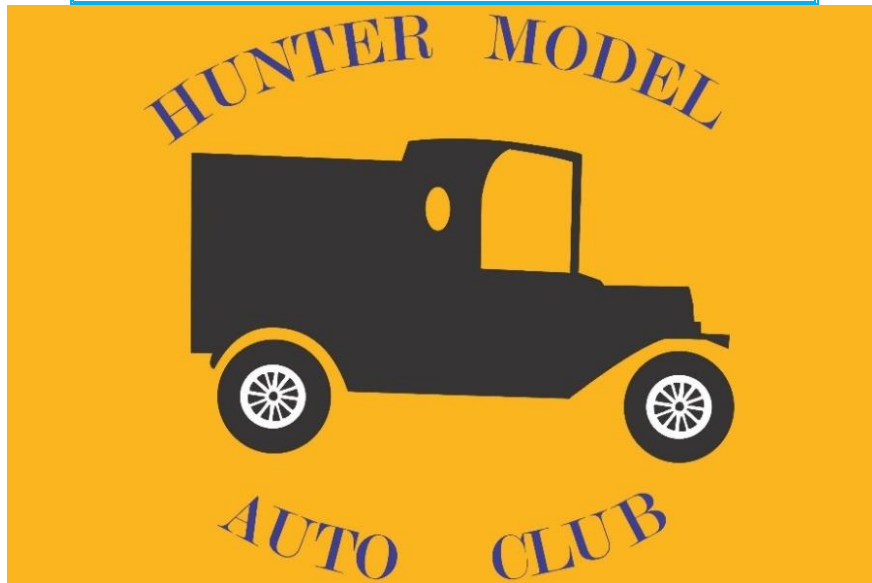


-GEARBOX-



JULY 2025

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INC.

CONTACT: email: huntermodelautoclub@gmail.com

Bill Kenchington on Ph (02) 4945 4830 OR Andrew Vile on (02) 4933 5607 in business hours only.

7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club

**** NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 8th July ****

**** TOY FAIR SUNDAY 10th AUGUST 2025 ****

What's Happening

Port Stephens Car Show - Sunday July 15th - 10am Start - D'Alboras Marina, 6 Teramby Road, Nelson Bay

Sandy Hollow Charity Motorfest - Saturday August 16th - 8:30am start - Sandy Hollow Tourist Hotel, 1611 Golden Highway, Sandy Hollow

our Toy And Hobby Fair - Sunday 10th August - 10am to 2pm - Edgeworth Sport & Rec Club, 1A Park Street, Edgeworth

Collector Con- Sunday 24th August - 9am to 2:30pm - Newcastle Entertainment Centre, Broadmeadow

Father's Day Car Show 2025 - Sunday September 7th - 10am to 1pm - Tuggerah Westfield, 50 Wyong Road, Tuggerah

Broke Fair & Vintage Car Display - Sunday September 14th - 9am start - Wollombi Road, Broke

TOYOTA TOYOPET CROWN - WHEN A SHORT TERM FAILURE CAN LEAD TO A LONG PERIOD OF SUCCESS.

The 1957 *Toyota Toyopet Crown* is one of many cars that actually changed the motoring world. Yet, there are many motoring journalists who would not know how important this vehicle was in the way motoring history has developed since this vehicle's inception in the late 1950's. The British motoring magazine, *Autocar*, produced an article early this year where they nominated thirty-nine cars that changed the motoring world. Most were easily recognizable as icons of the automotive industry, particularly in creating outstanding innovations in car design and performance. You can guess many of these and they included Jaguar's sporty XK-120 and E-Type, the compact Mini, the Ford Mustang and many others including one of my favourites, the Range Rover. Many of those mentioned in the *Autocar* article have also been featured in the Gearbox. But a *Toyota Toyopet Crown*?

In 1958 the Toyopet Crown became the first Toyota passenger car to be sold in North America. But the odd thing is that even though reasonably successful in Japan, it was a bit of a letdown in the U.S.A. with poor sales partly due to reliability problems. In any case, it was seen as being too small and quite docile in performance for the American market. According to *Autocar*, only a few thousand were sold in the U.S., and Toyota made a loss of US \$1.4 million dollars. That was in early 1960's money value, so imagine that in today's monetary values. Toyota's U.S. passenger car sales were suspended in 1960 with the Landcruiser being the only Toyota product being sold there. **Next pic** is the 1959 model in left hand drive for the American market courtesy of *Remember Road online*.



