

Leylines 84

Canberra and Districts Leyland P76 Club Newsletter June 2010

Next Meeting: Tuesday 1 June
Weston Creek Labor Club
From 7.30PM

Photo ©Damien Haas



Editor's Note



It's a bumper issue this month. Damo has supplied a terrific and detailed article on the world of the P76 model. Those of us who have the magazine from the 2010 Nationals will have read the story already. However, for production reasons the article as published in the National magazine was in black and white, and a large number of photos that illustrated the text did not appear. So Damo was keen to get the full picture out there, and what better way than through Leylines.

Damo's item is quite long, so I'll be publishing it over the next two or three issues, depending on the content and space available. He's put a great deal of painstaking research into it. Read and enjoy.

Bryce has been wandering westward, and found a car museum that doesn't have a P76 in it, so he's provided a story about that. No P76 perhaps, but still a good collection of cars if you happen to go out Forbes way. Thanks Bryce.

I spent some time in Yackandandah in the past month, inspecting the latest addition to the grandchild fleet. Yet another granddaughter, making seven in all would you believe, but there's nowt wrong with that! So I've only had the P76 out of the garage on one occasion for a run. But on that occasion I was using it as a photographic model. As most of you know, one of my hobbies is writing for Australian Classic Car magazine. Some months ago the editor asked for a story on a P76 for the July issue, but specified that it could not be white or beige! The likely reason is that light coloured cars lack impact on the printed page. They are also difficult to photograph well, particularly with digital cameras which are very susceptible to 'blowing out' highlights on light colours. I suggested JB's pink taxi, but also provided a photo of my Targa as an example of a 'not white or beige' P76. In his wisdom the Ed decided that he wanted a story on the Targa with a smaller 'box out' on the taxi.

OK, so far so good. I wrote up a story on both cars, took some photos of mine and JB provided some pix of his taxi, and submitted it all. But in the interim there has been a change of editor at ACC, and I don't know what the new guy is going to do with the July issue, which is his first. All will be revealed on 16 June, I guess.

See you all on Tuesday.

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Looking at Leyland in 1/43

Damien Haas

PART 1



Introduction

As fans of a car that was produced in one body shape only, and sold for a very limited time, it is sometimes hard to accept that there are people who don't share our passion for the car and its history. For a long time it was impossible to buy a model of our favourite car. In this article, I will look at the history of Leyland P76 models, primarily in the 1:43 scale. Over the years people have commissioned custom models to be built for them but this article focuses on commercial production only, and not one-off models.

Two Australian companies – Dinkum Classic and Trax Australia, have produced the Leyland P76 commercially. There has also been a limited run of resin kits of the Force 7 coupe organised by the Sydney Club and made by a respected model builder. As the same team is working on a Deluxe sedan right now (2009), I will discuss these projects as well. The future for Leyland model collectors is indeed bright.

In this article I look at the two major diecast companies that have produced the Leyland P76 in 1:43 scale. In Part 2, I also look at the various resin models which have also appeared. At the end of the article, I have two interviews – one with Tony Hanna – who designed the model built by Trax, and with Steve Maher, who organised the production

of the resin 1:43 Force 7s and is currently working on the resin P76 Deluxe venture and the P76 Station Wagon project. Steve is also arranging for a very limited run of Code 3 models of the P76 Rallye show car.



Dinkum Classics

It is impossible to talk about quality scale model diecast cars in Australia today without providing a brief history of the first company to really kick start the industry. Dinkum Classics was the first of the modern diecast model car companies to focus on high quality scale model cars that Australians were familiar with. Prior to this, models of Australian cars had been slush cast toys or produced on the rare occasion by Dinky or Matchbox. In the 1980s an ex-race driver and car fanatic called Mike Stack created Dinkum Classics. He had practically no knowledge of making diecast cars and through trial and error, sheer determination and an ability to hire the expertise necessary and learn from his mistakes built a successful business producing high quality Australian scale model cars. In doing so, he created a new market.

Mike Stack not only selected the cars, designed the models and supervised the production; he also built from scratch the machines required to produce limited runs of diecast model cars in Australia. At the peak of Dinkum Classics' success, they had a factory in Sydney employing ten or so people, hand building and assembling a diverse range of cars. Often the runs of particular models were limited to 99, but occasionally they would not reach that number, making some particularly rare. I have heard that some runs, advertised and certified as limited to 99 examples, only had ten produced.

