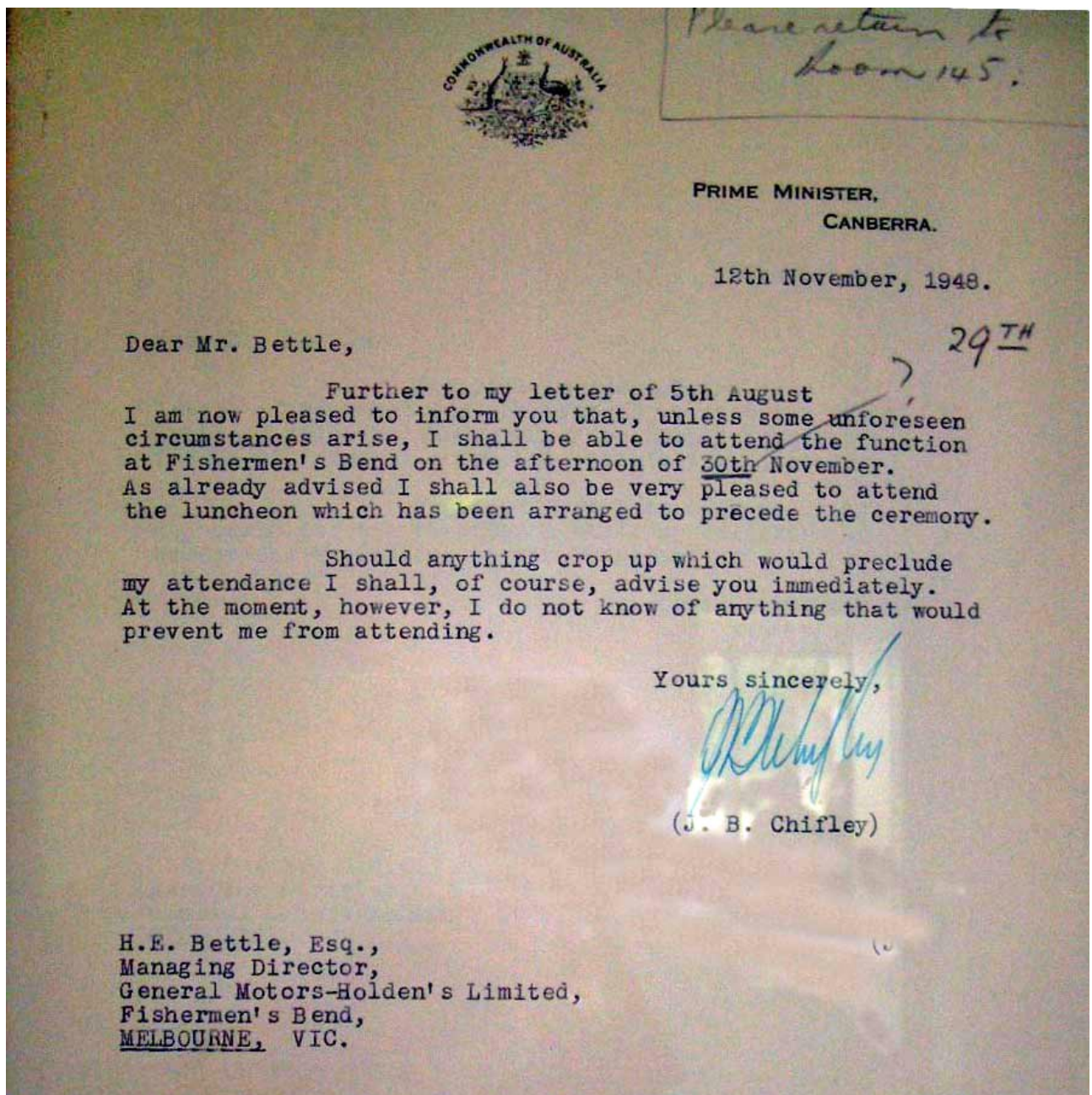


MEMORIES OF THE LAUNCH OF THE FX HOLDEN. By Roger Gibbs



I was 5 years old when the 48/215 (FX) Holden was launched. Prime Minister Chifley went down in history when he declared "She's a beauty" as the first vehicle rolled off the production line at Fisherman's Bend. Did he realise what an historic moment this was to be? Looking at his letter of acceptance he

seems to have left an escape clause to skip the launch if a better offer came along, and was initially going to be a day late!



