

# TRACMACH ARTICLE

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## **Ken Hall – A Magnificent Collection**

Ken Hall of Brookton celebrated his remarkable 102nd birthday in February this year. Over the past century, he has witnessed – and been part of – profound changes in agricultural and transport technology, from the era of horse-drawn carts to the advent of GPS-guided machinery.

Born in Tocumwal, New South Wales, in 1923, Ken moved to Brookton in 1928 at the age of five. His parents, William and Ivy Hall, had seized the opportunity to purchase uncleared land in Western Australia at an affordable price, beginning a new chapter in their lives as pioneering farmers.

Ken rode a horse to and from school, and left at the age of 14 to begin working with his father, using a team of horses for farm work. William, a passionate horseman, briefly explored mechanized farming with the purchase of an F-model Fordson tractor. However, due to his limited mechanical skills, the tractor broke down within a year and was never repaired. Disillusioned with mechanization, William returned to using horses.

In 1936, the family acquired a more reliable W30 tractor, which remained in use for 23 years. They also briefly used a Cat 22. During World War II, Ken was 'manpowered' and required to stay on the farm to support the war effort. These were challenging times, marked by shortages of fuel and parts, prompting farmers to adapt – using gas producers and modifying existing equipment to keep their operations going.

Unlike his father, Ken showed a natural aptitude for mechanics from a young age. He became self-taught in mechanical, electrical, and later hydraulic systems. His first vehicle was a Chev 4 truck, followed by an A Ford, which he later converted into a utility vehicle in the 1950s.

Ken's enthusiasm for motors extended beyond the farm. In his younger days, he actively participated in car rallies and trials, serving as President of the Brookton Car Trials Club. He loved recounting tales of thrilling drives across the district to his family.

His passion for vintage machinery intensified in the 1980s. In 1962, during a trip to Perth, Ken purchased an old A Ford from a Subiaco dealer. He transported it back to the farm and converted it into a Ute. Affectionately nicknamed "Lizzie," this vehicle reignited his interest in the old machines of his youth and became a symbolic starting point for his lifelong hobby of restoration.

As he began stepping back from active farming, Ken dedicated more time to reviving early mechanized farm equipment. His first major restoration project was an old contractor's chaff cutter, which he completely rebuilt. This success led to further projects, including hay binders, balers, harvesters, combines, and eventually vintage cars and trucks from the 1930s. His particular interest lay in A-Fords, some of which he bought already restored, some project pieces. One of his greatest finds was an 8hp stationery engine in working order which he bought home from Ballarat

Ken would often rescue vehicles abandoned for decades under trees on farms around the state, using skills honed during the Depression to get their engines running again. These machines were then parked in a large shed he constructed in 1987 on Hillside Farm, made from repurposed buildings. He employed a retired panel beater, whom he nicknamed 'Mudguard', and together they bought back to life a range of McCormick Deering tractors ranging from a Farmall Cub W12 .Farmall A. H To M , tractors... 15-30, 1020, W30, WK40, WD40, W4, W6 ,WD6, T20 crawler tractor. Together they restored 38 tractor guards in one year.

A defining project was the full restoration of an International truck. Ken sourced technical manuals from enthusiast groups, and even repurposed timber floorboards from a house being demolished to make way for his retirement home – using the boards to deck the truck's tray. This truck took centre stage at his 100th birthday celebrations and featured in cherished family photographs, with children grandchildren perched on its back. Ken once remarked that he wished to make his final journey to the cemetery aboard that very truck.

Ken's dedication to preserving mechanical history was matched by his active involvement in car clubs and motor shows:

**Key Milestones:**

- **1956:** Club President of the Brookton Car Club
- **1985–1990:** Active in veteran car clubs, including the Model A Restorers Club and Trachmac.
- **1990–2000:** Displayed restored vehicles at the Brookton Old Time Motor Show.
- **2000–2010:** Continued his participation in motor shows. In the T-Ford Centenary Year 2008 drove from Geraldton to Esperance where 16 of the 35 participating cars were T-Fords
- **2013:** To mark Ken's 90th birthday, his family organized a mini car rally from Brookton to York, featuring his beloved A Ford, Chev, Buick and T Ford – a spectacular convoy through the Wheatbelt.

Sadly, Ken is now no longer able to indulge in his passion, and his collection stands quietly, a powerful reminder of his mechanical talent and historical commitment. The collection includes a wide range of items, from parts to fully restored vehicles, all representing a bygone era. Plans are underway to auction the collection in 2026.

Ken Hall's legacy is not only one of farming and innovation but also of preserving history – one lovingly restored machine at a time

Coral Hall