

DARRYL WILCOX

Darryl Wilcox was born in Hobart on 4th September 1946 and has lived most of his life at Huonville where he and Maureen have recently moved back again this year. During his long and illustrious career Darryl has raced a number of Holdens, from FX to his recently sold Monaro, most of which have appeared in the familiar Wilcox Blue.

First race was at Hillwood Hillclimb in 1963 where he went to watch fellow Huon Valley resident Ian Smith run his Cooper S and ended up having a couple of runs himself. This was followed shortly afterwards by a run at the Domain Hillclimb. At this time in life Darryl's main sporting interest was as a player for the Huonville Football Club. His football career came to an abrupt end when he was knocked unconscious in the 1963 Grand Final and as a result he never played again.

Darryl's first race meeting was at Baskerville in late 1963 where he managed to circulate without embarrassing himself. Shortly afterwards, after driving up to Orford with a mate in a fast early model Holden, he ended up with a broken leg after a road accident which on the way home. The accident put him out of action for twelve months.

It was during his recuperation whilst staying with an Aunty in Hobart that he discovered in an outside shed a tin of what was to become the Wilcox Racing colour. Racing locally for a couple of years Darryl became a contender for honours among the early models as he built up his racing skills.

In 1966 Darryl went to Hume Weir to take part in the Hume Weir 200 race for pre EH Holdens. He qualified 4th behind fellow Tasmanian Mike McIvor and went on to win the race after a struggle with McIvor who eventually failed to finish. The winner's trophy was a print of an Elephant in a timber frame which still forms part of the Wilcox trophy collection. Darryl returned to Hume Weir the following year finishing second in the trophy race (thereby probably missing out on another framed elephant!). Having established his credentials as a fairly handy early model Holden driver Darryl started competing in events at Calder where he broke the lap record for his class.

Having become tired of constantly defending the legality of his car against claims by beaten rivals he sold it to a local for \$800 and gave the mainland a miss for a while. Now focused on the Tasmanian scene he bought an EH Holden which became competitive locally. Still having the itch to race at Calder he saved the money to take the EH to Calder for the Six Cylinder Series. He borrowed money from his mother to buy a set of slicks which at the time were not being used by competitors in the Series. Darryl went out on practice on the Saturday and did the fastest ever time at the track and easily gained the pole position. On Sunday race day, both Ron Harrop and Norm Gown were his major competition and they had also found sets of slicks for the event. The three slick shod cars left everyone else for dead with Darryl eventually taking the win.

Following his Calder success Darryl decided to base his operations in Melbourne where he hoped to attract the attention of someone who might give him a drive in a higher category. Darryl drove consistently and competitively in the 1972 Six Cylinder Series, needing only to finish third in the last race at Calder to take the overall Series award. Sitting in 4th place behind a very wide John Mann a frustrated Darryl eventually got by after making contact and punting Mann into the scenery. After the event a very upset John Mann punched Darryl through the window of his race car. As a result Mann was later suspended from the results of the meeting. Both drivers remind each other, with great

amusement, of the incident whenever they cross paths. After Darryl campaigned the EH for some time on the mainland, a group of local Huonville RSL mates raised money to bring Darryl and his car back to Tasmania to run at Baskerville where the car ran with the leaders. The car was sold to Danny Newlands who managed to destroy the motor at his first race meeting in the car.

Back in Melbourne Darryl started to build a Torana Sports Sedan at Pomeroy Panels. After the car was completed the decision was made to return to Tasmania as Darryl missed the quality of life south of Bass Strait. Darryl was named as the 1976 Motor Sport Sportsman of the Year. The car was instantly competitive at a time when the Tasmanian Torana competition was quite intense. For a while the car ran with a borrowed engine from Melbourne but the biggest boost to performance was the fitting of an Irving cross flow head. The high performance head was funded by yet another Huonville RSL fund raising campaign to ensure that Darryl would have more power for the coming Baskerville 10,000 meeting.

Whilst practising in the lead up to the event Darryl locked up a wheel and slid into a track side Roadways tractor damaging the front of the car and spraining an ankle. Whilst his Huonville RSL mates and his brothers fixed the damage to the car, a local doctor helped fix the ankle including massaging it every day. By the weekend of the 10,000 both car and driver were in top condition. Darryl started the 10,000 final in 9th or 10th position and finished the race as "first Tasmanian" which resulted in \$1000 prize money. He was written up in the Mercury newspaper with the headlines "School bus driver / Huonville driver success". When Darryl drove the school bus after a race weekend the kids said that he got them to school five minutes earlier than usual. To maintain his personal fitness Darryl trained with Huonville football team.

In 1977 Darryl took the Torana to a Sports Sedan race at Sandown where he came third behind Gary Rogers and Murray Carter ahead of Greg Hansford in a Falcon. The car was rebuilt in the 80's and in Darryl's words 'no good after that'. Wilcox retired from active competition and the car sat in an apple shed for some time with eventually the body going to Allen Welling, the motor to Kerry Baillie and Darryl's mechanic 'Reedy' retained the alloy head.

After retiring from circuit racing, Darryl and his son, became involved with kart racing for a couple of years. Darryl returned to competition in 1992 when he drove Dr Andrew Blakeney's A9X Torana in Targa Tasmania in 1993. He was quickest on the Symmons Plains stage and was running in top 10 outright when the gearbox broke on Wayatinah Stage on last day. Darryl also raced that car at Symmons Plains in support race at Touring Car meeting gaining first outright.

