

The Leyland P76 Nationals – Geelong 2008 By Damien Haas



In every Leyland owners life there comes a special time when he must abandon normal life and set out on a trek, a dangerous journey, a perilous crusade to that one place he is accepted as normal THE P76 NATIONALS!!! This year it was hosted in Geelong by the Victorian Leyland P76 Owners Club, over the Easter long weekend.

I had decided I would take my Bitter Apricot 4 speed V8 Super to the nationals this year, as my black car is undergoing a restoration. Naturally in the days leading up to leaving for the nationals, all sorts of problems appeared.

- The custom wheels arrived, and didn't fit.
- Replacement wheels ordered 4 days before leaving for Geelong.
- The tyre fitters tore two tyres (and didn't say anything, hoping I wouldn't find out)
- The 1988 fuel that was in the bottom of the tank turned to jelly.
- Water in the cabin traced to a leaking heater hose.

So I was sort of busy. The saga of the wheels is covered elsewhere, but let me say that on Tuesday my day went like this:

07:30 Car dropped off at mechanics
12:00 Leave work, collect car.
15:00 Jax Quickfit advise wheels have arrived.
15:30 Arrive in Fyshwick for wheel/tyre fitting.
16:30 Fill car with fuel for early getaway.
17:00 Collapse

On the road.

I decided to leave for Geelong on Wednesday and spend a day in Melbourne with family and friends and then drive to Geelong early on Good Friday. I am glad to say the drive to Melbourne was trouble free. The car ran like a dream. I stopped several times to check fluid levels, tyre pressures etc. No troubles experienced at all.

With the new wheels fitted, the car certainly attracted attention from people when I was filling up at highway servos. I must admit, I do like the new wheels and tyres.



They are American Racing 'Torq thrust D's in 15x7. The wheels are zero offset, the rim is polished aluminium and the centre is grey. It has the period muscle look, I've got a photo of a racing Falcon of the era with the same wheels fitted. The tyres are Firestone Firehawks in 215/60/15. The tyres that came off the car were 70 series so with a 'plus one' wheel upgrade, a 60 series tyre retains the same outside diameter and doesn't require fiddling with speedos. Because of the zero offset, the wheels sit

approximately an inch wider than the normal P76 wheel track. Combined with the wider rubber, the wheels certainly sit nicely in the wheel arches.

Apart from a few stops to stretch my leg and curse Leyland for not having cruise control as a factory option, the trip was completed in about 8 hours. I'm still getting used to a manual gearbox, but at least I'm not grinding and hopping away in first gear anymore.

Good Friday

I polished the car the night before (no exciting nightlife for me) and drove from Bundoora, onto the ring road, and then onto the Princes Highway to Geelong. I arrived in Geelong 70 minutes later. The directions to the caravan park were pretty clear and I didn't get lost on the way. Upon my arrival I saw David Lee's car.



So I know he was in Geelong for the Nationals. The really bizarre thing is – I never saw him once more over the whole weekend. I didn't see him at any of the events or the show and shine. I was looking for his car especially, as I wanted a photo for my 'colour photo of the boot of every colour P76' collection. So David, please tell me what happened. Where did you go?

After checking into the caravan park I arrived at my 'spa cabin' which was like a large shipping container, with a Spartan interior and a few room sectioned off. One of the rooms had a spa in it. If I wanted to party with some hairy backed Geelong sheilas, this was the place for it. All I had to do was lay in some vodka cruisers. I unpacked my Gladstone bag and went for a wander. First I formally checked in with Rachel Jones at the front cabin, where the haggard looking Victorian Owners Club people had setup their office. I procured a few stubby holders – in Bitter Apricot – and one in

Corinthian Blue. I also bought a spare cap. These items may or may not be for sale at the next club meeting. I ordered a few extra copies of the national magazine which are to be mailed to me. These I shall also bring to the next meeting and exchange for cash or parts. I really really wanted a bright orange Nationals cap – not for sale alas.



