



The Squeaky Wheel



Issue #48 - October 2023

ROSS BROS CAR MUSEUM CHROME AND SHINE VS RUST AND TARNISH

On Saturday 22 July the MOTAT Society gathered a group of its members for a tour of the Ross Bros Car Museum in Cambridge. The museum is a private collection of classic muscle cars, vintage trucks, and earthmoving equipment put together by the Ross brothers, operators of C & R Developments, who specialise in large civil earthworks and earthmoving contracts. You can tell the museum is something special, the huge truck exploding through the front wall kind of gives it away.

Entering the Ross Bros Museum the first thing you notice is that everything is super clean and super shiny – well, maybe not the first thing, I guess the wall-to-wall array of classic vehicles in pristine condition might catch your eye initially. But the backdrop of chrome and polish on the black and white “finishing flag” tiled floor, the 1950s American diner, and the collection of music memorabilia certainly set the scene.

Pride of place at the front of the showroom cars is one of NZ motorsports legend Scott Dixon’s iconic race cars. The car is the 2005 Number 9 Target Panoz G-Force Toyota that Dixon raced for his long-time team Chip Ganassi Racing. Teams don’t often sell race cars, even when they are replaced. And they never sell important or championship-winning cars. So while 2005 wasn’t Dixon’s best season that is probably the reason the car was able to be purchased.

Now I’m no car aficionado - they all looked amazing to me (although I must admit I was really impressed with the AC Cobra kit car – my Dad, who passed away a couple of years back, had his own AC Cobra kit – it never made it past the shaped polystyrene stage but the dream remained so it made sense for me to admire it – a tough call considering the rest of the room) but this was a visit to a car museum so it makes sense to list a few of the cars in the showroom (thanks to an article in NZV8 magazine, March 2019, for the details that are completely over my head):

- The Ross brothers’ father’s Aston Martin DBS V8.
- A Z28 Camaro, powered by a 302ci small block and 4-speed. I have to say I WAS impressed by the pool table made from another Z28 pool table (or two).
- A big block 454ci 1971 Corvette.
- A 1964 Fairlane Thunderbolt replica built by Steve Keys.
- A 1968 Torino.
- A bright red 1971 XY Falcon GT, running a 351W and 4-speed.
- A 1970 HT Holden Monaro, a genuine Bathurst edition powered by a 350ci small block.
- An all-original (other than the big-diameter Simmons wheels) VL Walkinshaw, build number 241.

Most of the cars in the collection still have a current Warrant of Fitness and registration and can be driven – unfortunately, we were not invited (probably for the best!).



An unremarkable door in the classic car showroom leads through in Narnia style to a whole new world. The doorway on the other side is cut through the bucket of a 400-tonne Komatsu PC4000 excavator and the world you step into is remarkably different from the shiny showroom. Gravel floor, un-restored vehicles waiting for attention (no spit and polish here) and massive earthmoving equipment. Tucked away in one corner is the replica of an old 1930s mechanic’s workshop with vintage tractors and farming vehicles awaiting repair. In another there is an excavating equipment graveyard – rusting bulldozers slowly being overtaken by bush. It’s actually really pretty and the recorded Tui song just adds to the atmosphere.

Meandering through the rows of small dozers from the 40s and 50s, dump trucks and fire trucks (including a 1949 KB8, a 1967 R190, and a 1967 Load Star F1890) the stand-out vehicles are some of the biggest I’ve ever seen. There is a Komatsu 575 super dozer (its blade measures nearly 4 metres high and can carry almost 70 cubic metres of material in a single pass) but even this monster pales in comparison with the Caterpillar 994 loader which is described as the largest mechanically driven loader in the world. After scaling the steps to get up to the cab our group gathered in front of one of the 3.5 metre tyres that weigh in at 4.5 tonnes each.

