



**HOLDEN**

## RETIREES' CLUB

We thank Holden for paying the printing and postage costs of this newsletter. We aim to minimise these costs by encouraging receipt of the newsletter by email and by seeking more efficient postage methods.

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**Newsletter No. 99**

**June 2014**

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### **PRESIDENT'S PREVIEW:-**

It's almost breathtaking to find we have now reached the midpoint of 2014, headed toward the winter meeting and our 140<sup>th</sup> luncheon.

As a consequence of there not being a lot to preview, this note is probably a record breaking shortest ever – maybe too much shellshock from all the earth shattering announcements we have received over the past 6 months!

We continue to hear reports, from owners and others, of the fantastic VF Holden. Some of these were Mercedes Benz & BMW drivers, who were 'co-erced' into test driving a VF and, then and there, immediately ordered a VF for themselves. Hopefully the trend grows.

Our guest speaker at the winter luncheon will be Stewart Underwood from South Australia and we thank him for offering us the opportunity to delve deeper into Holden's history. Stewart, a keen veteran Holden's employee of 41 years, has always maintained a great interest in Holden's and GM's history in the Adelaide district and has been involved in running general tours in these areas over the years. I guess, unfortunately, the Elizabeth Plant is almost eligible to join the 'club' of a soon to be historic site!

As our guest speaker and 'tour leader' at the June luncheon, Stewart will take us on a photographic 'tour' of these historic sites. I'm sure most of us will be surprised at some of the facts Stewart will enlighten us on and we look forward to a very interesting presentation.

Stewart's C.V. is available on our website, [www.hrc.org.au](http://www.hrc.org.au).

Happy winter

and cheers,

John,

President.

President.

### **LAST MEETING (Mar, 2014 - Our 139th Lunch – 121 attendees)**

On 06 March, 2014, the meeting of 121 members at the Mulgrave Country Club started at 12:30 with President John Leigh welcoming our members and our guest: Mr. Marc McInnes (our speaker).

<b><u>Deaths notified since our last Newsletter</u></b>
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Dorrie Moore – Dandenong, Bob Harland – Industrial Engineering,
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John Leigh, President  
Graham Anderson, Secretary.

9696 1074  
9885 6067

[president@hrc.org.au](mailto:president@hrc.org.au)  
[secretary@hrc.org.au](mailto:secretary@hrc.org.au)

## NEW MEMBERS since last meeting:-

Harry Gorfine,

We welcome our new member to the Club.

We have occasionally heard from members who would like to come to a meeting but were too infirm to come by themselves. If any members know of others in this situation, or are willing to help out by picking up these members and bringing them to the meeting, Would they please notify a Committee member or send an email to [secretary@hrc.org.au](mailto:secretary@hrc.org.au)? For a list of those currently offering lifts, please see the "Next Meeting" section at the end of the newsletter.

## APOLOGIES

Apologies for the Mar 2014 meeting were:

Allan Watson, Darrell Thomas, Rex Sweson, Brian Griffin, Jon Denning, Don Wealands, Dave Tasker, Brian Williams, Ian Richards, Wolfgang Kotsch, Bruce Naylor, Godfrey Scicluna, Edgar Spencer, George Saaty, Robert Allen, Bruce Arnold,

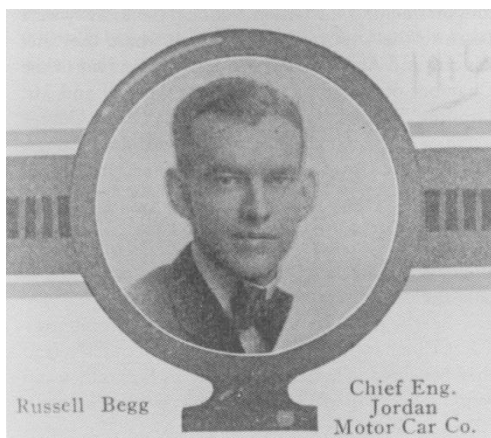
Apologies for the June, 2014 meeting should be sent to the Secretary, [secretary@hrc.org.au](mailto:secretary@hrc.org.au), or 03 9885 6067, **at least a day prior to the meeting**, and they will be recorded on the booking sheets so all can see them. Apologies on the day are difficult to handle reliably, and your committee asks for your support in providing them **before** the day of the meeting. Please don't ask for an apology to be listed permanently.