Now I was starting to see the noses and tails of P76's poking out from between cabins. I could hear burbling 4.4 litre V8's as they circled the caravan park, missing by inches, despite careful aim, a rotund cameraman. I came across a dead Leyland, its bonnet raised, with a cluster of helpful advice offerers crowded around. It was a Crystal White six cylinder that had expired on the way to Geelong and had been towed into the park. The owner and David Walker were actually in the engine bay when I arrived, took my furtive photograph and carefully backed away before my lack of mechanical knowledge was exposed. Actually, I left because someone told me the caravan owner had a collection of American 60's convertibles in a shed.



These cars were simply amazing, and they are all in excellent condition, complete and registered. Why didn't Lord Stokes sign off on a Leyland P76 convertible? As I

wandered around I ran into folks from nationals past, including James Mentiplay (solo this year, his Dad and brother didn't make it across), Neville Humphreys, Adrian Spencer, John Beattie, Jason Birmingham, Nick Kounelis, the Kiwis and numerous others. I also met people, like John Ernst, that I'd only known via email.

The Victorian Club had produced an agenda and largely it ran to schedule over the weekend, however due to people wanting to leave on Sunday it was decided by a popular uprising to move the delegates meeting to Sunday, with a pre-delegates meeting delegates meeting to be held on Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock. At 3.30 the meeting began and a list of topics to discuss was discussed. If you have been to the previous nationals, the same topics were raised.

Political speech.

I cannot see the point of a national delegates meeting. Nothing in our clubs constitution says anything about another club having any say over our club. The delegates to the delegates meeting are unelected, unappointed and have no capacity to carry demands to or from the national delegates meeting. Apart from being a forum to discuss inter club issues, I am not sure what purpose a national delegates meeting has. Even if there was a purpose, I think it should be arranged more formally with each club electing a delegate and any motions for discussion tabled on an agenda prepared well in advance of the nationals. Even then I would need a really good argument postulated which would convince me to attend another delegates meeting except out of politeness to the club organising the nationals.

My motion is – scrap delegates meetings.

After the pre-delegates meeting delegates meeting was concluded, we had 'free time' until 7.30pm when dinner would be served and a viewing of P76 videos and movies would take place in the BBQ area of the park. The videos were interesting, of various clubs and cars going back to the 1980's, a few 'current affairs' and 'today show' type reports on the wacky P76 and their owners. The best one was a totally objective road test for the Clive Robertson late night news show from the late 1980's. The car acquitted itself well and the road tester was impressed. Refreshingly the foolish and oft-repeated myths that have blighted our beloved vehicles since the effective propaganda campaign of the early 70's were absent. This clip should be uploaded to Youtube for the world to see.

At 9.30PM the pre-ordered fish and chip meals arrived, the Victorian club were pretty embarrassed. Apparently the fish and chip shop they had arranged to do the orders, kept putting customer in the shop orders ahead of the 45 club orders. I suspect pre-paying the shop might have been a factor here. Although irritating, it didn't really mar the evening as people were drinking heavily. Well, I was. One of the SA club members' children, a young lad around 3 or 4 certainly recognises that a P76 is different from other cars. When the assorted video clips were being played he would shriek with excitement and point at the screen whenever a P76 appeared. Other cars elicited no such pleasure. After a few hours sitting out in the cold, numbed by rum

and warmed by a late evening meal of fried ocean delights I decided the lures of a heated spa were more appealing and headed back to the cabin, alone sadly, with no hairy backed Geelong sheilas to scrub my back.

Saturday

The day started in fine form with a chicken and champagne breakfast. This arrived on time. As I walked to the BBQ area I saw Rod Warwick working on his car. Sadly his single rail 4 speed had suffered a detached gear stick. Having suffered from this myself some months earlier, I commiserated.



This was all to do with some bushing in some part of the gearbox where some rod connects to something. Apparently my gearbox is about to suffer the same fate. The Motor Gnome knows how to fix this and has promised to email me the part number for the magical part which will solve my 'porridge stirring' shift experience.

