

THE REAL 'FX' HOLDEN - Origin of the Nickname

By Warwick Bryce

Unfortunately, all of the first Holden cars have become colloquially known as the 'FX' model. This is not correct, as it actually only applies to the 1953 built cars.

Over the years there has been much speculation as to the origin of the designation 'FX' including claims by car dealers¹ that they had coined it to distinguish the first models from the subsequent 'FJ' series in Used Car trading. Others speculated that since the following models were 'F' series, the first one must have been as well, so 'X' must represent the unknown letter.

As it turns out, we are lucky to have within our ranks those who have known the real origin of 'FX' all along, but have chosen to keep quiet about it. Fortunately, I heard a whisper² of this and with a bit of coaxing had the story related first hand to me³ about 10 years ago.

Basically it goes as follows:-

A niggling field problem with durability of the front suspension started to become evident on the first model Holden. These used lever action shock absorbers incorporated into the upper wishbones and mounted on the front cross member. A new front suspension based on direct acting telescopic shock absorbers was planned, but with a delay to the introduction of the 'FJ' and worsening field problems it was decided to introduce the new Front Cross member as a running change to the 48-215 series early in 1953. As this was a substantial change involving not only the cross member but also including springs, wishbones and fasteners, quite a lot of new parts were required. In 1952, during preparation of a parts list for the experimental build of test cars, the Drawing Office pencilled 'FX' on to the new parts list to identify it. Subsequently, Engineering personnel would refer to 48-215 cars as having or not having the 'FX' fix.

Therefore '**FX**' was an unofficial designation coined by the Drawing Office with '**F**' standing for **Front** and '**X**' for **Cross member** to distinguish the 1953 built 48-215 models with the new suspension.

It is reasonable to speculate that the Spare Parts and Service departments picked up on the 'FX' nick-name when discussing the fix with Engineering, which then, in time, spread to the Dealers.

I have subsequently passed this information on to Holden historians Norm Darwin and Don Loffler, who have both incorporated it in their books^{4 & 5}. Don has done a bit more research with people involved who confirmed the origin and revealed that 'FX' did not appear in car advertisements until 1960⁵, eight years after the Drawing Office had coined it.

You could say that the myth has been busted. Additionally, if anyone has more information please let us hear it.

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Acknowledgements

¹ "Holden 48-215" Wikipedia the free Encyclopaedia

² Sam Davis

³ Bruce Arnold

⁴ "100 years of GM in Australia" by Norm Darwin

⁵ "She's a Beauty" by Don Loffler