Eventually Mike Stack became quite ill and he stepped back from day to day operations. First the business morphed into Auswide Models, run by his ex-business partner using the Dinkum diecast moulds. This then morphed into an association called Dinkum Paradise. This then became Paradise Garage, which also sold imported Chinese made cars. Then the entire venture collapsed.

The end was tragic. In the early 2000s a fire broke out in the factory where the moulds were stored and all of them were destroyed. This put an end to Dinkums/Paradise Garages ability to produce more diecast cars, but its legacy is assured. If it was not for the success of Dinkum Classics and Mike Stack's drive to produce the cars he liked, the large diecast model car market in Australia to day would not exist and we would still be buying whatever Corgi, Dinky and Ertl imported to sell us.

The last Dinkum Classics car to be built was the 1/24 Mad Max Interceptor which was produced in very low quantities and is quite sought after today. Not only was this the last car built by Dinkum Classics, but it was also the last diecast car to be built in Australia. The diecast cars we buy today are all built in high-tech factories in China, based on designs supplied from Australian model companies. The legacy of Dinkum Classics should not be forgotten quickly.

Let us look at the Dinkum Classics' Leyland P76. The first diecast Leyland P76 appeared in the early 1990s, produced in very limited numbers in a broad range of colours, none of them official factory colours. Exact numbers are not known and it is not known how many different colours the cars appeared in either. The late Michael Livingstone assembled the most complete collection of Dinkum P76s I am aware of. I have only seen one Dinkum Classic Leyland P76 he didn't have, and I'm not sure whether that one is a Code 3 or a genuine Dinkum Leyland P76.



The cars seen in this photo show the late Michael Livingstone's Dinkum Classic Leyland P76 Collection. The colours are:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Gloss Black | 2 Metallic Brown |
| 3 Metallic Bronze | 4 Metallic Gunmetal |
| 5 Metallic Dark Blue | 6 White |
| 7 Metallic Champagne | 8 Bright Red |
| 9 Bright Green | 10 Metallic Green |
| 11 Candy Apple Red | 12 Metallic Light Blue |
| 13 Yellow | 14 White Police |



Reviewing the Dinkum Classic Leyland P76 Sedan

The actual model itself is heavy in the hand. It is definitely heavier than a modern Biente or Trax, probably due to more metal being used in Dinkums. They were known to even have diecast metal interiors on the early cars. The car itself is definitely a P76, but it is a little out of proportion and the scale is not 1:43. It is more likely to be closer to 1:38.

The doors are too short and 'deep' although without the black paint under the bottom sills, it could be a trick of the eye.

Paint is uniformly excellent on every example I have seen. Despite non-factory colours being used, broadly the main rainbow of colours is present. I do not know what the release schedule of Dinkum was with the P76, but no doubt the less popular colours were released first and more popular and eye-catching colours last. That is industry standard practice. Along with not using factory colours, Dinkum didn't follow Leyland's practice of painting the lower sills black, exaggerating the lines of the car. Dinkum did paint blackouts around the window, which is non-factory, but a common application by people customising their own cars.



External detail is not great. There are no badges or even a grille emblem. The boot lid is bare. The door handles are painted with small silver dots, and there is a facsimile of chrome moulding along the car's sides, although on one of mine that decal is now coming adrift and losing its adhesion.



The wheels are definitely non-factory, and not to scale. When you flip the car upside down, you can see that Dinkum used what look like slot car wheels on the Leyland P76. They are really wide. They are not to scale in any sense. The wheel centres while simulating Targa Florio mags, are simply not accurate, and are caricatures of mag wheels.

The interior is reasonably accurate, although also not represented with factory colours. The detailed photos of the Dinkum P76 in this article feature a bronze car with a black interior.



While these critical observations of the Dinkum P76 might put you off, let me assure you that it is a nice model to have in a collection. It definitely looks like a P76, and considering the tremendous advances in model making technology available today, the Dinkum P76 was a quality article in its day. It is unfair to judge it with a Biante or Trax of today. Unlike the modern mass-produced scale model diecast cars that come out of China, the Dinkums are limited edition Australian-made scale models.



Trax at left, Dinkum on right.

Trax

Trax started in 1986 with a series of FJ Holdens and has branched out to cover most Australian cars made in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Ninety-five per cent of Trax's range is in the 1:43 scale and the Leyland P76 they produce is in that scale. When Trax began, its only real competition in Australian diecast scale models was Dinkum Classics. Now it faces competition from Biante and Classic Carlectables, who both produce '70s and '80s cars, but also churn out V8 Supercar scale models and 1:18 super detailed scale model diecast cars. Trax have produced some cars in 1:24 scale, but none in 1:18.

