

Frederick Charles Blacklock

Information for this biography is taken from research by A&DHS members Peter Whitbourn and Chris McQuellin and from Albury newspapers.

Greg Ryan

The Blacklock's Ford dealership is not as old as the Ford motor car company, established by Henry Ford in 1903. Blacklocks, the firm established by Frederick Charles Blacklock in the 1890s, has an interesting history that has stood the test of time. Fred Blacklock was certainly a visionary and an entrepreneur.

He was born in Albury in 1870, the only son of Charles Whalley and Bridget (née Murphy) Blacklock. Charles' obituary in the *Border Morning Mail* in December 1906 tells us that he:

was born at Ulverstone, Lancashire, England, and came to Australia in 1854. An iron-moulder by trade, he secured employment in Melbourne, afterwards journeying to Albury where in the year 1855 he was to be found working away in the historical 'Fanny Ceres' flour mill. Portion of this old mill is still in evidence [1906] and constitutes part of the cycle factory owned by his son, Mr Fred C Blacklock.

Frederick was born "in a cottage that stood off Dean Street on a portion of land now occupied by Beehive Chambers." The cottage was close by the Fanny Ceres mill where his father was described as the "mill engineer."

The first reference to young Blacklock is found in a local newspaper of December 23, 1876 when he was listed as a prize winner in Third Class in the Infants Department at Albury Model Public School. After completing school, he spent some time in the carpentry and joinery trade. In 1886 he is mentioned playing football for Wodonga Juniors. He was to become a very prominent local footballer in the 1890s and delegate in the Ovens & Murray Football Association.

In August 1894, the *Albury Banner* reported that "F C Blacklock has purchased hairdressing and tobacconist's business lately carried on by Mrs Roy opposite the Post Office, and solicits a fair share of support." Since the late 1880s, he was a member of the Albury Town Band.

As a young man Blacklock had a keen interest in bike riding with his friend and later business partner James Scanlan. They were members of the Albury Bicycle Club established in 1893. The club conducted road races around the local area and was responsible for establishing the first Great Bicycle Carnival on Easter Monday April 3, 1893.

Responding to the demand for bicycles, James Scanlan opened a shop at the corner of Dean and Kiewa Streets early in 1896 and secured the local agency of three popular makes of bicycles. Perhaps Fred Blacklock was involved with Scanlan's business at the time, selling Raleigh, Whitworth and the Raglan bicycles.

In September 1897 a 'Century Run' was held, an event that was to be held annually for the next few years. It required cyclists to complete 100 miles (161 km) within twelve hours. The route took eighteen riders from Albury to Woomargama, Germanton, Culcairn, Gerogery, Jindera and back to Albury – Blacklock and Scanlan participated on a tandem bicycle on what can be described as very poor dirt roads.

All advertisements for Albury Cycle Agency up until April 1898 name just Scanlan, but from May 1898 the adverts name Scanlan and Blacklock. The Albury Show report for September 1898 reported their first locally built bicycle as being christened the "Scanlan Blacklock." This was the beginning of bicycle manufacturing locally in Albury.



Albury Cycle Agency in Townsend St
 Fred Blacklock left, Jim Scanlan 4th from left, Alf Fuller 5th from left

Scanlan and Blacklock announced they had procured the best English parts for the manufacture of these bicycles, and their clients could rest assured that with long experience in the trade, the firm was not experimentalist, and that the machine built by them was everything they presented it to be. "A penny post-card addressed to Scanlan and Blacklock, Albury, may save you pounds" an advertisement announced. Within 12 months their bike would be renamed the "Relay."

Business was booming, with Scanlan and Blacklock establishing the "Albury Implement Agency," selling reaper & binders, and the spring tooth cultivator along with the Monarch plough, and Spottiswood stripper.

In November 1899 James Scanlan departed for the Boer War in South Africa. That brought to an end the successful partnership with Fred Blacklock, who bought out his former partner's share of the cycle business. In November 1899 advertisements read "Fred C Blacklock, Albury Cycle Agency, builder of Relay and Blacklock cycles."

In March 1900, increased business prompted Fred Blacklock of the 'Albury Cycle Agency' to take Alfred E Fuller into partnership. By Albury Show time in September, Blacklock and Fuller displayed their 100th



The 1898 Bicycle Carnival – Fred Blacklock in a skeleton costume on a tall bike supported by his father Charles on a tricycle and Jim Scanlan.