## GUEST SPEAKER – Mark McInnes



**Marc McInnes** joined GMH in January 1955 as a trainee body draftsman. During 18 years in Product Engineering he was involved in body design drafting, computer systems development and administrative and product planning and new model product information communication.

Marc moved to NSW as Public Relations manager and was soon on the front line in a period of great change, product and industry ups and downs, and difficult and rewarding media challenges. He retired in 1999 after a 45 year career.



### **Russell Begg, Chief Engineer of the first Holden car.**

Marc's subject was the life of Russ Begg, little known Chief Engineer of the first Holden Car. Marc has obviously researched his subject in depth and gave a most interesting talk lavishly illustrated with copious photographs. A brief précis follows, but cannot do justice to Marc's research. We recommend the download from the Holden Retirees' Club, website, if you can arrange it with a friend or relative to do it for you.

**Russell Begg** was 57 years old when he headed up the Engineering team to produce the Holden Project 320 car – the "48 (or FX) Holden". Russell led a team of veteran engineers with extensive experience in bringing significant new cars to market in pre-war US and Germany. Most importantly they were supported by the eager youthful enthusiasm of more than 20 Australian engineers in the initial development of the first Holden in the USA.

Now, engineers tend to focus on what they are doing; they don't look back much and few write their memoirs, but Russell's story tells us a lot about the auto industry in the first half of the 20th century.

Russ Begg was born in 1887 in Columbus Ohio and grew up in the horse and buggy and bicycle era. His period at the University of Michigan would have been influenced by the excitement of early cars such as the Oldsmobile, which was the first volume producer and sold 2500 cars in 1902, and 4000 in 1903.

After graduating in 1909 in science, Russell worked for the Sheldon Axle Co, an important supplier to the infant auto industry.

Then he moved on to Packard, Hudson, and the Thomas motorcar company, before joining the Thomas B Jeffery Company in Kenosha, Wisconsin around 1914. They produced the Rambler, later renamed to the Jeffery.



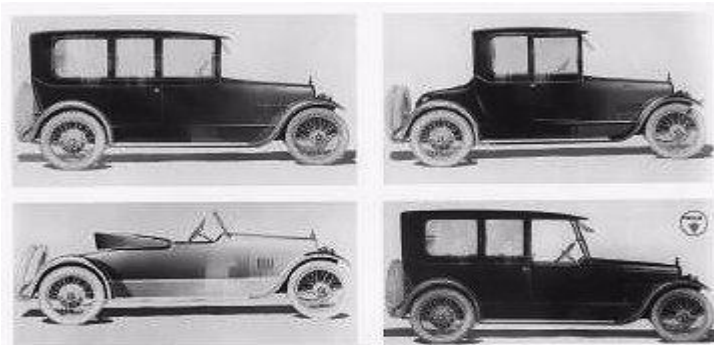
One of their most interesting products developing during Begg's time was the Jeffery Quad truck, a four wheel drive vehicle which saw war service. Over 10,500 were produced in 6 years, making it the top seller. The carrying capacity was 2 to 7 tons, and it sold to foreign allied armies and was fitted with armoured bodies.

Russell worked with Ned Jordan, Jeffery's advertising and marketing manager, and by late 1915 they were becoming uneasy about the intentions of the Jeffery company owners.

On **January 13**, 1916, Ned Jordan and Russell Begg left Jeffery and 2 days later Ned announced the formation of the Jordan car company.

In **February**, Begg set up an engineering office in Detroit and had their first prototype on the road by **April**. An early recruit was young Dutch engineer Gerhard Kuiper who graduated in Germany in 1915. He immigrated to the USA in 1916 joining Jordan as a designer. He and Begg were to work closely together for the next 35 years.

The product of their efforts was a luxury car pitched above Buick and below Cadillac, Packard, Pierce Arrow and Peerless. At only 28 year old, Russ Begg was elected to the board as Designer and Chief Engineer.



By then, an assembly plant had been built in Cleveland, Ohio. The first cars were shipped in **August**. A wide range of body styles was offered. With Jordan's promotional skills his car became a famous and successful niche sports luxury brand.

Begg and Jordan first travelled to Europe in 1919 and on other occasions to attend motor shows and follow developments there, years before Harley Earl started his annual excursions.



