

1986 Panel - Jubilee Mail Run Re-enactment

The South Australian 150th anniversary celebrations spawned a number of historic re-enactments. A group of Leigh Creek based Tom Kruse enthusiasts, lead by Dave Burge decided it was reason enough to mount a serious effort to rescue the 1936 Leyland Badger from the steel shot gibber plain on Pandie Pandie Station, south of Birdsville. The truck was one of two vehicles that featured in the multi award winning John Heyer directed Shell Film Unit's 1954 docudrama ***The Back of Beyond***. (# refer to Reference folder – *Tough Life of Leyland Badger*).

- 1936 - Built in the UK and sold by Sidney Crawford (CMV Adelaide) to Harry Ding
- 1939 - adapted by Harry Ding to suit Birdsville track conditions with Thornycroft rear axles and a transmission salvaged after a Thornycroft carrying a load of wool crashed at Carrieton in SA.
- 1942 - Tom Kruse and Badger 'took on' the Birdsville Track
- 1948 - Tom discarded the Leyland chassis and replaced it with another of his own design using rolled steel joists (RSJs). He made it by hand at the Lelliot Brothers workshop in Port Adelaide.
- 1949 - Sold by Harry Ding to Tom Kruse on October 28th 1949
- 1954 - Featured in the docudrama film ***The Back of Beyond***
- 1957 - Abandoned by Tom at Gilpaninna Dam on Pandie Pandie Station
- 1985 - Rediscovered in the desert by Peter Ware
- 1986 - Mail Run Re-enactment recover Leyland Cub – ***ABC Countrywide***
- 1993 - The Copley Crew led by Peter Ware recover the Leyland Badger
- 1996 - Trailered Copley to Northfield for restoration – ***ABC Australian Story***
- 1999 - Fully restored - lead by Neil Weidenbach, Aynsley Rowe and Tom Kruse
- 1999 - Birdsville to Birdwood re-enactment - ***Last Mail from Birdsville*** story
- 2000 - Feature vehicle Melbourne 4 x 4 Show
- 2002 - Tom and Badger attend The Legends of the Outback at Arkaroola
- 2003 - Tom and Badger named SA Icons by the National Trust
- 2004 - In Marree for the 50th anniversary of the release of ***The Back of Beyond***
- 2008 - Bequeathed to the National Motor Museum by Tom and Valma Kruse

The truck had a tough life and was abandoned by Tom at Gilpaninna Dam on Pandie Pandie Station in 1957. Tom was using it at the time in his dam sinking business. It and a Leyland Cub sat side by side in the desert. Time and the elements had taken their toll. The Leigh Creek Mail Run Re-enactment team in May 1986 travelled in convoy with Tom and two refurbished Blitz trucks carrying wheels, tyres, oxy gear and other essentials they hoped to use to recover the Badger. (One of the Blitz trucks used in the recovery effort is now on display across the road from the Marree Hotel). It didn't happen. It was too hard to get it off the ground. The Cub however was recovered. It's now at CMV in Adelaide.

ABC Countrywide recorded the recovery attempt. ***The Outback Mailmen*** is part of the RFDS's ***The Back of Beyond Collection*** DVD available at the Hotel.

Photo credits: Mark Metzger and Neil Weidenbach Collections.