

# AN ALMOST FREEDOM FROM LOCKDOWN IN NSW SPECIAL EDITION GEARBOX

*\*\* A few more Gearbox articles & pics from the past \*\**

## HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB

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*Two examples of some of the great displays by H/MAC members over the years.*



**Above - 'Our Town Model Show' 2011**



**Above - 'Crazy about Chrome' Cessnock 2016.**

*Again, like the above pics, I have gone back in time to select a few old Gearbox articles to throw in with a couple of new ones to celebrate your 'NEARLY' freedom from lockdown. In looking at the story on the launch of Ford's XK Falcon in Australia, it is hard to believe that it was over 60 years ago and the start of a great local auto manufacturing dynasty. The shame of it all is that Ford no longer manufacture any vehicles in Australia today.*

*At the end of this edition there are some pics from our display at the Maitland Truck show in 2015. That year the rooms allocated to us had a large number of glass display setups, so it worked out well. Another great H/MAC day.*

## ~THE 1956 - 1957 DUAL-GHIA CONVERTIBLE~

Detroit's Motor City V8 power, Italian styling and Hollywood pizzazz.



Recently, [mid 2021] the Worldwide Auctioneers Company advertised a *dark blue 1957 Dual-Ghia convertible* coming up for auction. It is supposed to be the model Frank Sinatra bought for Ava Gardner. *See next pic.* It was described as having a 315 cubic inch [5.16 litre] V8 Chrysler V8 engine that produced 230 horsepower. [Roughly 172Kw] The engine was fitted with dual four-barrel carburetors and came with a Torqueflite three-speed automatic gearbox, limited slip differential, power steering and power brakes.

I had read about this vehicle before, but never knew about its association with the Hollywood elite till mentioned in the story on the vehicle being auctioned. So, I decided to check it out for the Gearbox.



To start with, where did the name 'Dual' fit in? Eugene Casaroll was a man endowed with the gift of far-sightedness and plenty of get up and go. He entered the U.S.A. motor vehicle delivery business and started up his company, *Auto Shippers* and was almost solely responsible for the modern car carrier lorries. He also developed heavy duty military vehicles in World War 2 powered by twin engines, one at the front and one at the rear and so that business became the *Dual Motors Corporation*.

Not long after the war finished, Virgil Exner had finally established himself as a very competent auto designer but had issues with a lack of support from his superiors, especially Raymond Loewy, when he worked for him at Studebaker. Interestingly, in 1949 and with an introduction from Studebaker's own Vice-President of design, Roy Cole, Exner commenced working for Chrysler at their advanced styling studios.

Under Exner's direction and additional design input from the Italian coachbuilder, Carrozzeria Ghia's new owner, Luigi Segre, the Dodge Division produced a number of concept cars in the mid-50's. The problem with concept cars was that most were built for show only and were later destroyed. Dodge produced four different *Dodge Firearrow* concept cars that were designed by Exner and engineered by Carrozzeria Ghia, however these were to be finished off almost to the point of being road legal. Though the Firearrows were exhibited across America to wide acclaim, they never made it to production and mainly due to the fact that production costs would be too exorbitant.

Eugene Casaroll had seen an early Firearrow concept car at a Motor Show in 1953 and noting the sensation it caused, started to think about becoming involved in the production of special hand-made luxury sports cars.

Casaroll's Dual Motors Corporation would be the company to invest in his project. He secured the rights to the Virgil Exner concept car designs and negotiated a deal with Dodge to supply the chassis and drivetrain components for the vehicle which would be shipped to Ghia in Turin, Italy. He had formed a partnership with Carrozzeria Ghia through their U.S. representative, Paul Farago, whereby Ghia would then supply the bodies and interior. The vehicle would then be shipped back to Detroit for engine installation and finishing off at Dual Motors.

Through Farago's oversight, the general body design had small alterations made and was actually enlarged to give a more spacious passenger area as well as a larger boot. One of the notable body style changes made over the original Firearrow, was the addition of small tail fins with a slightly more squared up body style compared to the more rounded original Firearrow concept body lines. As well, the grille area was simplified and had single headlights fitted rather than the dual headlight panels on the Firearrow.

*The next pic* shows up the style of the Dual-Ghia's interior taking account of the fact that each automobile was hand-made and all models produced would therefore be slightly different. *The second pic* shows the tidy appearance of the fins compared to some of the rather large fins that had started to appear on American vehicles at that time. The Dual-Ghia was produced in both a hardtop coupe as well as a convertible.



