

MODEL A'S*in WA***1929 Closed Cab Pickup****Engine Number: CA 47522****Registration Number:****AK 1929 1996—2010****Restored and owned by****Steve Read****1996 - 2010****Sold to Anthony and Debbie Gilberthorpe****2010—**

Steve Read with his Ute
(1929 Closed Cab Pickup)

Steve wrote a story for MAFCA's newsletter, *The Restorer*. It appeared in Volume 44, Issue 6, the January/February 2000 issue.

The story follows on the next two pages.



Present owners of the 1929 Closed Cab Pickup, Anthony and Debbie Gilberthorpe, ready for the October 2011 Riverside Ramble.

Anthony Gilberthorpe thoroughly enjoyed the Bushwhackers Run to Wooleen Station in 2010 with Brett Pollock, Frank Farrelly, Trevor Higham and son Philip, and Colin Davidson. Anthony did not take his 1930 Phaeton, but drove his Land Cruiser with trailer, to carry swags, baggage and extra fuel, and generally to assist during the trip.

On returning home, he decided to find a Model A which could carry extra gear for the 2011 trip. He purchased Steve Read's 1929 Closed Cab Pickup (Ute) and put the Phaeton off the road for a bit of work.

Steve retained the AK 1929 registration plates, and they were replaced first by 1DNN 643. The Pickup was then registered as SW 6752, which were the Phaeton's plates, for a short time, before Anthony acquired local plates 29 BAS.

The SW 6752 registration plates have a history of their own. They were originally on Debbie's first vehicle, a Toyota. They were then on Anthony's Holden, and when he inherited the 1930 Phaeton from his father Peter, they were used for that vehicle. Anthony recently came across the local plates 29 BAS and could not resist them, so the Pickup was re-registered with these, and Anthony returned the SW 6752 plates to the DOT to be held until the 1930 Phaeton is back on the road.

Anthony and Deb are enjoying the Pickup. Unfortunately the 2011 Bushwhackers Run to Wooleen Station did not proceed. Anthony is planning to drive it with the group going across the top to the 22nd National Model A Meet at Ipswich next March.

There's a Pickup in the container

by Steve Read , Western Australia

Model A Fords have been a part of my life for more years than I care to remember. I even began importing assorted Model A bits from America to Australia with the assistance of Mark Eckerich from Cheney, WA. A container was shipped from Seattle to Fremantle in Western Australia in 1996 and I had received a note from Mark saying, "There's a Pickup in the container."

We all know the old joke about the classic car restorer who built up a complete car starting with just the bonnet ornament; well, if I was to have the Model A Closed Cab Pickup that I had coveted for many years, it was about to start from about the same basics. Included in the assorted parts in the shipping container were: three rusted-out Pickup beds, assorted sad body panels of indeterminate year and a new, complete wood kit for a Pickup cab. Some of the panels were cracked and crunched and had been used for target practice. They were bits of old metal, attacked by "tin worm," that anyone with an ounce of sense would consign to the "too hard basket" ... but fanatics like you and me see only the potential.

There were not enough panels and parts to make a new vehicle and I considered selling them—for about three seconds. I knew where I could get a pretty good 1929 chassis and I had assorted 1929 parts, so that decided the appropriate year. The die was cast; I was committed to have a go at creating a 1929 Model A Ford Closed Cab Pickup.

So, work commenced in April of 1997.

The chassis was sandblasted and primed. Rummaging around in some assorted parts that I had accumulated locally, I found a good front end that had new king pins and just needed new bushings. The hand went into the pocket for the grand total of \$10 and we were under way. The transmission was assembled from appropriate pieces in various boxes of parts.

I had rebuilt a motor for a fellow club member and obtained his old motor in exchange. The motor had been lying on its side for years with the pistons out and it had a good dose of rust. The cylinders were 20 thousandths oversize and the babbitts were in good condition and undersize. I line-bored the bearings back to 10 thousandths undersize, then ground and fitted a crankshaft to fit. I bored the cylinders to suit a mint set of secondhand pistons; fitted eight good, secondhand stainless steel valves; added a new timing gear, rings and gaskets and the motor was looking functional. I did the machining and rebuilding myself and the total cost of the motor was about \$150.