However, the American automakers were already seeing that compact cars along the size-lines of the Toyopet Crown, could be successful down the track and were soon producing their own. Toyota, having withdrawn and reviewed their strategies, returned to the U.S. market in 1964, and as history shows us, they became ultra-successful with 600 dealerships in place within two years. Toyota 'Crown' models are still manufactured to this very day and according to *Autocar*, Toyota's 'Camry' models are often amongst the best selling cars in the North American market. So after a short term failure with the Toyopet Crown, Toyota U.S.A. is now one of America's biggest automakers.



1:72 diecast scale model of the 1960 Toyopet Crown by Yodel.

And to finish off, in the early 1980s Toyota sent their engineers over to the U.S. to learn more about the luxury car industry. **Autocar** pointed out that they quickly discerned some interesting points about America's taste in Automobiles and wrote that in Toyota's view, *'people like high residual values and status, advanced performance and safety. And that after they'd upgraded from a Toyota they bought a BMW or Mercedes-Benz.'* Toyota were pretty smart and knew that it was fine in thinking about joining the big three U.S. automakers in the luxury car market, however, to be successful over there, you had to actually beat them. And they did. The Lexus LS400 was introduced in 1989 and as **Autocar** stated, *'it set such new standards that industry engineers were still calling it a Noise-Vibration-Harshness benchmark seven years later.'* Terry.

Placegetters for the June 2025 Actual model comp

*** **Category -Open (up to 5 models)** ***

As always for our 'Open' category we get a vast range of model types.



Ken 1st



Bill S 2nd



Mal=3rd



Trevor=3rd

----11th Generation Ford Thunderbird----

This was one of my first planned articles, but Marks' article on 'The Thunderbirds' television show inspired me to sit down and finally complete it.



Over the various generations the Thunderbird had been getting larger and in the later years less powerful. The sales were still high, but the car had lost its way. And some were just downright ugly. So after a three year hiatus, in 1999 Ford decided to go retro and make a car that harked back to the styling of the 1955-7 original. *(see pic previous page)*

The car was first shown at the 1999 North American Motor Show in a pale yellow. The final design was revealed at the same motor show two years later. Full production started in June 2001, so there must have been a lot of excitement about the model for it to go into full production so quickly.



It was released as a two-seater convertible with a largely plastic body. The removable hardtop could be purchased separately, but it was so heavy it needed two people to fit it. The colour the hardtop was painted was your choice, it did not need to match the car. The porthole in it echoed back to original 50s styling.

Underneath was Ford's 'DEW' platform consisting of a front engine, and rear wheel drive. Only one engine was available, a V8 putting out 188kw. Over time this was upgraded to 209kw. The transmission was automatic only, which was probably a little unusual for that era. Underneath the chassis was shared with both the Lincoln LS and the Jaguar S-Type, as at that time Ford owned Jaguar. Throughout its run it was available in two major trim levels, Deluxe and Premium. The standard appointments were high, as it was aimed at luxury car buyers, with a price to match.

Production started in June 2001 at Michigan, and ended in 2005 with just over 68,000 in total made. To give you an idea in first year they sold 31,000, but total light car sales in 2002 for the USA were 15 million. So its sales were less than 1% of the market.

Over the 5 year run there were a number of special editions released. In 2002 we got the Neiman Marcus Edition in black and silver. In 2003 they released James Bond 007 Edition, in the same coral colour shown in 'Die Another Day'. In 2004 they revealed the Pacific Coast Roadster Edition in mint green. And finally in 2005 the 50th Anniversary Cashmere Special Edition in cream. All of these were priced over US\$40,000, so they weren't cheap cars.

By 2005 sales had dwindled to 9,000 and it was removed from the range. The retro styling was not enough to keep interest in the car. And one would say it was not a performance car, it was more of a cruiser. The engine wasn't too powerful, as well as being mated to an automatic gearbox did not help. The main suggestion why it failed is that Ford dealers in the USA had little experience in marketing this sort of car, most of their sales came from pickups. The name Thunderbird has not been used since. But there are rumours!

The Models

In 1:18 scale most of the models are the Maisto version. It came in both hardtop and convertible releases. There also appears to be some official Thunderbird releases in this scale as well.



The 1:24 and 1:43 scales seem to focus on the Die Another Day' movie. Motor Max is at the larger 1:24 scale. Below is the magazine diorama version in 1:43. And no, Halle Berry doesn't come with the car.