The finished Dual-Ghia, for its time, was stunning in appearance and very expensive. It cost more than a top-of-the-line Cadillac, but was immediately sought after by Hollywood celebrities and other prominent citizens. The Dual-Ghia generated a touch of Hollywood flamboyance as well-known actors Ronald Reagan, Glenn Ford, Lucille Ball and her husband, Desi Arnez were among the early customers as was Frank Sinatra and his so called 'Rat-Pack' mates. Other owners of a Dual-Ghia included singer Eddie Fisher and then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower.

It is believed that Casaroll made a loss on each Dual-Ghia produced, however, 117 versions left the factory from 1956 till 1958. Perhaps the purchase price started to deter prospective buyers because demand gradually petered out and the Dual-Ghia ceased production. Of the 117 made, it is believed that around 30 odd have survived including the immaculate 1957 convertible up for sale through Worldwide auctions.

In 1958 Casaroll and Ghia commenced a new project and produced a one-off Dual-Ghia prototype which was shelved. Then in 1960, they produced a new model known as the [L6.4](#) and went on to sell 26 versions before that model also ceased production and mainly as a result of high production costs and poor sales figures. *Terry.*

## 1955 LINCOLN INDIANAPOLIS CONCEPT BY CARROZZERIA BOANO, TORINO, ITALY.



**Pictured above** is another 50's 'Dream Car' from Turin, which is in North Western Italy. Can't help but admire these old concept vehicles. **The following black and white photos** were probably taken in 1955 and maybe at the Turin Motor show for which it was intended.



Ford were in trouble, especially vehicle design wise after the marketing failure of the Edsel series. Chevrolet was igniting massive interest in the media and auto shows with their glamorous high class Motorama events as well as the arrival of their 1953 Corvette concept.

The other car makers now decided to go with the Italian styling houses such as the (then) link between Chrysler and Ghia. And so to the **1955 Lincoln Indianapolis concept car**. Perhaps unusual to a degree, the styling was quite fanciful as far as cars that had to be put out there in the 'real world' market. Yet it was both graceful and dazzling as well as in keeping with the styles that auto fans would now see during the 50's, either as a mock up or an 'almost' finished automobile piece of art known as a 'concept.'

This Lincoln concept car was planned only as a styling exercise, yet it arrived back in the USA fitted with a low powered Flat Head V8 and an automatic transmission. This was probably supplied with the Lincoln chassis that went to Italy for use by the coachbuilders in Turin and was just enough to get it around - all two tons of it.

There is also a thought that it did have a more powerful engine installed on its debut in the USA. The Lincoln was built relatively quickly from its initial order to completion and was immediately admired by Ford Executives to the point that Ford extended a contract to Boano.



The concept car was named after the famous Indianapolis race and was painted in a bright orange duco with a black and white interior. A specially designed chrome decoration, incorporating a racing flag and the tag 'Indianapolis' adorns the front mudguards.

**The coloured photos are of the car as it is today in a restored condition.**



It also has a powerful 5.6 litre (341 cubic inch) overhead valve V8 engine under the bonnet with four wheel power assisted drum brakes. The full restoration took over two years to complete

So what do we actually have now? Is it a real car? It weighs in at two tons, only seats two and has no boot storage space. It also has a big V8 engine and only a 20 litre petrol tank. This car is not even suitable as a *'Sunday Drive'* car to be honest, yet it was designed and built only as a Concept or Dream Car and that is exactly what it is, nothing less.

In 2006, the Lincoln Indianapolis Concept car sold at auction for nearly US \$1.4 Million. It made an appearance at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance as well as taking awards at prominent events and auto shows.

In 2013 it went to auction again, yet it was passed in with the highest bid being US\$1.5 Million. *Terry*.

