

THE COMMITTEE FOR LORNE

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LORNE WARD EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 23** Victorian Surf Life Saving State Junior Carnival, at Lorne beach
25 Monday Night Market, Lorne Bowls Club 5.30-8.30

MARCH

- 3** Clean Up Australia Day, Meet at the LAAC at 9am. Bring gloves & sunblock.

THE LONG FARE

Last week when I checked my Post Office box for mail, there was a card announcing that Uber, the new taxi service, was now available on the Surf Coast.

There was even a \$20 voucher for me to use on my first Uber ride! Reflecting on this next step in transportation, triggered a memory of a taxi ride of a very different kind which had its beginnings in Lorne in 1930 and is still regarded as the World's Longest Fare.

One winter's day in 1930, an elderly woman approached Charlie Heard, a taxi driver, as he waited for a fare in Geelong. Was he interested in a "long fare", she asked him? "Yes," he replied, thinking she meant Melbourne. Ada Beal, a well-known resident of Lorne, told him: "I want to go to Darwin and back".

Miss Beal promised to cover all expenses, as well as paying normal taxi rates. Even so, Mr Heard – who had served in France in the First World War and later helped build Victoria's Great Ocean Road – hesitated at first. He had four young children and said he would have to consult his wife, Hazel. But it was the Depression, and the offer was too good to turn down.

Three weeks later, they set off on a 7,000-mile (11,000 km) odyssey across the Outback, the world's longest continuous taxi ride. Mr Heard was at the wheel of his 1928 Hudson convertible. Miss Beal had two companions; Miss Wilmott, an elderly friend, and Miss Glenny, her nurse and housemaid.

At that time, there were barely any roads in the Australian interior, just a

few bush tracks leading from farms to nearby townships. With a compass, Mr Heard navigated their way across desert scrubland, sand dunes and crocodile-infested rivers, returning 12 weeks later. Their only mishap en route was a single puncture.

Miss Beal, a wealthy heiress with a wooden leg and a taste for adventure, wore a fur coat at all times, even in the 40C desert heat. Mr Heard wore a jacket and tie and would shoot wild geese for dinner. He also used his gun to fend off poisonous snakes.

Mr Heard had never been to the Outback, although he had bush skills, acquired while growing up in rural Victoria. The Hudson weighed nearly four tons when they set off from Geelong. Piled up on the running boards and on the back was half a ton of spare parts, water, fuel, tents, bedding and camping gear, and all manner of tools, including jacks and spanners.

They headed west along the coast to Port Augusta, via Warrnambool, Mount Gambier and Adelaide, then turned the car north and drove to Oodnadatta – an extremely remote township even by today's standards – to Alice Springs. Eight hundred miles farther north lay Darwin.

Even on the bitumen that now links some of these centres, it is a gruelling trip. But Mr Heard and his passengers were travelling cross-country. Some days they progressed only nine miles, with Mr Heard laboriously rolling out tennis nets made of coconut matting so they could cross sand dunes without getting stuck. One photograph shows them traversing

tall bull grass, with one of the women standing on the bonnet, her head poking out just above the grass, to guide the driver.

At night the four of them camped, and slept in tents, on stretchers, although Miss Beal preferred to sleep in the car. Miss Glenny would fold down the seats and make up a bed for her. They would buy bread and other supplies if they passed a homestead or town. But mostly they were dependent on what Mr Heard could trap. They reached one pastoral station, Mataranka, with one litre of fuel left in the tank.

Despite the conditions, they never suffered a mechanical failure, although they sometimes had to enlist the help of Aborigines to push the car through a river or drag it out of sand dunes. But the Hudson never broke down – which was fortunate, because they probably would have perished – and the car returned to Geelong on its original tyres.

The return journey was marginally less arduous: after descending from Darwin to Tennant Creek, in the Northern Territory, they headed to Brisbane and drove home along the east coast, via Sydney and Melbourne. The Hudson consumed four quarts (4 litres) of oil and 550 gallons (2,500 litres) of petrol and was refuelled with supplies left by Afghan camel drivers.

There is no record of the fare Charlie Heard was paid, but his family believe it was about £300, the equivalent of \$19,000 today. It was enough to enable him to buy his own service station in Benalla, a rural town in Victoria.

Steve Heard, Charlie's grandson,

recreated the journey in 2014 and with author Larry O'Toole, produced a book about this incredible journey; "The World's Longest Fare". Lorne Beach Books (5289 2489) would be pleased to order a copy of this book for those interested in reading more of this fascinating tale from Lorne's colourful history.

Peter Spring

Acknowledgements: Independent UK, Graffiti Publications, Turning Point Films Steve Heard



COMMITTEE FOR LORNE

As we embark on the last week of summer it's been interesting to share the experiences of local traders and visitors to the coast. I think it would be hard to argue that the summer weather pattern of the this season has been nothing short of sensational and has many saying "the best for years". It's been a bumper year for the coast in so many ways and let's hope that autumn treats us just as kindly towards Easter.

In what's been seen as a great initiative, the organisers of Monday Night Music at the Lorne Bowls Club have been running the Monday Night Market over the past fortnight and the final market is scheduled next week so if you haven't been, get down on Monday and support this great activity. The organisers, respecting the Gadubanud

land, have creatively put together a market celebrating creativity, skills, knowledge and passion and promoting environmental sustainability as well as community – a great initiative.

Last Thursday, we convened our first Committee for Lorne (CFL) meeting for 2019 and it was so good to see the new faces around the table. With Mary Lush (Friends of Lorne) and Karen Stribling (Lorne Business & Tourism Association - LBTA) improving our gender balance in joining Kate Gillan and Carly Enticott and with Paul Upham (LBTA) and David Worth (Lorne Aquatic & Angling Club) rounding out the new Committee, we have a "full table" and it's great to see such a broad cross section of Lorne continuing to come together as one.

There are always challenges in pulling a team together and as a town, we are so lucky to have the foundations in place to continue to guide the aspirations for our future. We have such a diverse group and there are always views and opinions that are not perfectly aligned, but therein lay the unique dynamic that is Committee for Lorne. We know that when individual views differ the underlying respect for those opinions is driven by the passion we all share for our town of Lorne.

Over the coming months we will be looking to share with you on our website an abridged version of our meeting minutes and discussions, providing another channel to our communication plan

If you haven't checked out our website go

to www.committeeforlorne.org.au and share the journey with us.

This weekend in Lorne we welcome over 1500 budding junior life savers, family and friends for the 2019 Junior Victorian Surf Life Saving Championships on the Lorne beach with competition spread over both Saturday and Sunday. With very little accommodation remaining in town it is sure to be another huge action packed weekend for Lorne.

We urge you to mark in your diaries our first community lunch which we have scheduled for Friday the 8th of March (Labour Day Weekend) and RSVP your attendance to nicole@greatoceanroadrealestate.com.au.

Ian Stewart

Chairman - Committee for Lorne

A word from the Chairman