Finally in 1:64 there's not much. In 2000 Matchbox released in the Collectibles line a Motor Trend series, with opening features (*see pic next page*). They came in both convertibles and hardtop versions, and lasted for one year only. I even had issues finding a good quality picture of one of these models, so that shows how rare this release was. *Dave S.*



HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB INCORPORATED

Minutes of Club Meeting Held at Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club on 11 June 2025

Meeting Opened: 7.30 pm.

Members Present: 19 **Apologies:** 3 **Visitors:** 1

Welcome to Members and Visitors: Chairman Shane Neems welcomed the Club members and visitor Peter Hill.

Previous Minutes: Moved: Allan Evans Seconded: David Rosser "That the May Club minutes be accepted". Carried.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer reported that the Club funds stand at \$3,004.34. Moved: Brian Blyth Seconded: Ernie Williams "That the Treasurer's Report be accepted" Carried.

OUTWARDS:

- i) Members and Others – June 2025 "Gearbox".
- ii) Members – June 2025 Model Competition and Meeting Reminders.
- iii) Members – WAMCC May 2025 "Showcase" Magazine.
- iv) Members – CTCS Newsletter for May 2025.
- v) Members – Wessex "Smalltalk" magazine for June 2025.
- vi) EOI Stallholders – Toy Fair Registration Forms.
- vii) Registered Stallholders – Confirmation of payments and table details.
- viii) Radio NEWFM – Request for promotion of Toy Fair.

INWARDS:

- i) Ian Hind (WAMCC) – May 2025 "Showcase" Magazine.
- ii) Des Barnes (CTCS) – May 2025 Newsletter.
- iii) Barry Lloyd (Wessex) – Wessex "Smalltalk" magazine for June 2025.
- iv) Jason Mitchell (South Hants) – Commented on cataloguing article in June 2025 "Gearbox".
- v) EOI Stallholders – Table numbers and payment.

vi) PH Cheah (SMAC) – Complimenting on June 2025 Gearbox

Moved: Scott McCallum Seconded: Brian Blyth “That the Correspondence be accepted” Carried.

Matters Arising:

i) Hunter Toy and Hobby Fair on Sunday 10 August 2025 – 37 tables sold to date. The Fair is being advertised on various Facebook Groups. More donations for the toy raffle will be gratefully received by Scott McCallum.

ii) Model Competition Perpetual Trophy in honour of Late Life Member Brian Fairhurst- Brian’s daughter Judi has provided a Micro Models FX Holden sedan from Brian’s collection to be mounted for this trophy. The form that this trophy will take is currently being developed.

iii) Club Visit to “Show Us Ya Slotz” at Lemon Tree Passage – Arranged for Sunday 18 May 2025 was cancelled due to the poor weather conditions and very few wishing to attend the day.

iv) Club Visit to “Catalina Plane Restoration Project” at Beresfield – This is on Sunday 15 June 2025 at 9.30 am and at a cost of \$15/head with morning tea. Afterwards it is planned to have lunch at Mortels at Thornton.

v) Club Visit to “Fighter World” at Williamstown – Dates suggested for confirmation are Sunday 13 or 20 July 2025 (with lunch proposed at the onsite Café).

vi) Proposed Cruise on the Wangi Queen at Port Stephens – Dates suggested for confirmation are Sunday 14 or 21 September 2025. The cost of the cruise is \$60/head (to be confirmed) and departs Lemon Tree Passage Wharf at 12 noon with a duration of 2 hours. A lunch box meal with dessert is included. Drinks are available at reasonable prices.

vii) Club Visit to “Sydney Tramway Museum” at Loftus – With our Club diary quickly filling up it was proposed that this visit be looked at for later in the year, say in October.

General Business:

- i) A number of car brochures are available free for members to take.
- ii) Mark has a number of models for sale.

Model Competitions:

Results for June:

“Actual” Model Competition: “Open” - Any scale up to five (5) models.

1 st	Ken McGregor.....	Earthworks Plant.....	25 Points
2 nd	Bill Smith.....	Super Heavy Haulage.....	20 Points
Equal 3 rd	Mal Hattingh	Heavy Transport.....	14 Points
And	Trevor Palmer	Race Cars.....	14 Points

“Virtual” Model Competition: “Open” - Any scale up to five (5) models.