Begg patented several suspension designs to give the Jordan car distinctive ride and handling characteristics and Lockheed 4 wheel hydraulic brakes were introduced in Jan 1924. Jordan was one of first cars in the US to use Michelin steel disc wheels. Begg also introduced the use of aluminum body panels from start up until 1922, and the introduction of all steel bodies by Budd on the 1926 models in late 1925.

In 1925 Begg and Jordan went on a study tour to Europe but there were clouds on the financial horizon. In September 1926 dividends were withheld; large scale investment in a small car were blamed, but Jordan like many others had over produced in the 26 model year.



In 1927 a small car was added to the line but did not appeal to Jordan's market. This was a financial failure from which the company never fully recovered.

Company.

In March 1928, Russ Begg resigned to become Chief Engineer of the Budd Wheel Company and Associate Chief Engineer of the Budd Manufacturing

Budd had pioneered the design and manufacture all steel motor bodies in 1912, and in 1916 steel spoke wheels were produced and later steel disc wheels were made under a license arrangement with the French company Michelin.

Budd invested in Germany in 1926 forming Ambi Budd Presse Werke which also owned a 25% holding in Adler who built front wheel drive cars in the early 30's.

Budd built a front-wheel-drive prototype in 1929 for Citroën. The Citroën was different, it was built using a concept that is popularly known today as monocoque construction.



In Germany Ambi Budd assisted in the development and manufacture of the new Opel Olympia and Kadett integral steel bodies and later helped build the first Volkswagen.

Begg joined GM Engineering as engineer in charge of Lou Thom's product study group sometime in the early thirties.

In 1934 he is thought to have worked on the design of new Opel Olympia. In 1936 he was appointed Assistant Chief Engineer of Opel. The Olympia and the Kadett which followed were GM's first fully monocoque models. Kuiper later joined Begg at Opel in 1937 as his experimental engineer.

With Olympia the engineers achieved weight savings of 180kg for Germany's first mass-produced car with an all-steel integral body and frame. Following its market debut in 1935 Opel became the first German carmaker to manufacture more than 100,000 vehicles per year.



It was during this period according to Jack Rawnsley (one of the original Australian engineers to work on the program in the US), that the experimental small Chevrolet prototypes on which the Holden program was based were built in Germany under Begg's guidance. Jack is quite specific; he worked directly and closely with Begg during the early parts stages of the project in an executive engineering role. Perhaps this is why Begg and Kuiper went from Opel to the US in early 1939, to accompany the prototypes.

When war became imminent GM relinquished Opel and Begg and his colleagues returned to the US. When Begg was put in charge of the design and engineering of the Holden program in late 1944 several of his former Opel engineers including Gerhard Kuiper joined him again.

Begg's expertise, experience and strength of conviction guided his team to blend the diverse concepts of the 4 and 6 cyl small Chevrolet prototypes into a lightweight 6-cyl integral bodied 6 passenger vehicle with independent front suspension. Following nearly two years of product development in the US both men were in the large Holden team that cameback to Australia in late 1946, including nine US GM Engineers.

Jack Rawnsley, in one of his last letters, commented that the role these highly experience people played, not only in design and development but also in working with manufacturing and suppliers has tended to be

understated. He also noted that some aspects of the design were dictated by Australian supplier facilities, for example Pilkington could not make curved glass for the windscreen. Kuiper came to Australia as early as 1945 to study Australian supplier capabilities.



**Poplar** before CME Monday, RUSSELL BEGG, and Mrs. Begg at the new home of their home in Milton, Florida, U.S.A., where they are now residing following Mr. Begg's retirement from General Motors (Australia) Pty. Ltd.

Mr. Begg was Chief Engineer of GMV during the period in which the Holden was designed and prepared production.

Russell Begg's influence outweighed all others. Bill Abbott and George Quarry wrote of his focus on weight savings and using a light 6 cylinder against the demands of others to consider a 4 cylinder. The product of the combined efforts of all involved was an outstandingly successful car.

Following the successful launch of the new Holden car on the 29th of November 1948, Begg and his wife left Australia on the "SS Aorangi" arriving in Vancouver on January 14 1949 for a vacation and a visit to the home office in Detroit.