Not a good thing to see near your car!

Rod and RACV guy

The RACV guy also knew how to fix the problem, but for some reason didn't carry single rail Borg Warner gearbox parts in his yellow truck. Rod did manage to track down the right parts, common to Ford and Chrysler supplied 4 speed Borg Warner boxes and went and obtained them later that day. He did manage to get the car mobile before the show and shine, however on the way through Geelong the car got stuck in first gear and he made the last few kilometres on first and a smoking clutch.

The Show and Shine

The previous Saturday I had used two cans of Turtle Wax number two to polish my car. This was the first real clean it had received since it was garaged in 1990. I had washed it before the Jugiong run, and tyre blacked the 70's tyres, but hadn't tackled the paint. I was planning on getting the car to the Old parliament House show until the blocked fuel filter issue derailed my plans. In any case, once polished, I liked the shiny look and had carefully picked leaves off it and cursed shitting birds since the weekend. After breakfast, I went back to the luxury spa cabin and went over the car with this magical micro fibre mitt. It works I swear, a shine without having to wash the car or reapply wax or potions. I started the car and motored away, following the Victorian Club car with that big flagpole on the towbar. I figured if they didn't know

where they were going, then we were all in trouble. The trip through Geelong CBD went off without a hitch. I was paranoid about my gearstick coming off in my hand ala Rod Warwick. I was about car 10 to arrive. Marcus Kneebone, Victorian Club Traffic Cop, directed the cars to their positions, arranging cars in a parallel formation and trying not to have two cars of the same colour next to each other. It took about 30 minutes for all the cars to arrive and be placed as desired. No collisions occurred.

*My car,
just
after
arriving*



More cars arriving in convoy from the caravan park

I decided not to enter my car in any of the judging categories and just wandered around for the next few hours looking at the different cars and getting ideas for my black car restoration. I still couldn't locate David Lee.



It was a beautiful day on the harbour – Leylands, Leylands everywhere!



