

Another ICONIC CAR IN OUR CLUB IS ANDYROO'S 1963 MINI 850 MINI'S MAGIC MILESTONE

November 2021 will see the 58th birthday of the 1963 Morris 850 (Mini) that my late wife, Ann, purchased brand-new. She was just 17 when the Mini was released in Australia in 1961. Instant infatuation decreed that she simply MUST have one, but it took her a couple of years to save up the 150 pounds (\$300) deposit required. Several dealers were reluctant to provide finance to a teenage girl largely supporting herself, but eventually Lancaster Motors in Blacktown gave the OK and Ann took delivery of “Morty” (christened thus by my dad when he first saw the number plate, DDT 016 (DDT=Mortein!) on November 16, 1963. To have a brand-new car at age 19 in 1963 was a pretty big deal for a girl (unless she had a rich old man), so she was very popular with the local lads. As I was accorded “most favoured” status at the time, I got to ride in it a lot (a situation that became a permanent arrangement in 1969). Minis owned and driven by many of our contemporaries at the time were prone to fairly heavy-duty use and more often than not

ended up as candidates for “Simmo’s” (Albert G. Sims, the big scrap metal merchants) in a relatively short time, but the “gentle touch” managed to see Ann’s 850 prolong its lifespan for several more decades.

Mini (and Ann then).....

Mini today....



(1964)

(2021)

The car did sterling service during the 70s, the copious door bins and rear pockets often overflowing with baby bottles, nappies and assorted toys. The passenger front seat was often removed to enable a cane baby basket to be placed in its stead. (No such thing as safety capsules, etc. then!) At least the safety belts, installed in 1964 (an optional extra) were threaded through the handles of the baby basket to (sort of) hold it in

place. Vast quantities of groceries, pet guinea pigs and other assorted rodents (of the four and also two-legged variety) were transported hither and yon until at age 26, the Mini didn't seem to be required so much as everyday transport.

“Perhaps the time has come . . .”, but an almighty shriek silenced the remainder of my thoughts-out loud “I'd rather part with the kid!” was the anguished rejoinder. So a detailed scrutiny was made of the car which revealed a pretty sound unit overall – some rust in the bottoms of the doors due to deterioration of the sliding window Bailey channels and likewise the battery box and rear beaver panel. So a programme of refurbishment was embarked upon which saw a total strip-down to a bare metal re-paint in its original Nurburg White, a couple of Mini Deluxe doors with wind-up windows were procured.....I can hear the purists crying “shock, horror” – but they're damn well more convenient for the Australian climate – and they look better too. The dilapidated front seats were replaced and recovered by Ann in a black and white houndstooth material. Some matching

floor carpet replaced the ancient rubber matting to complete the rejuvenation.



In the shop...1989.

Born again....1989

After some four months off the road, Ann was eager to take little Morty for a spin, but having become accustomed to a modern Commodore in the meantime, she was less than impressed with the Mini's braking ability, so a set of Morris Cooper disc brakes were located to rectify the Mini's braking inadequacy. The original 850cc motor had died in the mid-70s and been replaced by an 1100cc unit (on top of the original gearbox and diff, which gives the car excellent low-down

flexibility, but by the same token, it's flat out around 100kph (or at least it sounds like it!).

So from 1989 the Mini has been largely retired from active duty (modern cars ride a good deal more comfortably than a mini 850's rubber-cone suspension – (our suspensions have aged considerably too!), but parting with Morty has never been an option. It's nice to be able to take it out every now and then to re-ignite fond motoring memories from half a century ago.



Action station x 1

Action station x 2