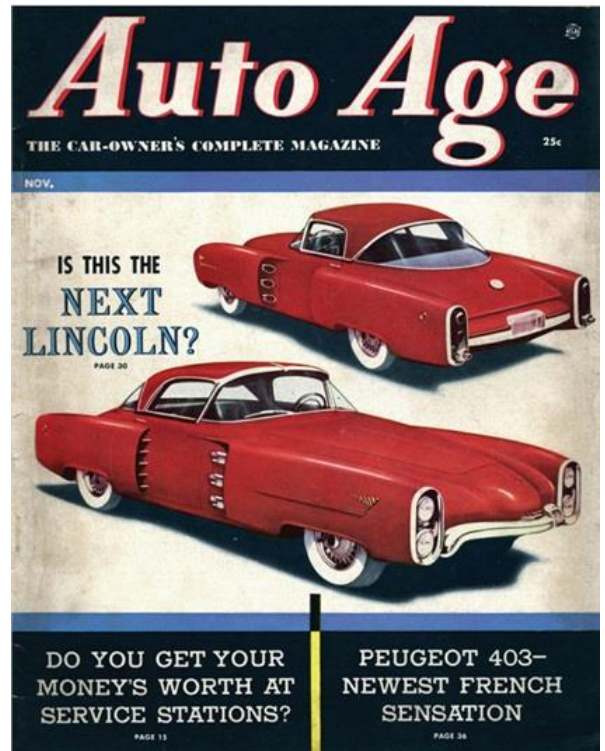


Those triple exhausts appearing from the side are obviously 'fake' with the actual exhaust pipes at the rear. I have to say that they look very nice though.

Apparently the car was conveyed to the United States after the Turin Show and transferred to Henry Ford II. There is a story that he gave it to his friend, the actor Erroll Flynn, though that has never been proved as factual.

In the early 1960's it was damaged in a fire with the interior almost destroyed. It passed through a number of hands and was mostly kept in storage. In the early 2000's it was fully restored to pristine condition with an emphasis on keeping it original to Boano's design. The odd thing was that the instruments and power steering on the original concept car were non-functional and they had to be made fully operational.

One thing I did find out was that some documentation exists that states that the concept car had a four speed automatic gearbox fitted. In 1955 that would not have been available. The car is *now* fitted up with a 4 speed auto box which might explain that story.



*Photo of a 1955 'Auto Age' magazine front cover.*



## **DID YOU KNOW** – *Some more little motor vehicle snippets.*

**GT40** – We all know about the GT40 and the movie 'Ford vs Ferrari' but I just read some interesting snippets about the GT40 I was not aware of. Though it was originally built in England at the Ford Advanced Vehicles facility in the early 60s, the whole testing and production unit was transferred in 1964 to Ford's Kar Kraft facility in the U.S. Besides the many motor sport competition versions that raced to numerous victories over their lifetime, such as the four consecutive Le Mans 24 hour race wins from 1966 to 1969, and four FIA World Sportscar Championships over the same period, I read that there were **forty-two street legal GT40s** produced between 1966 and 1968.

The road-going versions were still a 2-seater mid-engined sports car, but the big difference was that it was powered by a **de-tuned** 289 cubic inch [4.7 litre] V8 engine that produced 335 hp [250 kw] and could hit 100kph in just 5 seconds with a top speed of **only** 160mph or 256 kph. **Good grief!** The lowest power rating of any competition model was 317 kw and the later 7 litre V8 powered Mark IV was rated at 360kw plus. The street legal models were available in both left and right hand drive with an interior and dash fitted instruments that were contemporary to any sports cars of that era, as well as flow through ventilation and the usual centre console with the gear lever. These models also had two storage bins in the rear section of the vehicle. **Veloce Anglo-American Cars** wrote, '*It was impossible to drive the conspicuous Ford GT40 under the radar of most of the public and the Constabulary.*' A bit of an understatement I think. **See next pics of a RHD street legal version.**



**GORDON-KEEBLE GT** – Peerless was a small British automaker started by John Gordon that lasted from 1957 to 1960. The company turned out just over 300 Peerless GT four seater sports cars over that period before folding. For their GT, Peerless had developed a super strong lightweight, truss-like chassis known as a *space-frame* with Triumph TR3 running gear and a nice looking fibreglass body. Gordon and Jim Keeble experimented with dropping a Buick 3.5 litre V8 into the Peerless chassis which was the same motor Rover later used. They then had Bertone design a sleek new all aluminium body for the sports car and, using the same Peerless chassis, dropped in a 4.6 litre Corvette V8 engine with a top speed of 225kph. It was then shown at the 1960 Geneva Motor Show.