'Experimental' Six cylinder

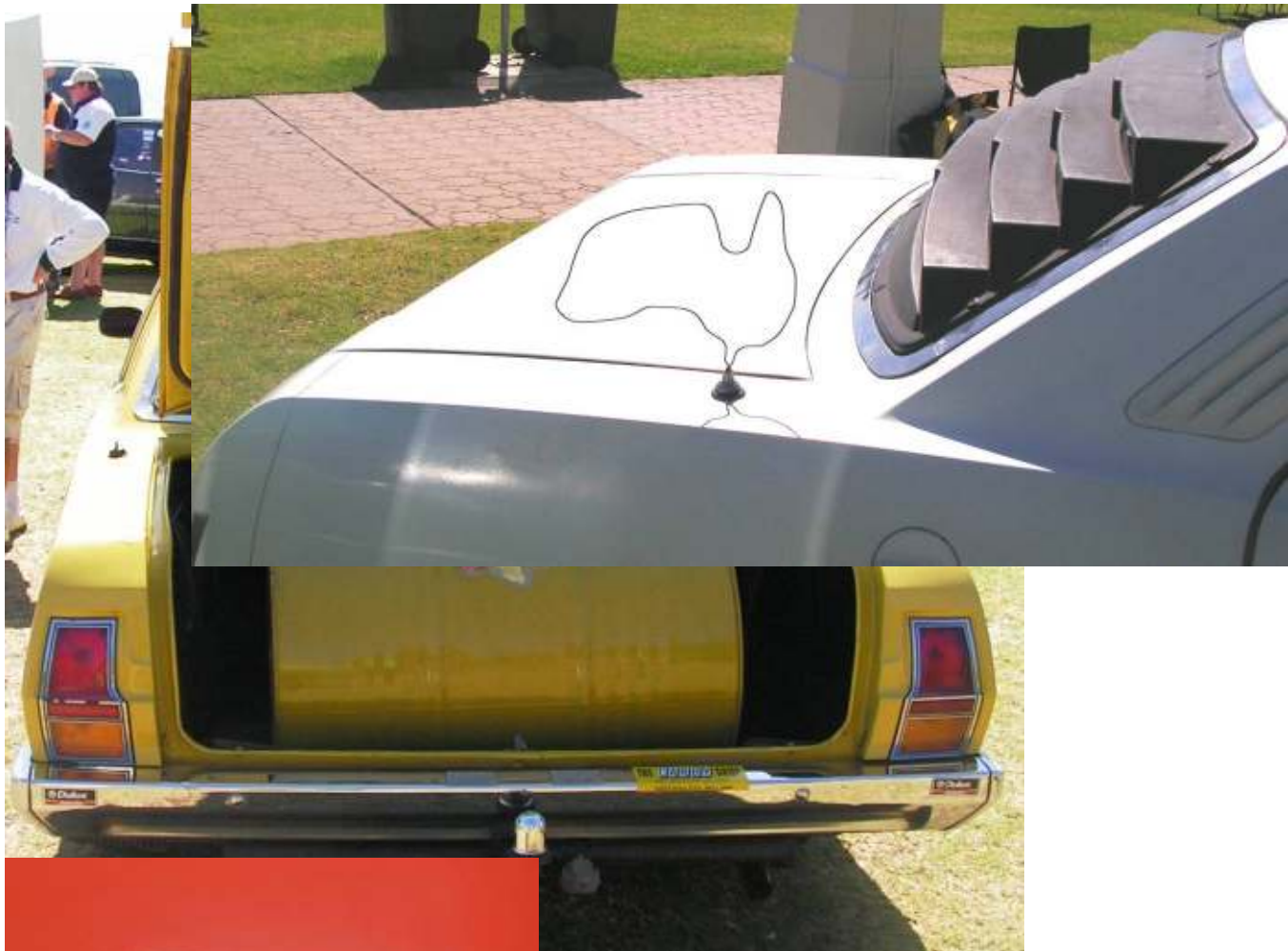


*Rear of pre-production Targa Rim
James Mentiplay obsessively collecting P76 details*



Motor Gnome and Elf







*Marina Six in Bitter Apricot
Marina Six engine bay*



Rick Percevals, Six Cylinder Kimberly Engine Bay



Ford Discovery Centre

After the show and shine finished quite a few people went to the Ford Discovery centre where discounted admission and a tour had been arranged. I think I'm pretty well informed on Ford history and after 15 minutes I hadn't heard anything I didn't know, so I wandered off. I was impressed by the cars on display, including a Bathurst winning Falcon Coupe and prototype cars, but I found the 'design studio' display to be the most interesting part. Especially the design sketches pinned to the wall.



I took a heap of photos at the Ford Discovery centre, but as this is a P76 publication, I won't distress people and include any more photos of Fords in this article.

Smorgy's on a Saturday.

The event planned for Saturday evening was dinner at Smorgy's a glutton's delight. I decided to use this time to visit friends and family in the Geelong area. At the Smorgy's dinner the people's choice award was announced. This went to Jason Birmingham for his Hairy Lime V8 Executive.

Parts Swaptacular at Lara

On Sunday morning we awoke to the delicate aroma of sewage rising from the Barwon River, and then the collective drove through Geelong and out to Lara a small town on the outskirts of Geelong, where Martyn Hayes, a Victorian club member

lives. He has a shed which is large and houses several P76's undergoing restoration. This was the venue for the swap meet parts bonanza.



I was absolutely gob smacked when I arrived and saw the parts tables so wondrously stacked with desirable morsels. There was a five dollar table, a ten dollar table, boxes of parts at two dollars each, boxes of tested and working instruments of all varieties at very reasonable prices. I made several trips and came away with almost all the parts I need to finish off the Aspen Green Executive in my garage, and the Black car.