On 2nd December 1994 Darryl bought a Monaro shell from Noel Miley, then Hobart Sporting Car Club president. The car had to be dragged out of a shed at Bridgewater and required a lot of work before it was suitable for competition and of course painted in the traditional Wilcox Blue. It is in this car that Darryl has become familiar in both Group N and Tarmac rally events. Initially the car ran as Improved Production then as an invited car in Group N events but in later years the car has been modified to comply with the more stringent Group N rules.

In recognition of Darryl's contribution to Tasmanian Motor Sport and in particular his countless hours of work at the Baskerville Circuit he was presented with life membership by the Hobart Sporting Car Club. The HSCC clubrooms at Baskerville were named the Darryl Wilcox clubrooms to also recognise

his contribution to the track. Darryl has competed in a number of Targa Tasmania and Targa Wrest Point events. Notable happenings include:

- 3 first placing and a third at a Group N meeting at Symmons Plains after moving from the Improved Production category
- Crashing the Monaro at Railton in Targa Tasmania
- Losing a wheel on the Sidling Stage of Targa Tasmania when the wheel studs broke. Got the car going by taking a wheel stud from each of the other wheels. Unable to find the missing wheel Darryl advertised for its return and it was subsequently found in the bush and returned.
- 3rd fastest to Andrew Miedecke and Terry Harper on longest stage in Wrest Point Targa followed by second fastest on Ferntree to Longley Stage.

When asked if he does his own mechanical work, Darryl advised he has never been overly mechanically minded, he just drives well. Mick Long has always built his engines. Semi retired Darryl is limiting the number of events at which he competes. Other Points of Interest (not necessarily in date order):

- Drove Adrian Brookes Lotus Cortina on one occasion in 1983
- On one occasion after refurbishing Torana painted it red. Was booed by race patrons when he took it to its next race meeting. Car was back to Wilcox Blue at next meeting.
- Drove Barry Cassidy's HQ in the HQ Series in 1992
- Was brought back into racing via Go-Karting, by Peter Fitts, by participating in the Devonport Street Races.
- Was getting ready to roll EH out to the dummy grid at Calder when Peter Brock asked him if he had any wet tyres. Darryl couldn't see any reason to fit wets but on Brock's insistence fitted a set of wets but by the time he had changed the wheels he had to start from the back of the Grid. Wilcox trailed the field until it started raining heavily and ultimately he lapped the field before the chequered flag.
- Wilcox first struck up a life time friendship with Peter Brock at Hume Weir when Brock was running the Austin A30 Special. Brock was having problems getting the A30 through scrutineering and had to borrow some wheel nuts from Darryl. Of course after clearing scrutineering Brock handed back the borrowed wheel nuts and fitted the wheel nuts that had been rejected.
- Had an opportunity to drive with Gary Rogers at Bathurst in 1977. Gary asked Darryl to come to Oran Park for a test drive which was completed to the team's satisfaction. At Bathurst Darryl drove competently in practice and was ready for a run in the race. Unfortunately Gary put a hole in the sump after 25 laps and the temporary fix with Silicone failed when silicone got into the oil pump and the motor self destructed.
- On another occasion Darryl came close to a drive with the Roadways Team at Bathurst and despite completing practice laps on the pace was overlooked for the race.
- Was asked by Holden Dealer Team (HDT) Supremo Harry Firth to get some Tasmanian Moonshine and bring it over to Calder. The only proviso was that it had to burn with a blue flame which the firewater supplied did. The twist to the story was that a thief was taking stuff from unattended cars in the pit including a trolley jack and the moonshine from Darryl's car, a HDT jacket from Brock's car as well as various stuff from other cars. The thief was caught and the material returned to the owners. Police found heaps of stolen goods at the Thief's house

but returning the moonshine didn't do Harry Firth any favours, as apparently he was sick as a dog after consuming too much of the Huon Valley's finest apple spirit.

- Drove Roger Stanley's L34 Torana at Symmons Plains Touring Car Round. Qualified 6th on grid – 2nd or 3rd at hairpin after great start then gear lever broke coming out of the hairpin.
- Darryl has raced at the following tracks:
 - Baskerville, Symmons Plains and Longford
 - Domain, Hillwood and Eaglehawk Neck Hillclimbs
 - Hume Weir (FX and EH), Oran Park (practice only), Sandown (Torana)
 - Calder (FX, EH and Torana), Winton (Torana), Bathurst (practice only)
- Most successful cars: FX (3 titles), EH (3 titles) and Torana (1st Tas finisher at Baskerville 10,000)

Addendum

- Favourite Race circuit? Baskerville
- Local driver that influenced career? Ian Smith
- Which interstate driver did you most admire? Peter Brock
- Most enjoyable car? Hard to say - All good. Probably the EH
- Funniest experience? John Mann punching me at Calder
- How much longer will you race? Wants to beat Dick Crawford's record another three years but not at the same level - getting slower with age
- As a Board member of the Historic Racing Car Club of Tasmania what do you want to achieve? To keep Tasmania's motor racing history alive.
- Best moment in motor sport? 1st Tasmanian at Baskerville 10,000
- Worst moment in motor sport? Running out of fuel in Monaro in support event at Symmons Plains touring Car round.



Darryl after win at Hume Weir



Flat out on Targa Wrest Point Stage Page Seventeen



Wilcox Team outside Motors Pty Ltd. Huonville Workshop



Get out of my way!



Montage 1 – FX Holden



Montage 4 - Monaro



Oh to be young again!