For the last 15 years, Trax has been owned and run by the former head of Matchbox Australia, Robert Hill, who brought a particularly commercial focus to retailing scale model cars. Under that regime, it was a great surprise when Trax announced that they were going to release a Leyland P76 in 1:43 in 2003. The car when it appeared was strongly received by the Leyland movement, but general sales to other scale model diecast cars collectors were limited. After the brief flurry of sales activity, sales slowed to a trickle – I'm advised less than ten a month. Trax sold less than 20 per cent of the 12,000 P76s in the first 18 months.



It was not a good sign. The Leyland P76 has been touted as Trax's most disastrous and expensive flop. That was due to a few reasons.

1. When Trax began tooling up for the Leyland, the Australian dollar was at its lowest level in modern history. As the cars and tooling are made in China, and the bill paid in US dollars, this made the tooling for the P76 the most expensive Trax had ever made.
2. The tooling could only be used for one model of car (unlike say an XA Falcon casting which can then become an XB and then an XC) so all costs would need to be recouped from that one model's sales.
3. Trax overproduced the model – making 12,000 cars in three colours and dropping it onto the market place in one launch.
4. Trax's own marketing campaign didn't help, playing on old stereotypes of Leyland P76s as lemons and a failure, and the car that sent Leyland broke. Instead of focussing on positive aspects of the Leyland to promote their scale model, they went negative. While this plays to the knuckle dragging Bogan element, it doesn't build a positive sales momentum.
5. The public just wasn't interested. As much as it pains me to admit it, the general scale model buying population really wasn't interested in the Trax P76. If they were, they bought one and that was it. Casual enthusiasts were waiting for the Targa Florio, and weren't buying a base model car.

I believe these are the key factors behind the initial failure of the Trax Leyland P76. Trax's response was interesting. Based on the quantity of stock and sales volume, they estimated it would take 75 years to clear their stock of P76s. They held a fire sale. You could pick up Trax P76s for 20 dollars, and if like me you bought in bulk at the Trax stall at Summernats – you could pick them up for around 10 dollars each.

This helped shift the stock of Leyland P76s. It also put the cars into the collections of people who normally wouldn't have bought them for their collections, but at the bargain price couldn't resist. One of the biggest purchasers of the discounted cars was the Sydney Morning Herald, to use as trophies for their long-running lemon/P76 award. Trax shifted 9000 P76 models in three months – ironically it became their best selling model ever.

Surprisingly, Trax revisited the Leyland P76 in 2005 by releasing the car people were probably expecting the first time around – the Targa Florio in Omega Navy. This time, Trax limited production to 2200 and demand was strong. All 2200 were presold before the cars arrived from China. This led to Trax producing the Targa Florio in Nutmeg Brown in 2007 and then in Aspen Green in 2009. With the Nutmeg Brown Targa Florio release, Trax did not announce it ahead of time, and it simply appeared on Trax's webpage one day. This car also sold out quite quickly. The latest Aspen Green Targa Florio has sold strongly, but as of January 2010 is still available from Trax.



The latest Trax P76 was a Super in Home on th'Orange. This is probably the most attractive of all Trax P76s to date. This car was released in 2009 and is still available from Trax.

Reviewing the Trax Leyland P76

Is the model any good? The answer is yes – it is very good. Until the Opal range of super detailed 1:43 cars (retailing for \$20 more than the standard Trax model) the Leyland P76 was the best looking and most accurate of Trax's cars to date. The car was designed for Trax by Tony Hanna (interviewed for this article), a very experienced freelance model maker, who has been designing cars for Trax and other companies for over twenty years. Joe Green owned the car that was used as a reference for the model. This explains why the car has a Force 7 steering wheel, and not a Leyland steering wheel. All Trax P76s have appeared with this incorrect feature (although I

would say over 50 per cent of club registered P76s actually have Force 7 steering wheels).



The accuracy of the model is high. It looks like a P76 should, and it has good ride height. The interior is reasonably detailed for this scale. The only flaws I could find are that the wheel trim, while accurate, is chromed, as is the dual headlight grille. These were not chromed on the real car. However, it certainly makes the model attractive. All model makers need to take some artistic liberties with a design, as the human eye can play tricks on us when we view objects that we think are familiar. Most people view scale model cars from above and on angles. We look at real cars at level. For this reason most scale model cars are slightly different in certain areas. The Trax P76 is no different, with the windscreen and turret being slightly narrower than the 1:1 car (if scaled up). This is probably the only major inaccuracy with the car.

