body roll. At high speed the car sat flat on the road and felt very stable. There was some understeer, but it handled safely. Brakes were good with plenty of feel.

The body was very roomy, with space for three adults across the back seat. There was plenty of headroom. The boot was huge, with a low lip for easy loading. There wasn't much wind noise, thanks to the smooth body. The tail was ugly and out of character with the rest of the car.

Next month there was a full road-test report on a P76 Super, with a V8 and a four-speed manual box. It confirmed the earlier good impressions. It was easy to drive, quick through the gears, with light controls and very good brakes. The tall gear ratios took it to 170 km/h. Under test it did 6.0 km/l overall, and up to 7.1 km/l at cruising speeds. This was regarded as disappointing; much better than the

## The totally new Leyland sedan emerged as a remarkably fine motor car said WHEELS.

opposition's economy figures but not as good as expected.

Boot and cabin space were commended again. There were second thoughts about the driver's view; now it was classed as good ahead and to the sides and not so good to the rear, thanks to the wedge shape. Noise level was generally good apart from some tyre rumble.

Finish wasn't so good. The doors fitted badly and let water in. The instrument cluster was loose, as was the centre console, and the steering wheel boss was coming away on one edge. This was seen as okay in an early production car.

"If Leyland Australia can't sell the new P76 in profitable quantities, then there is something wrong with the average new-car buyer," WHEELS summed up. "It's that simple. Once the assembly problems are overcome, the P76 is going to be a very good car."

September WHEELS saw the P76 pitted against the Holden Kingswood, Falcon 500 and Valiant in a four-car comparison of family models in the \$3200-\$3400 price range. The summary at the end was fairly non-committal, but a tally of category results showed the P76 generally in front with the Kingswood next best.

The P76 did about 6.8 km/l while the others all did about 5.3. It had the best brakes and its gearbox was judged the best. It came first for driver position, seat design and general accommodation, with by far the best boot. It was the best-equipped of the four. In noise level it came second to the Falcon. For finish, the

Kingswood came first with the P76 last. Door fit and trim still weren't up to scratch. The Kingswood also beat it on handling and ride.

British Leyland showed a P76 to the British motoring press, who thought it was awfully big for a family car. Nonetheless, it was reported Leyland Australia had arranged to sell 3500 of them to the parent company, who'd market them as a prestige model above the Rover range.

Meanwhile, with the P76 sorted out, Leyland Australia's engineers set about extending their own company's range. There were plans for a P76 station wagon, a P76-based coupe and a new Model A developed from the earlier version replaced by the Marina. The Model A was to be powered by the alloy V6 engine.

In November 1973, WHEELS showed sketches of the coupe planned for release next year and the Model A V6 projected for 1975. The coupe was shorter, flatter and wider than the P76 sedans, with a lower nose and an immense rear hatch. It used the same mechanicals as the sedans, and although there were no body panels in common, the family likeness was strong.

In January 1974, the P76 V8 was named the 1973 WHEELS Car Of The Year. "The totally new Leyland sedan emerged as a remarkably fine motor car," the citation read. "It is in the V8 version that it really shows its potential. It sets new standards for medium-sized local cars in its ride/handling/road-holding compromise, it has fine brakes, is comfortable, very roomy, practical and, with the all important V8 engine, has excellent performance and superior fuel consumption compared to the V8 opposition and the larger competitive sixes. Of course, the car is not perfect but in reaching its design objectives the P76 V8 has contributed to the engineering standards of Australian cars."

Local content in the P76 was close to 100 per cent. The public were more attracted by the up-market version than Leyland had expected, and more than half the cars being produced were V8s. However, an article in the same issue listed delays in delivery due to industrial unrest, power strikes and a steel shortage. Leyland was still building cars, but most had to be stockpiled because there were no parts to complete them.

The P76 had a brief competition career. Evan Green drove one in the 1974 World Cup Rally and made the fastest time

# THE P76 STORY

around the leg in Sicily. This included part of the former Targa Florio course (WHEELS, September '82), so Leyland introduced a limited run of 300 P76 Targa Florios to celebrate. They all had side flashes, power steering, alloy wheels, radial tyres, four-speed manual transmissions and limited-slip diffs.

The Leyland coupe neared production and in August 1974 WHEELS gave it a cover story. The basic version was to be called the Force 7, with a six-cylinder engine. Next was the V8-powered Force 7V. Top of the line was to be the V8 Tour de Force, with luxury trim and fittings. The report praised the clean lines of the tail, the room inside and the convenience of the big hatch.

So far, Leyland Australia's campaign had gone ahead more or less on schedule. It was like an invasion of a defended enemy coast. Plans had been laid carefully, an assault force had been assembled and the first wave of troops had stormed ashore and won a foothold. It was time to push on up from the beaches and capture some of the high ground.

The P76 had had a very good reception. About 2000 had been ordered in the first week and soon there was a 16-week waiting list. But this was a measure of demand, not sales. There was a shortage of cars for dealers, particularly V8s. The P76 was slow to get on the road in any significant numbers.