Relay, which now included a lady's Relay. Another local bike model was exhibited called the 'Hume.' On March 21, 1902, the *Albury Banner* reported that "Mr Darke's property, having 66ft frontage to Kiewa street, nearly opposite the Rose Hotel, has been purchased by Mr C Blacklock for £445." This property, purchased by Blacklock's father, would later become part of Frederick's expanding business interests.

The following month the *Albury Banner* told readers that:

We were surprised to hear that the puff, puff of the motor was to be a permanency in Albury, but, on inquiry at Messrs Blacklock and Fuller's, Albury, we saw the firm's mechanics busy on a new 'Relay' motor bicycle, the Minerva engines having just arrived from Amiens, France, and it will be built specially strong to stand the rough roads around here ... the pace varying from five to 30 miles per hour as desired. We had no idea the firm's business and premises were so extensive ... the eight hands constantly employed were as busy as possible. Over 300 machines have been built by Messrs Blacklock and Fuller, and now they have added a gun repairing branch where repairs of all kinds are promptly and skilfully done.

In September 1902 the Dunlop Road Race from Warrnambool to Melbourne was won by Matt Chappell on a Relay bicycle built by Blacklock and Fuller of Albury. That same year it was reported that the firm had been established for ten years, 1892-1902.

In February 1903, Fred married local girl, Kate Sexton, at St Patrick's Church Albury.

By December that year, the 'motor bicycle' was proving popular, with the *Albury Banner* providing an example of its popularity and use:

An inquest was held at Dora Dora, and a post-mortem examination of the body being necessary a local medical man left Albury on a motor bike for the purpose. Dora Dora is about 44 miles from Albury, and the road is not exactly of the best. The doctor, however, went up, made the post-mortem, gave evidence at the inquest, and had dinner besides taking a good rest. He was, however, after covering a distance of 88 miles, and all incidental delays, only seven hours absent from town. The motor has evidently come to stay, and as a matter-of-fact Messrs Blacklock and Fuller last week booked orders for five machines.

1903 saw hire cars added to the business portfolio with a new four-cylinder Talbot car purchased from England, and yet another local cycle called the 'Cameo.'

At the start of 1904 larger premises were needed, and an increase in new stocks of English and American cycle parts. A new product was now available, sewing machines. Blacklock and Fuller were now importing cases of cycles, cycle parts, motors, and sewing machines. Repairs of all kinds could be undertaken including motors, cycles, guns and rifles, stirrup irons, bits, and general repairs to all small articles. Agencies for Blacklock & Fuller, Cycle and Motor Experts (Albury), were established at Germanton (Holbrook) and Henty in 1905. The Minerva motor car was included for the first time in their Albury Show display.

On April 20, 1906, the *Albury Banner* reported: "Dissolution of Partnership.— The firm of Blacklock and Fuller, bicycle manufacturers, has been dissolved by mutual consent. Mr Fuller retires, and the business will be carried on by Mr Blacklock."

By September 1906, the advertisements for the business, still in Dean Street, read: "Fred C Blacklock (late Blacklock & Fuller) maker of the famous 'Relay Cycles,' guns and firearms repaired, Mullerite and other cartridges stocked, New Home and Naumann Sewing Machines on hand." A new De Dion motor car was added to the hire fleet in 1907.

Frederick Blacklock was actively involved in community affairs of Albury, being on many committees and donating generously to organisations such as the Albury District Hospital. In early 1907 he was elected as an Alderman on Albury Municipal Council. In welcoming him to his first

meeting of Council, Mayor Alf Waugh described Blacklock as “one of their energetic townsmen and was one most likely to take an interest in municipal matters.” Blacklock remained on Council until 1911.



About 1913/1914, Kiewa St – Fred Blacklock is on the right of the top photo

In 1910 the business moved to new more spacious premises in Kiewa Street. The *Albury Banner* described the new workshop:

Mr F C Blacklock's Garage. The new premises situated in Kiewa-street, opposite Mate and Co, lately purchased by Mr Blacklock give some indication of the vast strides this enterprising citizen has made in the estimation of the cycling and motoring public of Albury and district. The building has been altered and added to in the most up-to-date way; consistent with dealing with the ever increasing volume of trade which first class work and fair dealing has built up. A spacious front shop, stocked with everything which experience dictates as indispensable to cyclists of every description. Motorists' accessories from A to Z,

gun parts, guns, rifles, and shooters' needs are all to be found right to hand. A splendidly equipped workshop, backed up by a staff of skilled and experienced mechanics ...