The transmission was in good condition and I had the necessary spare bits lying around, so with new bearings, and just \$40 more, another step was completed.

The rear axle had been found in a swamp, half-submerged in the ground . . . perhaps it was an upmarket home for frogs? The bottom half of the backing plates were rusted out but the condition inside was remarkably good. So, backing plates were resurrected from the "junk" behind the shed and reconditioned, plus another \$40 and the project was looking promising.

I located a rear spring from a Phaeton, which is not strictly correct, but certainly gives a comfortable ride. The brake shoes

came from another club member who had them relined. The shoes were fitted to standard drums and the hand went into the pocket for another \$10.

The steering gear was obtained from my Tudor (to which I had fitted a two-tooth) and was already restored. New balls were fitted to the steering arms. Additional cost just \$28.

The running gear was assembled on the chassis and I started on the body. I had located a pair of good front guards at a swap meet in Portland, OR; plus a near perfect windscreen at good prices. I then acquired an almost perfect welled front fender. Although not personally keen on welled fenders, they were standard on Pick-ups so I had to curb my prejudices.

The firewall was for a left-hand drive vehicle, naturally enough, but in Australia we drive on the "correct" side of the road—the left. So, I cut the necessary pieces from a right-hand drive firewall and welded it all together to create an 'instant' right-hand drive configuration.

I visited a street-rodder who was rodding a 1929 Closed Cab Pickup and needed a pair of front door pillars; so I swapped him for a mint condition fuel tank and a new wood kit with metal run-ners for the bed—I think I definitely got the best of that deal.

Things were moving along, slowly but surely, and I assembled the Pickup roughly to see how it was looking, and to work out where all the bits were going to finish up. I had never even seen a 1929 Closed Cab Pickup, let alone restored one. In fact, to my knowledge, they were never imported into Australia. Mark Eckerich had sent me a copy of Mac's "How to Restore a Model A Pickup" and I would study the photographs at night to send me off to sleep, perchance to dream of a completed Pickup.

Time for the actual body restoration. The floor rails were rusted out and badly bent so new ends were fitted to a new floor and riveted in place. The front pillars were broken and bent and the door hinges had been broken off. The doors were rusted, bent, broken and twisted, requiring tow lower door skins, plus each door required about 20 patches each. The two replacement cab corner panels were reproductions made in Australia which were not of a good quality, but usable. The rear cab panels required straightening and extensive repair.



The finished product - a right-hand drive Closed Cab Pickup assembled from the parts of approximately 50 different vehicles.

It was starting to look like a real vehicle when the cab was blasted, primed and bolted into place—although this was only the first of dozens of times it was assembled.

Then it was time to work on the tray and the best of the three I had was burned, twisted, squashed and bent diagonally—in "pretty good shape" in other words. The rear panels were then made which I shaped using the base of my bench grinder as it just happened to have the correct radius. The back was all welded together after leaving a "time capsule" sealed into the back of the tray for someone to hopefully find during its next restoration in 100 or so years from now.

The wood was then fitted to the cab and bed, which should have been painted but I could not bring myself to cover the beautiful grain, so it was all varnished. Long short grain upholstery was ordered from Snyders as the local product was not wide enough and I did not want a joint down the middle.

Fellow club member Phil Wemm was restoring a Special Coupe and he helped me with the roof—oh, the fact that Phil is also an upholsterer was a definite blessing. New gutters were fitted, annealing the aluminium prior to fitting to soften the material and get the correct shape. The interior was finished by a local motor trimmer.

Prior to fitting the roof covering, the front page from the local Sunday newspaper was sealed in plastic and placed in the roof—one more "time capsule" for archaeological research to discover in the year 2100 (or so?). I wonder where the vehicle will be by then?

Little "finishing" bits were still missing, including the two inner door latch assemblies. As luck would have it, a street-rodder turned up one day with an ice cream bucket full of bits and pieces. I could not believe my eyes—there lurking among the other assorted automotive gems was a pair of door latches, in bits to be sure, but all there. This particular part is the same as that on the 1926 Model T Ford.