Then the cars sold had teething trouble. The V8 engine was an oil-eater until it was properly run in and, coupled with a poor standard of finish, this earned all P76s a reputation for unreliability. Adherents of the rival makes fastened on this to feed a whispering campaign.

Strikes and power cuts delayed production. One stroke of bad luck was a breakdown in the V8 engineering shop, so that engine production for a month was down to eight a day. All this combined to rob Leyland of the initiative. Although the first onslaught had been a striking success, there were no reinforcements to follow up. Meanwhile, the enemy were counter-attacking against the beach-head.

Not all of this was clear at the time. But it was obvious Leyland was in trouble with the new range and it was at least very likely that the parent company in England was having second thoughts about it. One bad sign was the resignation of David Beech, the father of the P76, in the middle of 1974. About 1000 Leyland employees were sacked and soon afterwards Leyland

## David Abell's scorched earth policy destroyed most records concerning the P76

Australia's managing director, Peter North, suddenly resigned, too.

North said he was quitting because he couldn't see eye to eye with British Leyland's management. "The differences have reached a point where I feel I must resign in the interests of the company, its employees and dealers," he said.

North, an Australian, was succeeded by David Abell, a 31-year-old British whiz-kid. In an interview with a WHEELS reporter, Abell said the P76 program wasn't one of the points of disagreement with Peter North. However, he didn't say how long the program would continue. He did say he'd promised that Leyland Australia would be profitable again within two years.

"On his record Abell has shown greater skill at pruning dead wood than he has at manufacturing innovations," the WHEELS man noted. "His technical and patriotic bias may be neatly underlined when the government gives its verdict on the Industries Commission report. It would suit Lord Stokes and his emissary if the Federal Government told them: Stop manufacturing and concentrate on your imports instead."

That appeared in November 1974. As it turned out, David Abell didn't wait for the Commonwealth to sort out a new motor industry policy. Before the WHEELS story was in print he'd axed the P76 and all other machinery under development. The big Leyland plant at Zetland in Sydney was to be sold to the government. The Marina was axed and local production was limited to the Mini and Moke.

"I've always thought we should never have built the P76," Abell said. He told reporters Leyland would return to profitability by concentrating on selling more Jaguars, Rovers and Triumphs.

Leyland Australia had jumped before it was pushed. Actually, the push never came. The Industries Assistance Commission suggested cutting the four local manufacturers back to three and when the P76 was axed Gough Whitlam called it a dud and Bill Hayden called it a lemon. But when the Labor government finally brought forth its policy, local car-makers were protected by a higher tariff wall linked to a local content rule which the P76 cleared by a mile.

But in the meantime, Leyland's production lines had closed down, the last P76s and Marinas were being sold off at a discount, all but a handful of the 50-odd Force 7s were stripped and crushed for scrap and the sole P76 station wagon was left to serve as a factory hack. In October 1974, David Abell had said about 2600 Leyland workers would lose their jobs, but by mid-1975, more than twice that many had been sacked.

WHEELS staff got hold of a completed Force 7 for a rushed road test. The opening spread photo showed it parked in a churchyard. It turned out to be a roomy, impressive car, fast enough and comfortable to drive, sporty, although not a sports car. In the market it might have wiped the floor with the gross, hulking 'muscle car' coupes the rival makes were offering then. "What a bloody shame!" the heading said.

About 16,000 P76s were made. Nobody really knows the exact number. As part of Mr Abell's scorched earth policy, most of the records were destroyed. Perhaps the British management was right and it was a bad idea to start with. It was certainly unlucky to start developing a fairly large car just before the 70s oil price rises encouraged the big-car market to shrink.

But even if that's so, it was a bad idea well-executed. It was an excellent and ingenious design. It was the most thoroughly Australian car, in concept and in content, ever offered to the Australian public. Those issues don't cut ice with businessmen, though. The point is, was it the car that could have taken Leyland Australia round the corner to profitability? In the small hours of the morning, does David Abell ever lie awake with second thoughts? From the look of him, I'd guess he doesn't . . . □

# Who still loves it

Sneered at it may be, but there are large numbers of P76 devotees who love their cars as much as any Ferrari-owner. Geoffrey Bewley reports

**I**N A way, it's incorrect to say the P76 was killed off in 1974. After all, a good few were made and probably two-thirds are still on the road. By now many have found strong-minded owners who know what they want from a car, are satisfied with what the P76 delivers, and can shrug off the wisecracks that it still draws.

In the last year or so, P76-owners have been closing ranks. P76 clubs were formed independently in Sydney and Adelaide within a few weeks of one another, which sounds like proof of an idea whose time has come. Since then they've established links and started to put out a national club magazine. Right now, they're probably the fastest-growing car clubs in Australia.

