

West's Motors Albury

Joe Wooding

Mr W H (Bill) West, proprietor of West's Motors, 534 Kiewa Street (opposite Stanley Street) erected a 60ft tower above his dealership in 1937. At its apex, a cone 12ft high was attached with neon tubing affixed. The cone flashed "AY" in code to alert any night flying aircraft of their location.

While the cone flashed red, West also outlined the parapet of the building with static red and blue neon tubing. First lit on Saturday, March 13, 1937, the newspapers noted the effect was "particularly bright."

West had obtained approval from the Defence Department, Albury Municipal Council and presumably the Odewahn family, owners of the freehold since 1926, to erect it. Authorities had proposed a series of beacons along the major air routes between the capitals, but rapid advances in radio and radar technology meant that commercial visual navigation could never become functional. It is not clear how long West's beacon operated or if it helped any aircraft.

West's Motors traded in Albury as a car dealer and service agent from 1922. Their first advertisement in the *Albury Banner* September 21, 1923 was most impressive: West lauded the world's famous "Hispano Suiza" in four models. Top of the range being the six-cylinder H6 model, price £1,950. The others were four cylinders, reducing from £1,050. Also included were single and double seater Chevrolet, Pikes Peak "Chandler" and sports model "Cleveland." Their phone number was 105, but Albury the only address given.

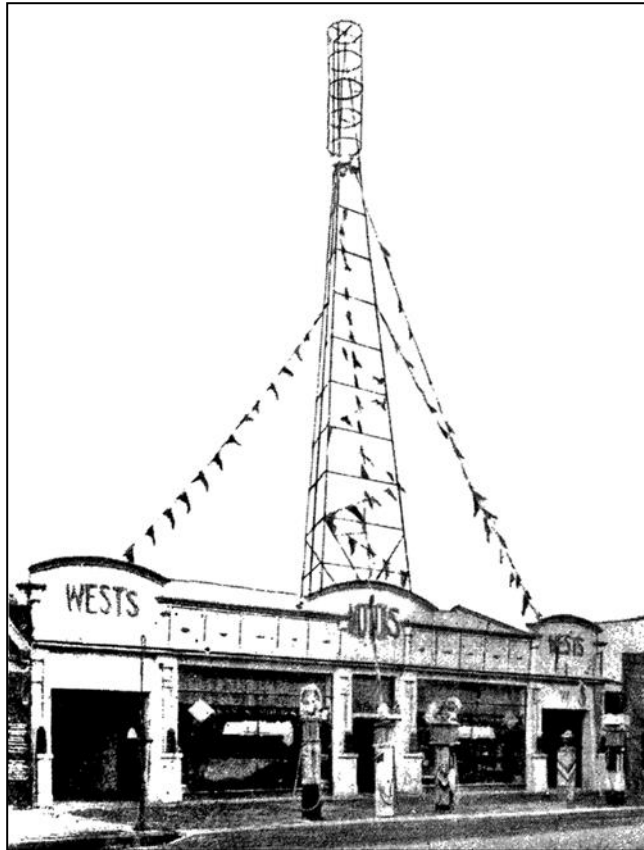
During the ensuing forty years, such makes as Essex, Citroen, Itala, Overland, Hudson, Cadillac, Pontiac, Buick, Lasalle, Vauxhall, Bedford Trucks etc were advertised.

In 1926, the business expanded with a new showroom built next door and trading under the General Motors logo.

Around 1930 petrol bowsers were introduced. In 1948 a spare parts division was added.

When Bill West died aged 68 in 1964, the business became insolvent. It was then bought and operated by Preston Motors.

The Odewahn family sold the freehold to Ampol in 1968, who eventually demolished the buildings and tower, before erecting a petrol station on the corner of Kiewa and Swift Street.



West's Motors Garage in Kiewa Street stood out with its 60 ft (18 metre) tower erected in 1937.

Albury City Council acquired the site around 1989, converting it into car parking until the Library Museum was built and opened in 2007.

Yours truly spent six months as bowser boy and car polisher from February 1952.