By September 1953 Russell Begg and his wife were comfortably retired in Florida.

He died on December 1958 aged 70 years.

*In 2017 the Holden Motor Body brand will have been building cars for 100 years, an achievement very few others can claim. Many of us here will have been associated with Holden for more than half of that time.*

*Hasn't it been a great ride?*

John Leigh thanked Marc for his presentation.

The ever popular Door Prize Raffle was then drawn, with Holden supplying the gifts for the lucky winners.

John reminded members that Holden had also supplied a new vehicle for their inspection. This time it was a Trax LTZ model, available for viewing at the front steps.

We thank Holden for their continued support through these difficult times for them.

## **GM-H: From Motor Body Builders to Vehicle Manufacturer.**

By Roger Gibbs

The move for Holden's to shift from being a Motor Body Builder to a full Vehicle Manufacturer was a big step, and the natural supposition is that this occurred with the introduction of the 48/215, or FX, in November 1948. Actually it took place some four years earlier.

1944 saw the introduction of Holden's first fully locally designed and tooled complete vehicle, with the outstanding credentials of being a truly zero emissions car.

It was the Holden Pedal Car.



*Pedal car*



*FX*

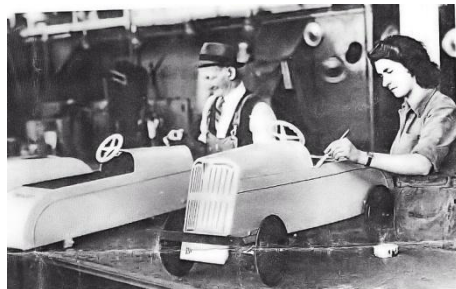
Even the badge on the front was very much an indication of the badge to ultimately appear on the FX, including the 5 little circles above the lion.

In 1944 with the war effort winding down, GM-H was looking towards the introduction of what was to be the Holden.

Their dilemma was to keep their skilled staff on hand until the FX was ready for production, as well as keeping their tooling and process facilities utilised, and so they embarked on manufacturing such items as a carpet sweeper and the Holden Pedal Car.

It is said that barely a month elapsed from Model Approval to 'First Vehicle Off Line' – surely a benchmark in the auto industry. There were a number of initiatives that achieved this:

- Judging by its appearance, Styling Department (as it was then called) was left out of the process
- Manufacturing had a heavy hand, decreeing that ideally there should be just one metal fold per panel or at the most two, to minimise tooling costs
- Purchasing had a minimal role, having outsourced the powertrain to the end user
- Forward Model Management were determined to bring the program in on time, such that the Chassis Engineer was still trying to figure out how to get the same camber angle on both front wheels as the first vehicles rolled off the line.



Marketing, in their usual enthusiasm, saw the vehicle through rose-coloured glasses and were excited about the launch campaign.

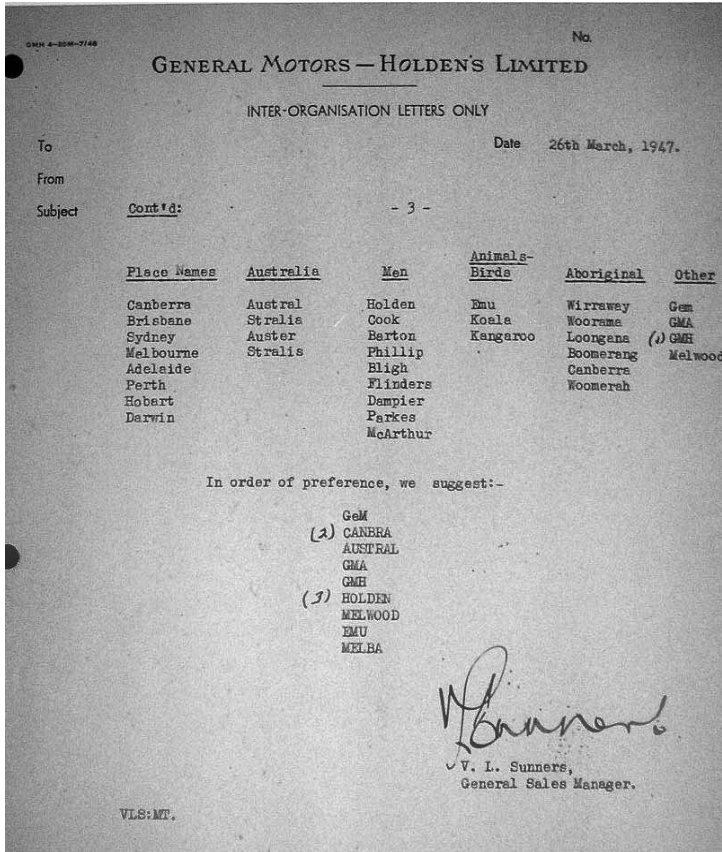
Again, to save time by eliminating the need for revisions to the Paint Shop, hand painting was used. Shown here is perhaps the up-market 'Holden Special' model, with its fluted grille and a