Our next stop was the restoration workshop, pristine and orderly, matched by the C&R Workshops – the Ross brothers definitely have the right business to accommodate their love of vehicle restoration. The Ross Bros Car Museum presents an outstanding display of transport and





technological heritage, celebrating the history of motoring and earth-moving. If you love classic muscle cars or heavy vehicles you should definitely stop in and view the collection. The MOTAT Society is incredibly grateful to Murray Barton, who showed us around and regaled us with tales of the collection, and to the Ross brothers who have opened their private collection to be viewed by the public.

An excursion such as this can only be followed up with a meal at a great local establishment and we all enjoyed a fabulous lunch at the Good Union in Cambridge (and some cider shopping at the associated Good George Brewing). A great way to finish the day before the coach trip home.

*Words by Jodie Cawthorne
Photos by David Kannu and Ken Lee-Jones*



MOTAT SOCIETY SEPTEMBER EXCURSION

Stardome Observatory and Planetarium

Coming off the busy Auckland roads the contrast between city lights and the pitch black in the Maungakiekie Domain was intense. No light - no stars. Heavy cloud cover obviously does not bode for a good night of star watching, however, the MOTAT Society was at Stardome to visit the planetarium where clouds are no barrier to a brilliant show of the stars.

With a short time before the show, we were able to view the interactive exhibits outside of the theatre, then filed in to sample the new seating within the planetarium, one of the items included in the recent \$2 million refurbishment of the venue. As part of the improvements to the observatory a new, permanent kōkōrangī Māori astronomy show - Ngā Wāhanga o te Tau (Seasons of the Year) - was introduced to the planetarium beginning with Takurua: Winter, an introduction to Māori astronomy and the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar). Being September the MOTAT Society came into the next stage of the show, Kōanga (Spring). Reclining back in luxurious comfort we turned our focus to the 360-degree screen in the



Planetarium's domed theatre and experienced not only an informative show about the whetū (stars) of kōanga (spring) and how they inform the way we interact with the taiao (natural environment), but an almost three-dimensional trip, launching off from earth, and out to the edge of the known universe.

Our presenter, Olive, guided us through the experience with an almost hypnotic voice and at least one of our party perhaps relaxed a bit too much! Olive talked us through the whetū of seasonal focus in our night sky and explained their significance to Aotearoa New Zealand combining mātauranga Māori alongside Western scientific tradition. It was an absolute experience and we'd like to thank Olive Karena-Lockyer and the Stardome Planetarium and Observatory.

Words by Jodie Cawthorne. Picture from Stardome Observatory & Planetarium website.

YOUR 2024 MOTAT SOCIETY COMMITTEE

The MOTAT Society held its 2023 AGM on Wednesday the 13th of September 2023 with the usual AGM processes - reports for the previous year, annual financials, and election of the committee members.

This year we were grateful to be given a very interesting and entertaining presentation from MOTAT Staff and Society Members Christen McAlpine, Head of Registry and Emily Hames, Assistant Registrar about their roles within the Collections team at MOTAT 2. (Keep an eye out for an article about this presentation in the next edition of Squeaky Wheel).

The Committee would like to farewell Henry Swan and Ross Goldsworthy as they stand down from the Committee and would like to thank them both for their continuous and dedicated contribution to the Society, both in their continuing capacity as volunteers and as members of the MOTAT Society and the MOTAT Society Committee.

The Committee would also like to welcome two new Committee members, Kate Newton and Bryna Foster, both MOTAT Staff members.

Therefore your 2024 MOTAT Society Committee is as follows:

- John Tutchen - Chairman
- Makyla Curtis - Deputy Chair
- Alan Curtis - Treasurer
- Bruce Wild
- Peter Burch
- Bill Rayner
- Scott Pilkington
- Kate Newton
- Bryna Foster

Words by Jodie Cawthorne



November Excursion



THAMES GOLDMINE EXPERIENCE & SIR KEITH PARK MEMORIAL AIRFIELD VISIT

Saturday 25 November 2023

Join us on a full-day trip to the Coromandel Coast to experience the best of Thames heritage. Pay for your lunch, everything else free to MOTSoc Members
(non-members travel for free, \$16 entry to Thames Goldmine Experience).

