

## A 1950 Lowlight's Pre-Restoration Journey

"I've Been Everywhere, Man!"

By Les Whale

I bought this very original black SMM on eBay in late 2005, and collected it from Melbourne in February 2006. It was, in effect, a 'one-owner' car when I bought it. A Mrs Ferris bought the car in Melbourne new in 1950 (a fully imported Cowley car, not CKD) and owned it until her passing late last century. Her son Graeme had intended to restore it after retiring, but sickness had prevented him from making a start. All he did was move it from the garage of his old family home to his current residence, where it sat in the open for (too) many years.



As first seen, sitting in Montmorency, Melbourne

I towed the car back to Sydney to my old family home at Maroubra, where it spent the first couple of years in my possession. There it joined my 1949 SMM Lowlight, owned since 1964, which I had significantly modified during the sixties with a 'Flash' engine from a Simca Aronde, a Fiat 1100 gearbox and upgraded suspension. But this car had never been finished, and had since deteriorated in storage.

My thinking at the time was to make one SMM Lowlight restoration from the two cars but, as it turned out, I was subsequently able to restore the '49er, (which is my Datsun-powered modified maroon Morrie), starting this in 2007.



The only work done on the black car at that time was getting some re-chroming done to items like the split bumper blades, door catches, bonnet hinges, etc, at the same time as getting the chrome work done for the maroon car.

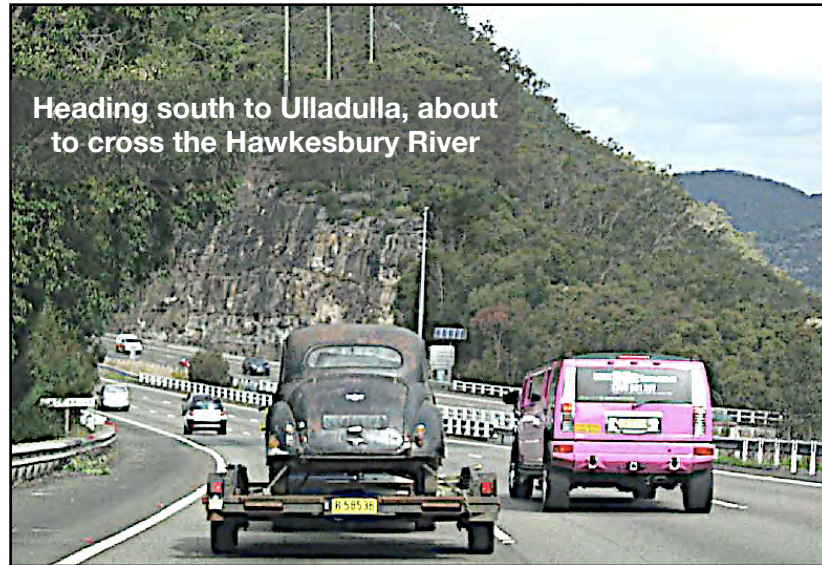
Come mid-2008, both cars had to vacate their Maroubra residence because the house was being sold. The maroon car, with restoration work having already commenced, went to Colin Trusler's big shed at Kempsey to continue the work. The black car found a temporary new home in a hay shed on a dairy farm at Hilldale, about halfway between Paterson and Dungog, on the north coast railway line. I "tucked it up in bed" there in June 2008.



Arriving at the hay shed in Hilldale

I continued to work on the maroon car, when in 2010 I received notice that farmer Trevor needed the shed because his other hay shed had fallen down – “could I kindly remove the car at my earliest convenience?” So the black car had to be moved yet again!

Having formed a beautiful relationship at Maroubra, the two cars renewed their friendship with Colin’s offer to house the car at Kempsey. In October 2010 it made the journey from Hilldale to Kempsey where it was safely housed in the well-protected lean-to adjacent to Colin’s big shed.



Heading south to Ulladulla, about to cross the Hawkesbury River



Colin Trusler supervises unloading into its next 'home' in Kempsey

Work progressed on the maroon restoration, which was finished in April 2011 in time for the National Rally in Port Macquarie. In the meantime, I had purchased our ‘retirement’ property at Ulladulla on the NSW south coast, where in 2012 I built my own shed where the black Lowlight was to be finally restored. Of course, this meant yet another journey for “Blackie”.

A friend further up the north coast had just purchased a 1950s Morris Oxford in Dapto, and he needed to get it back to his place up north. This made for a neat arrangement - I would meet him in Kempsey, he would tow my car down to Ulladulla using Colin’s trailer, and on return would pick up his car in Dapto, take it home, before dropping the trailer back to Colin in Kempsey. This we did in August

2012 – we had quite a long day’s drive down to Ulladulla in one hit, before I assisted my mate to load his car in Dapto the next morning for his return journey.

Well, you would have thought it was now time to start work on the black SMM in its newest home. Unfortunately for it, no. My 1957 blue Minor 1000, in a half-restored state back in Sydney, had been ‘booked’ by my daughter for her wedding in early 2014, so it received top priority and all the attention in the next two years. “Bluey” never made it to the wedding but was finished in 2015 ready for the National Rally in Albury-Wodonga.

The good news is that “Blackie’s” restoration has now been underway since 2018 with completion hoped for in 2021 – but that’s another story . . .



Blackie ready & waiting for its restoration in Ulladulla