pinstripe down the side.



Just as Holden's were later to draw on GM Corporate Technology in bringing out the FX, so with the Pedal Car they were able to leverage the Corporate experience with the Pontiac Silver Streak Pedal Car, which was often used in Dealerships as a promotion (let the kids loose with the pedal car whilst the Salesman finalises a deal with Dad).

There is no specific name plate on the Pedal Car, just the Holden badge, and it was simply referred to as the 'Holden'. Having implanted this name so well in the public's mind in 1944, one wonders why the naming of the FX caused so much angst. Here is an internal Holden document, dated some 20 months before the FX went into production, as the name selection was being narrowed down.



At this time, the favoured name was GeM, being a play on the 'GM' connection and it being a 'gem' of a car.

This was followed by 'CANBRA', a reflection of how Australians pronounced Canberra.

Probably the only other name on the list needing explanation is the 'MELWOOD', which was an amalgamation of the two places of production, MELbourne and WOODville.

By the pencilled note on the memo, HOLDEN had been moved up from 6<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> place at this time

- 'HOLDEN' was ultimately chosen in recognition of Sir Edward Holden, GM-H's first Chairman and grandson of founder J.A. Holden.

So from the humble Pedal Car the iconic Holden was born.

## TREASURER'S REPORT:-

I am pleased to report yet another strong result for the Holden Retiree's Club for the 2013 financial year (Jan - Dec). At year end, we had \$4,000 in a Term Deposit, and a sum of \$3,692 available to run the Club in 2014, and to make donations to charity.

Our club is non-profit making, so all surplus funds are donated to charity. In early 2014 we will be making donations totalling \$2,500 to six charities, our equal highest total, matching our previous year when we also donated \$2,500 to charity.

This will still leave us with around \$1,200 to cover the Club's expenses during the year, which should be quite adequate to cover all foreseeable items. Plus we normally get further subscriptions early in the new year.

Again this year, we have deemed it prudent to put aside reserves of \$1,500 in a Term Deposit to guard against any unforeseen issues during the coming year. In addition, we have \$2,500 in the Term Deposit protecting forward subscription payments.

At year end, the Club has 529 financial members, with a further 89 on the books but yet to pay their subscriptions for 2014. Direct Deposit is easily the most favoured way to pay subs, with the number of EFT payers more than equalling the Cheque and Cash payment totals together.

We continue to receive very positive reports from members about The Mulgrave Club as our meeting venue. Those who have not yet been to the new premises would be most welcome to come and see for themselves the improvement in our meeting facilities.

In summary, 2014 will be another strong year for the Club.

Neil Pogson  
Treasurer.

## RETIREES IN OTHER STATES:-

### Gold Coast Retirees Christmas Lunch

The Gold Coast lunch was held in Carmody's restaurant at the Southport Sharks Club on 6th March 2014. A great time was had by all and if there any retirees visiting the Gold Coast we would like them to feel free to join us for our lunch or even contact us to get together socially.



L-R Garry Newsome, Graeme Coverdale, Rod Alford, Lee Broomhall, John Ashmore, Bob Musgrave, Adrian Hobson, Ted Bryant, Garry Dryden & Bevan Rawson.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Please make cheques payable to Holden Retirees" Club, and mail them to The Treasurer, Holden Retirees Club, 1 Glenwood Ave, Beaumaris, VIC, 3193. Alternatively, you may pay your subscription by direct bank transfer to: Holden Retirees' Club, Bendigo Bank BSB 633-000, A/C No. 138 299 151. You can do this by computer or at a Bendigo Bank branch, but you MUST include your name in the transaction details / deposit slip reference block, or we will not know who the money came from.