**LIMITED SEATS AVAILABLE
SO BOOK NOW AT
ADMIN@MOTATSOCIETY.ORG.NZ**



MotSoc visit to Bush Tramway Club – 6th August 2023

We were looking forward to our visit to the Bush Tramway Club again following our last visit there two years ago. It was then and was again this time one of our highlight trips. We were there on a day when the Club had just advertised in the local Waikato news that they were still open after the floods, and they were extremely busy.

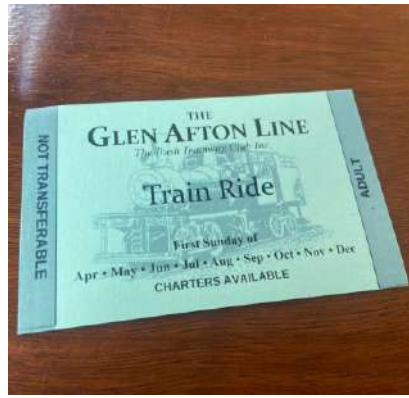
A team of a dozen of our members gathered at M2 for an early start and were at Pukemiro Junction by around 11:00am. Some of us queued to get on an early train which was running a shuttle between the two ends of the line. It is currently a little shorter than usual due to flood damage, however the ride is still a great experience. Others of us spent time elsewhere and took a later train.

One of the great benefits of Pukemiro Junction is its small size. This means that you can get around the whole site, stop and talk to the volunteers and spend time in the workshops getting to understand the projects they are working on and the progress they are making.

There was a BBQ running on the station platform and the “tea people” were flat-out serving the customers. We were there for about four hours and were busy taking photographs for The Squeaky Wheel and another publication. It was an extremely relaxing day and very pleasing to see how well supported The Bush Tramway Club is by their local community.

Words by Alan Curtis
Photos by Jodie Cawthorne





Les Downey: 6 June 1930 –15 September 2023 HONORARY LIFE MEMBER MOTAT SOCIETY

Les was born in Wellington and from early childhood had a strong interest in models, particularly cars, ships and aircraft made out of cast alloy or carved out of wood. His first job, post-war, was with a model aircraft supply company and in seeking a more serious interest joined Whites Aviation Ltd working with the Leo White photographic collection. (This collection is now held in the Walsh Memorial Library at MOTAT)

He furthered his involvement in aviation by obtaining an airframe apprenticeship with Tasman Empire Airways Ltd (TEAL) based at Hobsonville which led onto a twelve months course at the RNZAF Technical Training School where he worked on Tiger Moths, Harvards and Mosquitos. TEAL at the time were using Short Sandringham and Solent flying boats, one of which "Aranui" is at MOTAT, and Les had the opportunity to extend his apprenticeship to work on these. During this time Les became interested in aircraft photography and started an Auckland branch of an aircraft interest group with the desire to eventually build his own ultralight aircraft. On his meagre apprenticeship wage building an aircraft was out of the question, so he settled on modelling aircraft instead. TEAL was now based at Mechanics Bay over the road from the railway yards on Quay Street.

Passing the rail yard daily on his way to and from work he became fascinated with the movement of trains on their tracks and decided to try his hand at modelling trains. To build a good model needed detail from drawings or photographs, so with a good background of photography, particularly working with



Above: Les at Brisbane International 17-03-09 on way to NZ and to visit MOTAT

Leo White, he started photographing any part of the railway that would assist him to build a realistic model of the NZ Railway of the 1950's era. His collection included not just trains but the infrastructure, lineside features, buildings, locomotive and rolling stock details. He became interested in the history of the railway, collecting documents and other information. An invaluable record to be known as the "Les Downey Collection" and through the vision of Librarian Lorraine Wilson and the MOTAT Society the collection was made available to the Walsh Memorial Library at MOTAT.