1 st	Ken McGregor.....	Harley Davidson Bikes.....	19 Points
2 nd	Terry Payne.....	Traffic Police Cars.....	18 Points
3 rd	Bill Kenchington.....	Ford Zodiac Mk2.....	17 Points

Next “Actual” Model Category – July: “Muscle Car” - Any scale up to five (5) models.

Next “Virtual” Model Category – July: “Christmas Vehicle” - Any scale up to two (2) models and ONE PHOTO ONLY.

Meeting Closed: 7.50 pm

Placegetters for the June 2025 Virtual model comp.

*** **Category -Open (up to 5 models)** ***



Ken 1st

THE PAST - AUSTRALIA, U.S.A. AND BRITISH TRAFFIC POLICE CARS.

Entry E



Terry 2nd



Entry D

Ford Zodiac Mark 2 Highline

Bill K 3rd

- A Little snippet - THE BATMOBILE IN REVERSE -



Most members would know the story of the first *'Batmobile'* created by the famous American car customiser, George Barris. It began life as a [1955 Lincoln Futura](#) that was designed in-house by the Ford Stylists from the Lincoln Division, Bill Schmidt and John Najjar, and was fully built by the Carrozzeria Ghia in Turin, Italy. [The original Futura is [the lead-in pic.](#)] This was another one of those so-called *'Designed in America and built in Italy stories.'*

I wrote previously that it cost Ford US \$250,000 in 1955 to create the Futura and *'...it was powered by a 368 cubic inch Lincoln engine with a chassis from a Lincoln Mark II and was displayed at various the auto shows in 1955. The Futura gathered a great deal of favourable publicity for Ford. In a much more subdued form, the headlight and tailfin themes from the concept car would appear on some production Lincolns for 1956 and 1957.'*



1:18 scale diecast model of the Batmobile by Hot Wheels.

The 1955 Lincoln Futura, like most concept or show cars, would have been destroyed by Ford under normal circumstances. However, for some reason it was sold to Barris for a token amount, allegedly one American dollar, and he stored it behind his custom shop. But this was not before the Futura concept car was re-painted red and appeared in the popular movie *"It Started With A Kiss"* starring Glenn Ford and Debbie Reynolds.

When pre-production of the Batman television series was underway in 1966, the William Dozier Productions studio required a vehicle to be built for the show with a budget of US \$15,000 being agreed upon. Fellow custom car builder Dean Jeffries was unable to produce a vehicle in time as requested by the studio due to his work load. Barris was quickly given what was described as an urgent job and he was able to customise the old Futura into what became the Batmobile. When no longer required, it was retained by Barris and used on the car show circuit before ending up in a museum. Of note, in 2013 it was sold at a Barrett and Jackson auction for US \$4.62 million.

But there is more to this story and a bit of a *'strange but true'* item. George Barris had a good mate named Bob Butts who helped in the business and was considered a top body customiser. Around the late 1980's Butts decided to recreate the original 1955 Lincoln Futura Concept car with a fibreglass body. To do this he was able to re-mould the Batmobile body into the template for the Lincoln Futura and finish off the body to original appearance. So it became the *'Batmobile in reverse'*. The replica was painted a similar red to the original Futura when it was used in the movie *'It Started With A Kiss.'* The original Batmobile in reverse Lincoln Futura, having spent time on the show circuit before storage and deterioration, has been fully restored and now sits in a museum in the U.S. *Terry.*

----Catalina redux ----

Nearly two years after our first visit, on Sunday 15th June we returned to Beresfield to see how they were progressing on the Catalina PBV-5A.

The plane was built in 1943 for the US Navy. Post war it was used by a mining company in Puerto Rico, and was no longer in use when purchased in 2013. The aircraft is being returned to WWII specs, with the addition of side waist blisters, a bow turret, and a tunnel gun hatch.



Left image shows the modification being made to the front to install the bow turret. The right image shows where the main wing attaches.



In the left image we have an original engine, and one that is nearly fully restored. The right image shows the reskinned center wing, with all its riveting completed



Above is the end wing with the outside skinned removed. They must repair all the corrosion inside, before reattaching the outer skin. Below, the back section is completed and has been painted in grey.