## VFACTS YTD March 2014

	TOP TEN MARQUE	YTD	
	YTD	Mar-14	
1	<i>Toyota Total</i>	48,148	18.09%
2	<i>Mazda Total</i>	27,786	10.44%
3	<i>Holden Total</i>	27,419	10.30%
4	<i>Hyundai Total</i>	23,560	8.85%
5	<i>Ford Total</i>	20,128	7.56%
6	<i>Nissan Total</i>	14,601	5.49%
7	<i>Mitsubishi Total</i>	14,267	5.36%
8	<i>VW Total</i>	12,873	4.84%
9	<i>Subaru Total</i>	9,984	3.75%
10	<i>Kia Total</i>	7,630	2.87%



## **NEXT MEETING is on THURSDAY 06 Jun 13:-**

The doors will open at 11:30 am.

### **Our Guest Speaker will be Stewart Underwood,**

Stewart retired in Dec 2009 following almost 41 years of service and now busies himself with volunteer work. This includes being a guitarist in a Senior Citizen's Rock Choir band, a driver for a Mental Rehab club, and a volunteer at the National Motor Museum, Birdwood. Additionally, he conducts Holden History Tours of all the original Holden sites in and around Adelaide.

Stewart will present:

### **"A Holden Heritage/History Tour of Adelaide"**

In conjunction with Don Loffler (The well-known Holden Historian and author) Stewart has hosted annual coach/foot tours of these sites - as part of the South Australian Governments' 'History Week' celebrations, each May.

Whilst it is not possible to replicate the Coach Tour – Stewart is going to present to you a photographic representation of what the tour basically entails....

### **John Lee receives OAM in Australia Day Honours**

Our congratulations go to John Lee of Engineering and Service Departments and a long term HRC member who has been bestowed with an OAM in the 2014 Australia Day Honours List.

The citation accompanying the award is as follows:

### **MEDAL (OAM) OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA IN THE GENERAL DIVISION Colonel John Hamilton LEE RFD ED (Ret'd)**

#### **For service to veterans, and to the community of Mentone.**

**Mentone Sub-Branch, Returned and Services League of Australia: Member, for 20 years; Member, Executive Committee, 1999-2011. Organiser, Community ceremonies, involving local schools, since 2000.**

**Refurbished displays for memorial gardens.**

**Researched and installed military history library.**

**Researched and installed pictorial display of 205 mounted photos depicting the history of Australia at war.**

**Chairman of Region 4 Area Advisory Committee, Victorian State Branch, Returned and Service League of Australia, 2004-2008; Life Member with Gold Badge, 2009.**

**Chairman, Ethics Tribunal (formally Victorian State Tribunal), 2004-2008; Member, since 2003.**

**Member, State Awards Committee, since 2004.**

**Chairman, Memorial Park Sub-Committee, Kingston City Council; lobbying for memorial up-grades.**

**Founding Member, Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron.**

**Awards/recognition include:**

**Reserve Force Decoration, long service award presented to officers in the Reserve elements of the Australian Defence Force.**

**Efficiency Decoration, long service award presented to officers in the Army Reserve prior to the establishment of the Reserve Force Decoration.**

**Inductee, Hall of Fame, Victorian State Branch, Returned and Service League of Australia, 2009.**

**FUTURE MEETINGS** will continue to be at 12:30 pm (doors open 11:30 am) on the first Thursday of March, June, September and December, at the Mulgrave Country Club, Corner of Wellington and Jells Roads, Wheelers Hill, Victoria, Melways Reference 80 H 1.

Note that Victorian licensing law requires you to sign in, which you may do either in the foyer, or after paying as you enter the room. Either option will require you to write down your name and address.

If you require a lift, please ring one of our volunteer drivers in your area:

- |                  |                       |             |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| - Rudy Knapple   | Vermont South area    | 9802 1795   |
| - Bruce Naylor   | Mt. Waverley area     | 9803 2869   |
| - Fred Jamieson  | Balwyn area           | 9836 4184   |
| - Hugh Healey    | Berwick area          | 9769 5546   |
| - Ted Bryant     | San Remo area         | 0428 123206 |
| - Dorothy Godley | Mornington Peninsular | 5987 2575   |