In November 1913 Blacklock's announced that the business had accepted the 'Ford' agency, the *Albury Banner* making the announcement on November 28:

Mr Fred C Blacklock makes an important announcement in this issue of the 'Banner.' He advises that he has accepted 'The Ford' agency ... the most astonishing thing in connection with 'The Ford' is the price—£190 for a 20 hp (single seater) and £210 for a five seated body.

Blacklock's business interests expanded in 1914. In March, the *Border Morning Mail* had the news that "Owing to the expansion of the motor business at Mr F C Blacklock's garage, he has completed the purchase of Messrs Robbins and Porter's business, and all their stock and plant."

In March 1912, Blacklock had paid £920 for the skating rink site in Kiewa-street. On May 8, 1914, Albury saw the grand opening of his Theatre Royal on the site, built by Frew and Logan. Stuart Logan designed the unusual façade, described as "a blend of Moorish and Gothic and towered to a great height."



Blacklock's Theatre Royal and Blacklock's Ford Agency c1914

The car business continued to expand and in April 1920, the *Albury Banner* reported:

Recent additions made by Mr F C Blacklock to his motor premises and repair shops in Albury have made the establishment one of the largest of the kind in the State. We believe it is now the largest workshop in the country districts, embracing as it does not only every branch of repair work to cars, bicycles and motor tyres, but also some engineering departments ... Having recently purchased Brunner's property in Kiewa-street, he will be able to make extensions in that street. The business premises of Mr Carew in Townsend-street have also been acquired, with the object of eventually carrying the works right through to that street from Kiewa-street.

In 1924, Blacklock's opened their expanded premises on Kiewa Street and by the end of the decade had extended through to Townsend Street. Speaking to the *Border Morning Mail* at the time, and referring to his first motor car, the Minerva that he imported in 1905, Blacklock said that "I felt several inches taller when I got that car going and drove it down Dean Street. Its appearance created a mild sensation. There was no need to register cars or worry about licenses then."



BLACKLOCK'S
1892—1924

1892—
Blacklock's business started—first as cycles and repairs.

1900—
Motor cycles were added to the list, and the fame of the firm spread as importers and repairers.

1905—
The first car was imported, and was quite an event in Albury.

1910—
Business had grown beyond the bounds of the premises, and the present site was purchased and built on and more staff engaged.

1915-1920—
Further additions to staff, plant and premises.
Fame for fair dealing and good work renowned.

1924—
Staff of 37 going continuously—Turning, fitting, oxy-welding, black-smithing, vulcanizing, painting, trimming, motor cycle, cycle and general work, and general engineering.
New two-storey front built and shops enlarged and fine show-room added. Business larger than ever.

When in Albury, see **BLACKLOCK'S**. It has grown solidly, like the town—
on good foundations.

Blacklock's Albury Motor Garage

Box 34— "Where business goes and grows"—'Phone 41

Frederick Charles Blacklock died suddenly on April 20, 1930. An obituary in the *Border Morning Mail* read (in part):

Mr Blacklock's business activities extended over a wide area. He was a large employer of labour, his staff numbering from 45 to at times 60 persons. His success in building up his great business was due to his integrity and application. His watchword was service and that he always rendered in full measure ...

Mr Blacklock was never selfishly absorbed in his own affairs. He played his part as a citizen in his native town's activities. When a young man, he was a keen footballer and played with the old Albury team of that time. He was a generous supporter of all local movements, served a term as alderman and was a committeeman on practically every public institution in Albury. Mr Blacklock took a keen interest in Rotary and was a member of the Albury Club ... His friends were legion in all walks of life, to all he was the same gentle kind hearted man.

It was reported that his funeral "was the largest ever seen in Albury, extending over a mile in length, and more than 1000 mourners assembled at the graveside."

After his death, the business that Fred had established continued to thrive. Arriving in late 1930, Mrs Blacklock's nephew, Mr Robert Farrell, took over management of the business.