This visit we got a more detailed presentation with slide show. There were some good aerial shots of the original Rathmines base, where the Catalina's were based during the war. The restoration is now under the governance of the Air Force, and it will eventually be displayed at Fighter World at Williamstown. They are up over 30,000 hours of work so far. *Dave S.*

----Tomica Packaging and Books ----

Tomica is a Japanese brand of model cars released through the Takara Tomy Corporation. They generally focus on JDM (Japanese Domestic Market) cars, but also do cars made by overseas companies. The models are realistic replicas, and they always have the scale of the model printed on the box.

Tomica model cars were first released in Japan in 1970, and there were six models in the original lineup. They were in little boxes like the original Matchbox superfast models. And they were made locally in Japan.



By 1974 the lineup had grown to 100 models, but still with all of them being Japanese cars. In 1976 they started to introduce non-Japanese cars in the lineup with 'F' numbers (*see pic above*). The boxes still had all the writing on them in Japanese. By 1980 the lineup had expanded to 80 Japanese cars plus 70 foreign ones.

The first time I came across them was in Kmart in 1983 on blister packs for about a \$1. These were released for the overseas market, and often were unique colours that had not been sold in Japan. The main colour on the card could vary. I've have seen yellow, orange, and blue cards. Apparently the red card version (on the right) could be Australian exclusive.



The first time I came across the boxed models was in Sheriffs in Angel Place in 1986. They were \$5 which was a lot more expensive than blister pack versions. But obviously they had a much larger range.

In 1984 Tomica introduced white/red boxes, and for the first time with the model name in English as well. By 1988 they had decided that 120 cars was the ideal number for the range. The 'F' code was also dropped. Below shows the front and rear of that style box.



Then in 1996 they suddenly reappeared on a blister cars in Kmart for \$1. It was a square card that folded out to show inside all 24 models they were releasing. All of these were recolours of existing castings, with number T1 to T24. Below shows the front and rear of this card. I'm sure white/red boxes were available all this time, but you could only find them at specialist model car shops.



In 1994 production was moved to China. A lot of model cars were made there as they were still a developing nation at that time. Finally in 2008 production was moved to Vietnam because of the cheaper costs. It remains there to this day.

Branching out in 2001 they released the 'Tomica Limited' range which was more upmarket (and expensive). In 2015 this was superseded by the 'Premium' range in black boxes (left side), which cost about \$20. In 2004 they started the 'Limited Vintage' range which concentrated more on cars from the 1950s (right side), costing around \$40.



Without warning some Tomica models appeared at BigW in 2020. They were all recent releases and were priced at \$7. These were the international format, not what Japan gets. They contained the car outside the box, plus the box, all enclosed in a blister (*see below*). Japanese releases are still just the white/red boxes, with the car hidden inside.



Currently Tomica releases about two standard models every month. Most also have a first release colour which is only available for a limited time. I can still purchase the standard red/white boxes for less than \$10 at stores online. Unfortunately there's just a gradual decrease in the number of retail stores selling models in general. And the big chains seem to be only interested in Hot Wheels cars.



And now to the books, and a word of warning. All reference books on Tomica are for the local Japanese market. Thus unless you are fluent in Japanese that's going to be a problem. To solve this I simply take a photo of the writing and then use Google Translate to transfer it into English. This works perfectly 'most' of the time.

On the previous page are two interesting reference guides. Ultimate Collection 1970-2020 was released for the 50th Anniversary of Tomica. It covers all the standard 1-120 range, plus Long Tomica models. It is arranged in years and shows the standard colours. The pictures are great and it shows a photo of the outside box as well. But it does not contain information on store exclusive or set releases. The book on the right covers the Limited Vintage range from 2004 to 2018. It's grouped under car models, so the information is a bit more scattered through the guide. For example all the 'Nissan Skyline' models are grouped together.



The books I would suggest are the four books recently released by Takuro Morinaga. He owned the B-Museum in Tokyo, and has a collection of 13,000 Tomica models, believed to be the largest in the world. The books contain about 11,000 pictures in total. They show pictures of all the variations, albeit at a small size in some cases.

But the way the books were created one at a time over a period of four years, can make it hard locate all the releases of a casting. I'll give an example of the Toyota 2000GT. In Volume 1 it's under 'early models'. In Volume 2 it's under, 'police', 'fire', 'others', characters' and 'domestic cars Toyota'. In Volume 4 it shows the latest releases under 'Toyota part 2'. The index at the end comes in very handy.

None of these books are cheap, and they are becoming increasingly hard to find. You either need to find a Japanese store that will send them to Australia for reasonable postage, or try your luck on ebay. *Dave S.*