We were living in Adelaide at the time and there were two launches: the official VIP one at Centennial Hall and the Employee's Day at the Woodville Plant. I went to the latter and remember it well, not for the car but for the swings, slides and other play equipment brought in for the kids. My father, whose responsibilities included the organisation of the event, brought along his parents and at least one of his brothers, Bert, for Bert took a 16mm movie film of the proceedings and I have extracted a couple of stills from it. It is always interesting looking back to see how well-dressed people were on such occasions - today such a crowd would be wearing T-shirts and jeans.



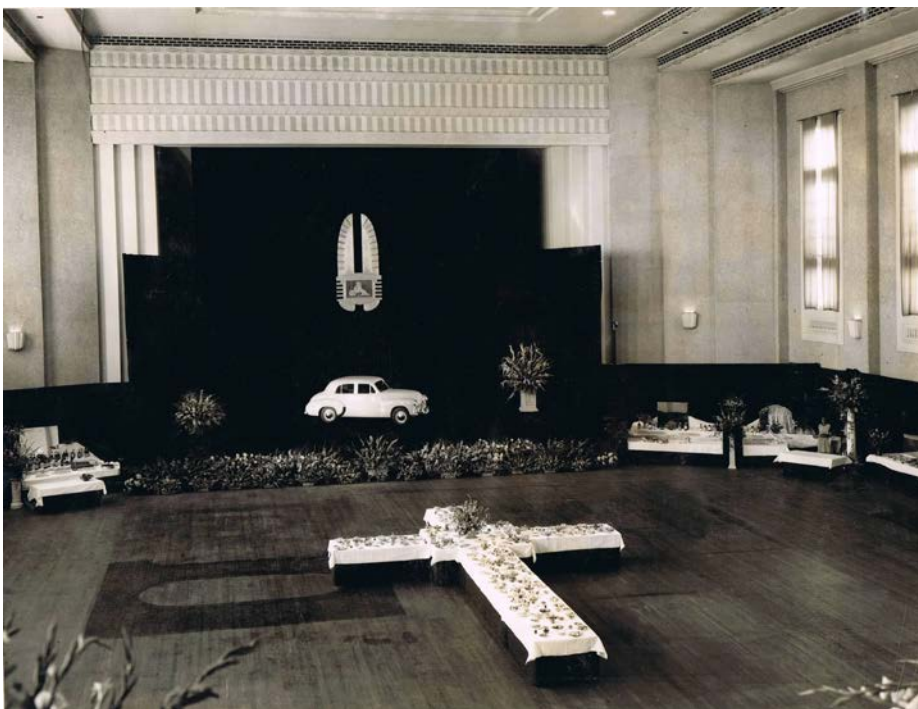
Employees looking at the 48/215



Play equipment for the children

Prior to this was the VIP launch - and obviously a 5 year old boy wasn't at that - but I remember it for a couple of reasons. It was a grand occasion, and below is the layout in Centennial Hall for the formal announcement on 3rd December, with the buffet

table giving a rather religious effect and drink stands at the far end.



The next picture, taken from further back in the Hall, shows the milling VIP guests, the ladies all with their fine hats. My father had the final say in who received an invitation to the launch and he was beset upon by people from the

Government, the Police and even the Church, for one. Looking at how many guests came versus the food on the table, I rather wonder if he had been overly generous in dispensing invitations.



As the guests departed they were each given one of those splendid tins of Benson & Hedges cigarettes. Afterwards, there were a number of these tins left over and I remember for many years each Xmas Dad (a non-smoker) would give the postman, the milkman and the garbage man one of them - much treasured

by the recipients but perhaps the contents were getting a little stale as the years rolled by.

The other memory I have is that, like the tins of cigarettes, after the event there were a number of the specially printed VIP Invitation cards that were surplus, and Dad brought them home for my brother, Peter, and me to do whatever with. Peter, 3 years my senior, showed me how I could roll one of the cards up into a cylinder, light the end, blow it out, and the smouldering end was just like a cigarette. Unlike Bill

Clinton and his experiments with marijuana, I own up to inhaling, getting a partial lung full of smoke which could be exhaled with as much nonchalance as a 5 year old boy could muster. Encouraged, I inhaled deeply, the end reignited and a tongue of flame shot into my throat, causing much discomfort. That night at dinner my mother was concerned for my well-being as I only picked at my food, unwilling to confess to having difficulty swallowing due to scorched tonsils. However, good came from it, I was never tempted to smoke again which, with what we now know, I'm truly thankful.

I'm sure that if we had kept those original blank VIP Invitation cards they would be a sought after item on eBay - Peter and I were probably smoking the equivalent of \$10 notes today!