"It was a real grassroots movement," Joe Torony, the NSW P76 owners' club president, says. "It really started as a result of some friends of mine being very interested in the car and suggesting that we could have a barbecue at my place to get a few P76-owners together and see how things went.

"So I printed a little sheet and passed it around, leaving it under windscreen-wipers and so on. I only printed 30 sheets and they were all white, but funnily enough, all sorts of different coloured sheets started to appear, so obviously people were recopying.

"I was instantly rewarded with a positive response from 15 cars, so we changed the venue to Parramatta Park. I booked it for 20 cars and 50 turned up, including two Force 7s, and from that meeting the idea of a club was formed. We then started looking for a constitution.

"Then we heard of a South Australian group and we adopted their constitution almost without change. Our first meeting was on December 6 and they started on February 2, but we weren't as quick at getting the organisational part of it done. They set off virtually with the intention of forming a club, whereas our first meeting was to see if the feeling existed.

"From then on the club has gone from strength to strength. We're getting enquiries at the rate of six or seven a week. We've got members from as far afield as Tamworth, Wagga, Canberra and we've got a large number at Newcastle, Mittagong, the Blue Mountains and Wollongong. Now we're looking at the possibility of local branches."

Joe has two P76s himself and other club members have up to six. "I think there's such interest in it because basically it's such an excellent motor car," he says "It offers superior handling, superior roadability and superior fuel economy. And the people who've been willing to persevere with it and overcome minor difficulties — and they were all minor — have seen how well it's turned out.

"You hear a lot about fuel efficiency these days. You're looking at V8 motor cars here which habitually get 24 or 25 miles to the gallon. P76-owners don't like publicising figures, because the owners of other cars tend to think they're terrible liars. But I might point out that in the recent economy run held in Adelaide, the winning car, which was a four-speed manual V8, achieved 30.4 miles per gallon and averaged 35 miles per hour for the duration of the run.

"And besides that, of course, it's a truly Australian car, designed by an Australian team for Australian conditions. As for the design, well, to give you an example, I'm currently rebuilding a car from the bare shell and I went down to the motor registry office to ask what points I might have difficulty with as regards registering the vehicle.

"The fellow there hit me with the usual P76 jokes, like P38, because it's only half a car, ha ha ha. Or, what's the quickest way to get a P76? Buy yourself a vacant lot and pretty soon you'll have half-a-dozen, ha ha ha. And after I'd weathered the storm of all this he said: 'Listen, mate, you'll have no trouble registering it. They're a terrific car, they just don't wear out.' So that's the feeling of the technical

people who really know.

"Unfortunately, the general public tend to buy cars on looks and nearly 10 years ago the shape of the P76 was, to say the least, revolutionary. Now if you look around nearly everybody's adopted the wedge shape, but in 1973 it was a new departure which people failed to accept. Most people thought it looked funny. But you talk to the people who own the cars now and you can't convince them that they're ugly in any sense."

One club member, Hal Maloney, has experience of driving P76s in the toughest Australian conditions of all. "I ran a four-speed manual in the Repco Trial," he says, "and I also drove one across the Gun Barrel Highway to Ayers Rock, and it went real well. We were told this car couldn't cross the Gun Barrel; a vehicle had to be four-wheel drive and a two-wheel drive car was out of the question. So we thought the only way to find out was to go and have a look.

"It was a tremendous trip. We started off at Wiluna and went right across to the Warburton Mission, Giles Weather Station and then to Ayers Rock. We'd lifted it up, given it heavier springs and an alloy sumpguard underneath and extra fuel tanks. But economy was an interesting point. I was in company with a Commodore from NBN Channel 3 and a Peugeot 303 and we filled the vehicles at Wiluna. When we refuelled at the Warburton Mission the Peugeot took 85 litres, the Leyland took 86 and the Commodore took about 103.

"We had better performance than the Commodore, we could outrun it on the good smooth sections, but on the rough I would say the Commodore was just a touch better. It did have gas front struts and gas rear shock absorbers. But on the sand stretches and over the long sand ridges, we were way in front. I could actually stop on the soft sand and start again, but if the Commodore lost its momentum it just sank. But overall, it was amazing how similar the cars were." □

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GENERAL MEETINGS

The Qld P76 owners club Inc holds its monthly meetings on the second wednesday of each month.

TIME 7:30pm

VENUE

Norman Park Uniting Church  
Cnr of Bennetts rd and  
McIlwraith Avenue  
Norman Park  
(At the Round a bout)

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1994 MEETING DATES

January	12th 94
February	9th 94
March	9th 94
April	13th 94
May	11th 94
June	8th 94
July	13th 94 A,G,M.
August	10th94
September	14th 94
October	12th 94
November	9th 94

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CLUB OUTINGS

Various activities are organised by the clubs members and are generally held on the fourth Sunday of the month. The activity and venue will be advertised in the monthly newsletter.

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CLUB MEMBER OF THE YEAR

points allocated	
Attend meeting	1 point
raffle donation	1 point
organise event	4 points
attend event	2 points
win event	1 point