His interest in heritage transport was flourishing and he was soon attracted to the activities at MOTAT and by 1970 he had joined the Museum and become a volunteer in the Rail Section. As a volunteer, he was a hard worker, he became Chairman of the Rail Section for a long term, and was eventually elected onto the Museum's Management Committee serving as a member for about 8 years. He was also employed by the Museum between April 1978 and June 1980 to carry out special projects, reporting to the Director (Ron Richardson) including Sylvia Park Off-site Stores Supervisor, Weekend Duty Supervisor and Special Projects Supervisor.

Les was also heavily involved in several large Rail projects such as the development of the rail yard at MOTAT 1 and preparation for and arrival of the Waitakere station building, and steam locomotives; Ab832, Ww491, J1236 and particularly K900 and the publicity and crowd support it created.

One of Les's claims to fame, and fitting legacy, was the bringing together a group of fellow Railway Modellers to design and build a model of the North Island Main Trunk railway in the basement of the band rotunda, successfully opened in 1980. During this time it was obvious that the rail collection at MOTAT 1 was outgrowing the site and as there was no possibility of extending the operating part of the Railway onto the Western Springs reserve, as originally hoped, a proposal was put by Les to Management to eventually relocate to MOTAT 2, which was approved. Plans were prepared for the track layout on the site including an operating track which was to receive official status. The Western Springs Railway was officially opened by the then Minister of Railways George Gair December 1982, thanks to Les's perseverance. Les was still Section Head, Member of the Management Committee until 1984 and for a time served as a Deputy Warden for the Periodic Detention Centre in the MOTAT grounds.



Above: First spike ceremony May 1982. Les encouraging the Minister of Railways, Hon Geo Gair, who was driving the first spike for the construction of the Western Springs Railway. The Minister kindly returned five months later to drive the last spike when the railway was completed.

Les was elected an honorary Life Member of the MOTAT Society in 1988. Because of health problems Les



Above: This is a corner of Les's NZR layout illustrating his expertise in model making..

was advised to move to the warmer drier climate of Queensland and in 1994 emigrated with his wife, Diane and family, to Australia. MOTAT was still part of Les's life and he was ever hopeful to the end that one day the Museum would feature a Railway display pavilion. Les will be remembered for his ability to communicate well, as a good organiser and leader, and as a meticulous modeller. As a fellow volunteer and good friend of 53 years, he will be sadly missed.

Les passed away peacefully at his home in Brisbane on the 15th September 2023 after a long and painful illness.

Richard Croker
September 2023

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT

MOTAT Society's October Event

Most of the MOTAT Society's monthly events have been trips away to look at the work of others, from mechanical and historical restoration to innovative bookbinding and pottery. So when the opportunity arose for a hands-on opportunity to explore my own creativity I for one jumped at the chance alongside a small group of MOTAT Society members.

Intro to Expressive Printmaking

Toni Mosley is a Printmaker and Educator with a passion for artworks on paper. "Having taught for over 20 years, she loves working within the community whether this is with pop-up print workshops or art classes she teaches to all ages, as well as creating work in her studio, Blue Bathtub Press. Toni has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in NZ and overseas." Browne School of Art www.browne.school.nz/toni-mosely

To view some of Toni's work visit her on <https://bluebathtubpress.com> or Instagram: @tonimosleyart @bluebathtubpress.

Our morning workshop with Toni M introduced us to the process of Monotype printing, also known as the painterly print process. Toni took us through its history and showed us some great historical examples such as Three Ballet Dancers, by Edgar Degas. We learned about reductive and additive monotypes, how to use the hand press, and then we were let loose to experiment ourselves.

We have some real artists within the Society and their one-of-a-kind prints were fantastic. It took me a few tries and a bit of ink on my face to relax into it but it was a lot of fun.