Paint on all variants produced by Trax has been uniformly good. Detail such as badges and mirrors are accurate and the paint schemes chosen have been factory accurate, using factory colours. The wheels and decals on the Targa Florio were also very accurate.



The baseplate is limited in detail. TRAX have a new range OPAL which features super-detailed 1/43 scale models, and the Leyland P76 will probably never appear in any Australian model company's 1/43 super-detailed range. Unless you tip a Trax Leyland P76 over, this does not matter.

This quality has been reflected with strong interest on the second hand market. No one who has bought a Trax Leyland P76 has lost money. There are always examples for sale on eBay, with \$60 to \$90 being common for a mint example.

Trax Leyland P76 diecast scale models in 1:43

Model	Colour	Price New	Current Value
TR42	Corinthian Blue Super V8	\$37.00	\$65
TR42B	Hairy Lime Super V8	\$37.00	\$65
TR42C	Dry Red Super V8	\$37.00	\$60
TR42D	Omega Navy Targa Florio	\$39.95	\$90
TR42E	Nutmeg Brown Targa Florio	\$39.95	\$85
TR42F	Aspen Green Targa Florio	\$39.95	\$39.95
TR42G	Home on th'Orange Super V8	\$39.95	\$39.95

The future of the Trax P76 is unknown. I expect that Trax will continue to offer recolours of the Super, and they may do some scarce and rumoured Targa Florio variants such as Oceania Green. It is unlikely they will retool and produce a single headlight version. This is the same reason they are unlikely to ever offer a World Cup rally car version, sadly. At least Trax have 11 more factory colours to go!



More about models from Damo next month

LEYLANDS SNUBBED BY NEW MUSEUM

Bryce French

Actually that's the sort of silly sensationalist headline that gets me annoyed when other people write them. I only wrote it to justify putting this in Leylines.

I recently visited McFeeters Motor Museum which opened in Forbes some 18 months ago and found an eclectic collection of vehicles but no P76s. As in any eclectic collection there were a few I thought were crusher ready; a Falcon ute with such a wonderful stereo system that they had to remove the fuel tank and tail shaft to fit it in; a Falcon sedan with the roof cut off with an angle grinder and the doors welded shut to restore structural integrity; and a Honda constructed of stolen parts, but missing those parts they were able to remove between the tip off and the police raid. All very nicely finished but not my taste.