It took till 1964 to turn out what was now called the **Gordon-Keeble GT**. It had a fibreglass body instead, and a 5.4 litre Chevrolet V8 engine with four wheel disc brakes and performance wise, it was the equivalent of the then Aston Martin models. Unfortunately, there were supplier problems associated with its manufacturer and as it turned out, it was too expensive. With only 90 odd models sold by 1965, the company went into receivership. **Next pics: Gordon-Keeble GT in 1:43 scale resin by Matrix Models. Terry.**



## Aussie XL Ford Falcon convertible - a genuine Aussie Ford product.



The above pic is a genuine Australian built XL model Ford Falcon convertible. Yes, an authentic Ford product made in Oz. Well, actually a two door retractable hardtop to give it its proper name. I saved the information on this car, but it was that long ago I have forgotten where it came from. Anyway, the Ford Motor Company of Australia apparently had six of these vehicles produced for the 1964 Miss Australia Parade and prepared by a local company called 'Bodycraft.'

They were all fitted with a steel folding retractable roof in order to satisfy the requirements of being used as a 'parade' vehicle. I think Ford chose this to help promote these early model Falcons rather than use an imported Ford convertible which would have been the norm in those days for big parades and the like. You often see old photographs or movie clips of these type of parades with the celebrities sitting in larger imported convertibles such as Ford Galaxies.

From the photos it appears that Bodycraft did a great job and, apparently, it was having the new squared T-bird style 'C' pillar roofline of the XL model sedans that made the conversion viable. *Next pic shows the convertible with top up.*

However, each vehicle actually started life as an XL model Falcon utility. As it turned out, the Aussie made utility had an advantage over the equivalent American Ranchero utility because the Aussie ute had shorter doors, therefore a larger sheet metal area between the rear of the door opening and the start of the wheel arch. This allowed for a stronger sided 'roofless' body shell when the modifications and centre strengthening braces were fitted to the Aussie utility. Unfortunately, there was little proper bracing in the rear section of the body shell and the vehicles flexed quite alarmingly as they were driven along.

Not much information is available on the project other than Lew Bandt, who created the original Aussie Ford coupe utility, was said to have been involved in the project. No doubt the whole idea was planned as a one off project as the vehicles lacked a proper electrical apparatus to operate the retractable roof. In fact they had to be opened and closed manually, a case of a bit of push and shove to get the job done.

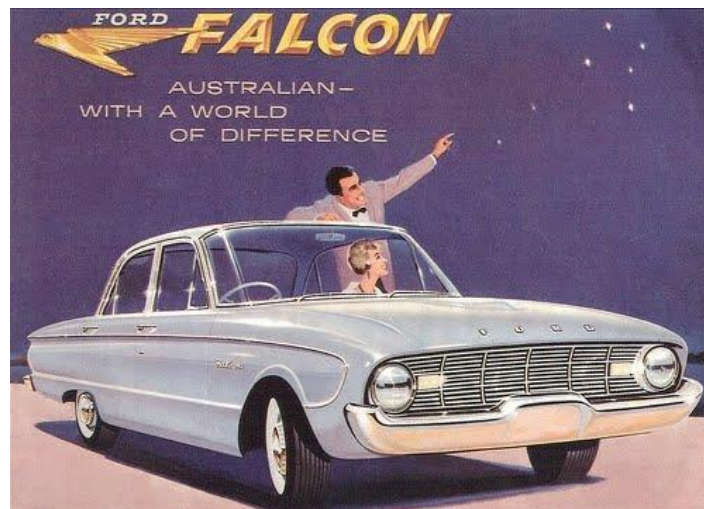
From what I have read about the cars, they were probably destroyed as there have been no sightings of these convertibles since. I suppose that Ford would not have liked to have seen them survive if the story on their structural weakness is correct as they were liable to fall to pieces in due course. *Terry.*



## June 1960 – The first Ford Falcon, the XK, rolled off the assembly line at Broadmeadows.

This old Gearbox article started from one of my books, *'Muscle Car Mania.'* When the magazine was printed, I'd bet that there was no indication that Ford Australia would one day cease local manufacturing. When looking at the lead in photo for the story in their book, I saw in the top left corner the words, 'The Graeme Thorne case.' Their story on the release of the first Falcon states that their lead-in photo was from a front cover of an old Australian 'Pix' Magazine, and it may well be, however, the Graeme Thorne case was probably making the biggest news at the time. So, I found it odd that this particular 'front page' was used as a lead in for the short story on the Falcon's launch in *Muscle Car Mania.*

Anyway, for those of us not born pre-early 50's, the Graeme Thorne case was an extraordinary event for our times then, and definitely shocked the nation. The abduction and ransom demand was a first for Australia and the solving of the case involved brilliant investigative work by the NSW Police CIB as well as classic forensic work. Graeme's father, Basil Thorne, had just won 1st prize of 100,000 pounds [about \$5 million today] in the Opera House lottery. Graeme, his young Son, was subsequently kidnapped and a ransom was demanded even though, as it transpired, he was actually murdered within 24 hours. The offender, having left Australia was eventually arrested in Ceylon [Sri-Lanka] and brought back, convicted and sentenced to life.



