

A CUTE, BEAUT UTE



A long-term fan of the Ford nameplate, when the company announced the closure of its Broadmeadows manufacturing facility in Victoria would occur in 2016, I (along with a legion of Australian supporters) felt that we should make haste to acquire a sample of the blue oval's product before the axe finally fell.

I'd always kept a box trailer for carting "stuff", but with advancing years making heavy weather of manoeuvring an articulated vehicle, I decided that a Falcon ute would be the ideal compromise. I particularly liked the way a white base model ute looked with the black trim used on the rear bumper and along the side sills – these items being done in the body colour of higher spec models.

However, a base model ute was so basic as to be positively prehistoric! A six-speed manual gearbox – NO air conditioning – no wheel trims – no tonneau cover for the tray, and a miniscule 2-speaker stereo with a tiny (about 5 inch) black and white screen positioned in the dash. So some serious perusing of the options list was called for.

First up, a 6-speed ZF automatic gearbox – climate controlled air conditioning – a tonneau cover for the tray, and a limited slip differential (an extremely worthwhile fitment in a vehicle with a lightly-weighted rear end) – an upgraded 8-speaker stereo with an 8" colour screen – a set of front and rear mudflaps with mats for the cabin and a set of stainless steel scuff plates for the door sills. All these nick-nacks amounted to around \$5000, and so the serious fun of haggling with various dealers began.

The final deal was sealed with Winford Motors in Windsor, who threw in all my extras for free, and after a six-week wait while the vehicle was custom-built in Broadmeadows, delivery was made to me on 10th May, 2013. I still felt it needed a bit more dressing up, so to remind me of my motoring youth in the 1960s, a sun visor, rear venetian blind, a tow bar (never used – but you can't have a ute without one, can you?), a set of white walls to accompany the Auto Barn wheel trims finished it off nicely.

The number plates are a story in themselves. Back in 1969, the Department of Motor Transport (as they were then) began to offer motorists the opportunity to acquire a set of personalised plates for the sum of \$25 – 2 letters only, and you had to take whatever number combination came up. So I applied for a set of AY plates and was happy as Larry (who was Larry?) when a letter arrived advising me that I could collect my AY-000 plates from the Parramatta office ASAP. Had them now for 57 years!
Andrew Yeend.