Unfolding Ideas – An Introduction

Toni Hartill is "primarily a printmaker who also creates unique artist books and sculptural works. Common themes in her work include a love for the natural environment, explorations of environmental concerns and a fascination for the strong ties that come with connections to "place". Toni regularly exhibits in group and selected shows, enjoys participating in collaborative projects and is currently working towards her 2nd solo exhibition." Browne School of Art www.browne.school.nz/toni-hartill.

To view some of Toni's work visit her website at <https://tonihartillart.blogspot.com/p/artists-books.html> or find her on Instagram and Facebook: @tonihartillart.

Our afternoon workshop was an introduction to simple folded structures for creating artists' books. Toni provided us with several pre-cut bright sheets of paper and went through different methods of folding 3 dimensional books showing us some beautiful examples prior to our trying each method for ourselves.

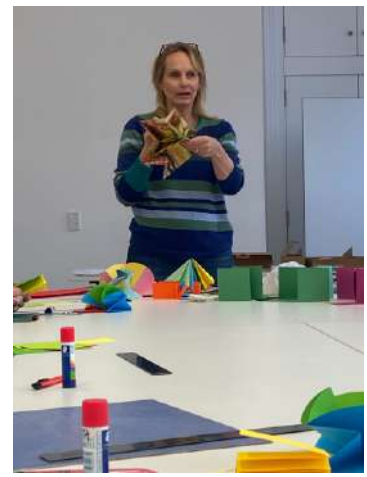
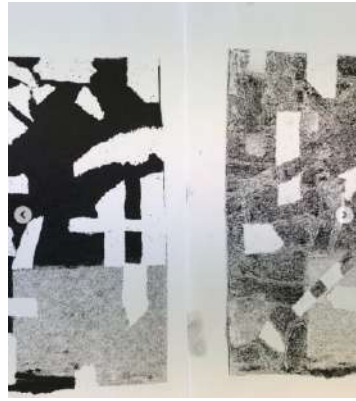
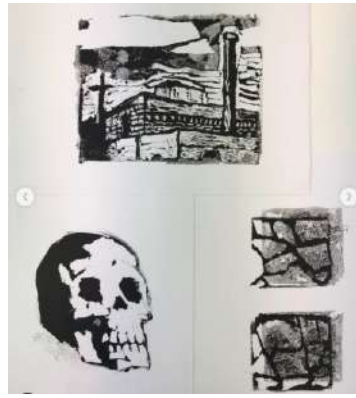
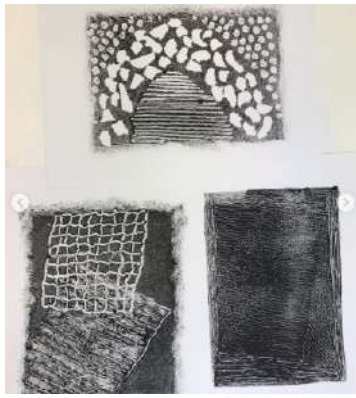
At the end of the session, we were able to continue working with other papers such as music sheets and maps to experiment with our own artists' book.

Both workshops were so much fun and viewing the work of artists in both monotype printing and 3-dimensional artists' books was definitely inspiring. I am looking forward to creating more artists' books using my own monotype print papers. Thanks to the two Toni's for their patience and brilliant teaching, to Makyla and Alan Curtis for introducing the two Toni's to the Society, and to Studio One Toi Tū for providing us the space to learn and create.

Words by Jodie Cawthorne

Photos by Jodie Cawthorne and Toni Mosley







MOTAT Society & Tramway Social Club
DOCKLINE BBQ

The annual Tramway Social Club and MOTAT Society BBQ is once again being held at the Dockline Tram Shed in the Wynyard Quarter. Book a place at the picnic table by contacting the MOTAT Society Administrator at admin@motatsociety.org.nz



Saturday
9 March 2024 4.30pm

**THE
MOTAT
SOCIETY
CONTACTS**

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Contributions to the MOTAT Society quarterly The Squeaky Wheel newsletter and/or monthly Events and Announcements newsletter can be sent to admin@motatsociety.org.nz.