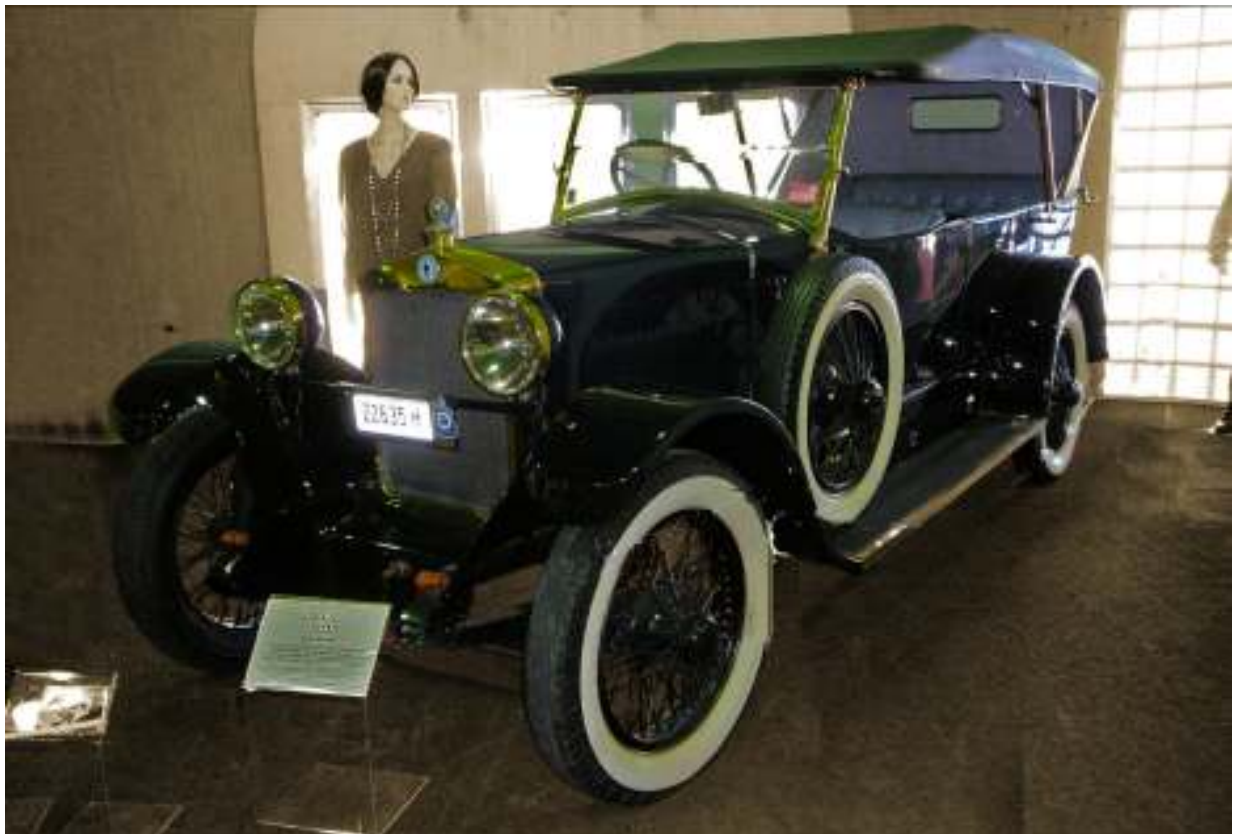
But with some fifty vehicles I found some interest in most of the others. There were also a number of model cars on display. The museum has a reasonable and reasonably priced cafe and cellar door sales.



Bugattis, Mercedes, Fords and reflections on a small scale



This 1916 Buick had excellent engine access, note the exposed pushrods and rockers and the small oil reservoirs on top of the engine. I gather the oil can on the bulkhead is not a standard fitting and the engine was terrible to clean up if used in dusty conditions. A 1923 Berliet restored by the museum at a cost of some \$200,000. They point out a small defect in the restoration to prove it was all done by hand.





A 1909 Clement Bayard. The models in period costume are to give the ladies something to look at while the men look at the cars.



A 1910 Swift.



A 1923 20 horsepower Rolls Royce with two wheel mechanical brakes, compared with the 1930 Chrysler with four wheel hydraulic brakes. Quite a difference for only seven years apart. The Chrysler also appears a more modern and well developed style.





What does this have to do with motor cars? The Japanese are dying to see this view. It's the interior of a Japanese funeral car. The Museum staff told us it was a pleasant car to drive until someone put a ton and a half of wood on top of it.





The first white Rolls Royce ever made, a 1957 Silver Dawn.



An FJ ute, a Vanguard and a Wolseley 24/80. Apparently the Vanguard is a surprise to many people who remember Vanguards as only the beetle back models. The small vehicle on the right is made from car tyres, proving some people have too much spare time.

An Austin A40 Somerset Convertible from 1953. The colour is not original, but interesting to note the stylists were not comfortable with dispensing with the visual cues of mudguards. A handsome car, even today.



A 1916 Mitchell, fully restored by the Museum in 2008 and may be the only one of its type in the country. Mitchell was a carriage building company from Wisconsin USA.



An A Model Ford which may not be your thing



But if A models are your thing you'll be well pleased.

A 1905 Minerva made in Belgium.



The Minerva has all controls close to hand for the driver (sort of anyway).



For those with the interest to take a trip to Forbes, there are plenty of other vehicles to see. A number of the cars are on loan so the display changes occasionally. If you go in your late model car, and go west of Forbes, be advised that you should cover the grille with fly wire to protect the radiator from locusts. Friends in a Mazda 2 discovered that the locusts can block the radiator easily, but removing them is more difficult because the grille cannot be easily removed. Hosing them off results in them piling up at the bottom of the radiator as the area is sealed and there is nowhere for them to be washed out. Eventually compressed air blew them back out the grille. However while on the radiator, they cooked, and cooked locusts stink!! If they had a Leyland P76, they could have undone four screws, removed the grille and brushed out the locusts.

I thought McFeeters worth the visit, and as I didn't go west of Forbes, had a manageable locust problem.

Contact the Canberra and Districts Leyland P76 Club

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