Time then for the fenders: the left hand rear was assembled from three separate fenders, the right hand rear only needed two others to complete the picture. The front ones were okay with relatively minor cosmetic surgery.

A pair of very good commercial headlights in as-new condition in shiny black were obtained from fellow club member Darren Jeffree—what a find! Darren's father, Alan, provided a fully re-stored rear number plate and light assembly. The radiator sur-round came from another club member who had purchased it incorrectly, many years previously and it just needed painting.

Out of the 70 or so wheels behind my shed I located four good wheels and another reasonable one for a spare. Whitewall tyres (although incorrect for concourse judging) came from my restored Tudor which had won its class during the '94 Australian National Meet in South Australia, after having been driven 2,000 miles across Australia.

We were getting near the end now. The choice of colour was predetermined by the copious amounts of Gunmetal Blue left over after restoring the Tudor. Not exactly an "original" colour, but it looks authentic and resulted in a big cost saving.

The front bumper came out of the "scrap heap," was pounded straight on the anvil and chromed. Five hub caps were cleaned, chromed and fitted. The only parts left unplated on purpose were the petrol and radiator caps; they were originals that many hands had screwed and unscrewed over the years until the nickel had screwed and unscrewed over the years until the nickel had been worn away

and they deserved to stay that way. A discarded radiator was located which was causing overheating, primarily because the top baffle plate was left out after reconditioning. A new baffle was fitted, the core cleaned out, and it was "as good as new."

The water pump, starter motor and generator, which had been collected over the years, were all reconditioned and fitted in the appropriate places. A Tillotson carburetor, which had never been used, was fitted but it did not want to work . . . subsequent inspection discovered that the fuel inlet had never been drilled out (proof positive that it had never been used) but a 1/4" drill bit quickly fixed that minor problem.

A minimum of "new" parts had been utilized in this restoration, only things like: bushings, bearings, hoses, fan belt, tubes and new glass throughout did not come from what could be loosely termed "scrap." Actually I admit to a touch of "street rodding" (well, just a very little bit) as I fitted tinted side and back window glass. There was an ulterior motive for this as the Pickup was being completed in readiness for a drive right across Australia for the 70th Anniversary of the Model A Ford in Australia Rally in Canberra.

Final paint was applied and everything assembled for the last time. The first run was 60 miles to York and then back home and the only problem we encountered was fuel vaporizing in the extreme heat.

So, there she was, completed and sitting proudly in the garage - a rare right-hand drive Closed Cab Pickup that had not existed previously. I estimate that the parts of some 50 separate vehicles contributed to my Pickup at a total cost of around \$4,000; the bargain of the century?

Although I did a lot of the work in my shed myself, I did not do it all alone. The panels and body work were crafted by a person I consider to be probably the best in his field in Australia: Martin Heywood, who is a sheer genius with sheet metal and rust. I would also like to acknowledge the help of several fellow Model A Ford club members who helped and those who contributed parts at little or no cost to me: Mark Eckerich, Alan and Darren Jeffree, Phil Wemm, plus of course, Martin Heywood. Without their help the job would never have been finished. Although belonging to a different "religion," several street rodders were also very helpful, as were many MAFCA members in America who patiently answered my restoration questions. Thanks you all.

The stamping on the floor pan indicates that it was originally from a Twin Cities vehicle and I'm sure that the original owner would never have imagined where it would finish up after so many years of use and abuse.

So, we were ready for the biennial Australian National Model A Ford Rally during Easter, 1998. The Pickup was trucked 2,000 miles to Melbourne but the transport did more damage than I would have thought possible. The vehicle left with a full tank of fuel and a fully-charged battery. It arrived with no fuel, a flat battery and extensive damage to the floor of the tray. It must have been loaded on an angle with the front down and the key left on during the three day voyage over some rough roads. The key on and fuel running out . . .

I flew to collect the vehicle in Melbourne, drive it to Canberra and then some 3,000 miles back home again. But that's another story. . .