

The REAL Story Behind the Photo

On the cover of the May Newsletter, we displayed a photo to commemorate the end of WWII and show Morris Eight Sports in military service. The following article, from a late 1990's newsletter tells the real story!!

VEHICLE IMPRESSMENT FOR THE ARMY IN THE EARLY DAYS OF W.W.2.

A few years ago we produced a Newsletter with an Army Camp photo showing several Morris Eights parked at the Army Camp together with what appeared to be Army tanks, but were really only cars dressed up as tanks to fool the enemy should any spies fly over our Army camp.

These mock up tanks were known as Bob Semples tanks as he was Labour Minister of Works at the time and this idea was his.

The photo is still on a display board at the Clubrooms and I feel should be used in conjunction with this article. Apparently when World War Two struck in 1939 the Army was short of vehicles and the vehicle assemble plants in New Zealand were starting to change over to manufacturing ammunition etc. and there were no vehicles being assembled so something had to be done to transport our troops etc. and the answer was vehicle impressment from private owners.



In the main cities two men I know were seconded from their private jobs and sent out on the city streets with note books each day and their job was to note the make, year and registration number of the vehicles they spotted and thought would be suitable for the army.

The details were handed in at the end of each day and the owners were located through motor registration details and asked to bring their vehicles to Army drill halls for assessment by army mechanical staff.

After assessment and if the vehicle was suitable, the owner was given a price based on what had been the original purchase price less a small amount for depreciation based on the mileage already covered.

The price was fair and I know of vehicles only being devalued by 30 to 40 pounds from their original purchase price. The vehicle was taken there and then but a deal was drawn up giving the owner the first option to buy it back at the end of hostilities.

As things turned out the vehicles were well maintained and the Government kept their word on re- purchase by the owners that lost them to the army and I can quote a

few owners that bought their own vehicles back and had them repainted and used them until new vehicles later become available.

As far as heavy trucks were concerned these were located from their vehicle inspection records but the Government took to many and transport firms had insufficient vehicles to use for the cartage of involved in essential industry, so by 1942 the Government of the day had to allow the importation of trucks from America and also release trucks from the army to keep up with coal and timber cartage etc.

Several heavy trucks and buses were well passed their use by date with worn out motors and the army had to release mostly new Ford V 8, Chevrolet, and G.M.C. motors to keep vehicles in service

Several American left-hand drive chassis mostly Macks were imported for New Zealand Railways road services and converted to right-hand drive in Wellington and had bus bodies built on them to keep passenger transport going until new chassis became available .

From 1946 new cars and trucks started to roll off New Zealand assembly lines but it took several years to satisfy a vehicle starved country such as we had, due to the war

Arnold McDonald