**One of many launch ads for the 1960 Falcon.**

Back to the article, though quite short, it was probably a little hard on the first Falcon as it seemed to be a summary of its bad points. Ford's Regional Manager, Max Grandsen, is quoted as saying, *'if you drove over a damn piece of paper the bloody thing would bottom.'* Grandsen, as well as other dealers had just driven the Falcon over a test course at Sydney's St Ives Showground. Their opinions were not very complimentary. The new Falcon's suspension was only suitable for smooth surfaced American Freeways, not our roads. It was also apparent that the Falcon was very much 'underpowered.' Of course, in the fullness of time, all these criticisms would be addressed, especially in the engine department. Here, the iconic 'Pursuit 170' motor would prove a popular choice initially, and it would add extra ammunition to challenge the Holden range more effectively.

Why did I select this story? Besides the story's lead in photo grabbing my attention, I just love the XK and XL Falcons. No one in my family had one, I just liked their shape, so different to the run of the mill makes in Oz at the time. The 'S' and 'R' model Valiant had the same effect on me, a totally different body style that I believe created a new enthusiasm for brand loyalty that has lasted since in this Country. My three Trax XK models are shown below. *'I luv em!' Terry*



**PRETTY AS A PICTURE - BMW 840 Ci - Up for auction.**



The *lead-in pic* is a 1994 BMW 840 Ci I saw advertised on-line up for auction at Bonhams in Oxfordshire England. It is a later V8 powered version of these 8 Series two-door pillarless BMW coupes. It really took my fancy after seeing the photos, and it is a vehicle that if produced in a scale model, I would definitely have tried to purchase. However, the closest I came was a 1:43 scale diecast model of a similar, but squarer looking BMW 6 Series coupe which had a 'B' pillar, so it was not quite as attractive as the later sleeker looking pillarless 8 Series coupes in my view.

The BMW 840Ci was made from 1990 till 1999, a fair run for this style of vehicle, yet the 6 Series BMW that preceded the 8 Series, also had a long run on the market. Against many motoring writer's opinion, BMW claimed that the 8 Series was a new class of vehicle and was not planned as a replacement for the 6 Series.

Bonhams pointed out that the 8 Series was more expensive, but its performance figures had been stepped up immensely. As well, BMW had invested an immense amount of money in its development, being the equivalent of just over One Billion Aussie dollars at the time. This process included Computer-aided Design [CAD] of the body, still innovative for the time, and wind tunnel testing that produced a body style with an extremely low drag coefficient of 0.29 and hence it's slippery looks. Interestingly, the comparable 6 Series coupe was only slightly different in comparison, so BMW designers knew how to get things right even before CAD.



The Auction house also made note of a few interesting facts about the Series 8. Besides being the first road car to have a V12 engine hooked up to a six speed manual gearbox, it was one of the first cars to have electronic drive-by-wire throttle. The 8 Series was heavier than its comparable predecessor due to a higher level of standard equipment, additional body shell strengthening for the full pillarless design, and the weight of a 5 litre V12 engine. However, the extra power of the V12 certainly outweighed any disadvantage due to the extra pounds the coupe had accumulated. The V12 models were available with a four speed auto as well.

In 1993, BMW added a 4 litre V8 model to the 840Ci range and, besides the 6-speed manual, had a 5-speed auto as an option. The only way to distinguish the V8 from the V12 is that the V8 had quad round exhaust tips compared to quad square tips on the V12 models. Bonhams estimated that the hammer would fall between 16 to 21 thousand British Pounds and, in their description, made the comment that these BMW 8 Series models still had the ability to turn heads. Yes indeed! *Terry.*

[\[On August 16, 2021, it sold for 14,500 British Pounds. TP\]](#)

**2015 Maitland Truck Show – A few pics of the HMAC Club members displays.**