Presidents hard at work

Stylish

Neville Humphries scurrying away with TREASURES! More parts trading



non-factory bumper overrides



The Victorian Club exceeded expectations at this event and after drooling over parts, a brunch was served for hungry parts purchasers. The day before the Motor Gnome had told me my upper radiator hose was about to explode. As an exploding coolant hose is unlikely to occur on my car, I hadn't yet

changed the old hose over, I looked for a NOS hose, but none were available. Martyn Hayes went and found a good condition (it looks new to me) second hand one from his personal stash. That's excellent service.

Sunday Arvo

Most of the attendees then went off on a tour the countryside observation run. I instead went and visited some friends in Geelong. On my way back I saw Jason Birmingham hitchhiking and gave him a lift.



Jason firmly strapped in.



Posing on his car after winning 'Peoples Choice'

Jason coming out to check on his car

Jason checking his tyres air pressure



The Nationals Dinner

On Sunday night the merry travellers dined in style at the Belmont RSL Club. It was a good choice of venue. I sat with Jason Birmingham and his son Kyle, Nick Kounelis, Mick Le Coq and Neville Humphreys. We got stuck into the grog pretty quickly. Kyle got all hopped up on Red Bulls. I'd hate to spend 12 hours in a car with that kid – more energy than a wind farm.



Victorian Club members: unknown, John Beattie and John Ernst Setting up the prize table



Kyle, Jason, Nick and Mick. Neville was at the bar, as usual. The booty!

The food was excellent and the prizes for the cars were awarded to the winners and runners up. After the awards, the auction was held. Probably the prize item was model number 76 of the Force 7 models the NSW Club had arranged to be made. Bidding was furious on this and if I recall correctly it sold for over 150 dollars. The deep pocketed Motor Gnome and Nick Kounelis also bid manically for these very high quality laser cut steel cut-outs of Leyland P76's and a Force 7. I bid successfully on a bottle of memorial P-Port from the '1990 Ballina get together'.

On the back it says:

Our table 'The Hairy Limers' did well in the trivia competition. The first part was car company emblems; I knew 99 percent of these. The second part was 70's and P76 trivia. We thought we were doomed when the answers were read out as we got about 30% of our answers wrong, but other tables must have been even stupider than us because we won! I think we aced the car emblems. Our prize was 12 bottles of wine and champagne – with cool 2008 nationals stickers fixed to them. Motor Gnome came out a winner on this again as the Elf is too young to drink, so he actually picked up 4 bottles! I'm going to hang onto mine as some idiot paid 65 dollars for a bottle of P76 club branded Port from 1990 at the auction earlier on.

2006 Geelong Nationals Concourse Prize Winners



Best L6 (First Place)

Martyn & Silvia Hayes



Best L6 (Runner-up)

John Ernst



Best Original (First Place)

John & Linda Seattle



Best Original (Runner-up)

Norman & Maree Julian



Best Experimental

Scott Reynolds



Best Non-P76

Rick Perceval



Best Modified (First Place)

Greg Vannieris



Best Modified (Runner-up)

Jason Birmingham



People's Choice

Jason Birmingham



Presidents Choice

Graeme Beck



Best VB (First Place)

Nick Kounelic



Best VB (Runner-up)

Denise Mott & Gregory Bryant

As I was planning to make a getaway fairly early, I left the dinner before most of the others. One thing I noticed when I arrived was that the carpark markings in the RSL are more Leyland Mini sized than Leyland P76 sized. I was careful not to scratch the door of the car next to me when I climbed in to my car. I'm not sure how Nick and Jason managed to carry all their loot out of the RSL.

Back To Canberra

6.30AM on Easter Monday I crawled out of bed, showered, ate my fruit loops, packed my Gladstone bag and left the snoring metropolis of Geelong. I noticed that the Victorian Club members were up. They'd been printing the National Magazine all night – I picked up a copy (with others for club members to be mailed). They had included the Concourse winners and a wrap-up of the weekend – a good idea but logistically challenging. Out on the Princes Highway I refuelled and then set off for the Melbourne Ring Road and then the Hume. Despite Motor Gnomes gloomy prognostication, the car made it back to Canberra trouble free and without blowing another hose. This concludes my report – enjoy the extra photos.









