

Motor Sport Involvement Begins to Taper Off

While not related to competition, an event of importance on March 7, 1958, was the making of the final hire purchase payment on the car. The amount of \$34.20 made the car all mine. I am not sure what the hire purchase company concerned would have thought about the amount of competition their car had been used for. Later, in March, the car was repainted in "Ford Sports Red" which was very close to the original colour. The cost, for a first class job, was only \$60. Admittedly I had stripped the car of all chrome fittings, lights, bumpers, grill etc and refitted them after painting.

My approaching marriage on April 26 meant there was little motor sport activity early in the year and some scaling down over a period of time. This still allowed me the time to compete in at least three gymkhanas, a speed trial and a hill climb. There was also spectating at a QMSC race meeting at Strathpine in June, a Queensland Racing Drivers Club race meeting at Lowood in August and a hillclimb on a new residential estate at Currumbin on the Gold Coast. The latter was the usual end of year event organised by the Pacific Car Club. The year, 1958, was also the one in which the Toowoomba Auto Club conducted the first of two road races on a circuit using streets in the Toowoomba suburb of Middle Ridge. The full circuit at Leyburn was no longer in a state fit for racing but the Sheep Pen Straight was still being used for speed trials a few years later. It was used again in 1988 for a special nostalgic speed trial but the broken up surface was certainly well past being a suitable competition venue.

My bower bird instincts seem to have deserted me in 1958 as the only information I have about the three gymkhanas is that I paid an entry fee. The payment dates, and most likely the competition dates, were March 1, August 17 and August 30. The entry fee for each of the first two was 40 cents and for the last one \$1. It is probable that the first two were T.A.C. events and the third was organised by one of the clubs in the Brisbane area.

Hillclimb, Prince Henry Drive, June 22, 1958

This was to prove to be my last hill climb as a competitor. The only record I have of this event which shows that it was organised by the TAC is a "Certificate of performance" card. This indicates that my best time for the course was 54.43 seconds. This was 0.03 seconds outside the course record for Class "E" sports cars held by a Swallow Doretti. The cards, of postcard size, were used for a time to give competitors at T.A.C. events a record of their times. A much larger certificate called a "Certificate of Merit" was issued for any competitor breaking a course record.

One of the problems I always encountered at Prince Henry Drive was on the approach to the first bend. To stay in second gear meant exceeding the engine rev limit but to change up meant a change down was needed almost immediately to get around the bend. My best times were invariably made when the rev limit was exceeded.

Speed Trials, Leyburn, August 10, 1958

I have a programme and unofficial results for this TAC event. This tells me there were 15 competitors one of whom drove two cars. The driver who doubled up was my friend Ted Jones. He drove his Chevrolet sedan and also the Austin Healey belonging to, and also driven by, Ray Jorgensen. Ray was to be known in later years as a restorer of Healeys and this Healey, registration NFJ-543, must have been going well as its top speed on the day, when driven by either driver, exceeded the class record which had belonged to the Austin Healey 100S of Steve Ames.

The day must have run very smoothly as some competitors had as many as seven runs in the standing event and one driver managed ten runs in the flying with a number of drivers having eight or nine. Anyone having less than six runs must have had trouble or have felt that they had done as well as possible. The results are from my record and may be in error in some cases.

DRIVER	CLOSED CARS	CLASS	STANDING SECONDS	START FLYING MPH	START KPH
H. Moore	Ford Customline	B	19.03	100.44	161.64
L. Bryant	Morris Minor	F	28.06	52.41	84.34
F. Bentley	Lloyd Hartnett	H?	24.73	61.09	98.31
C. Gay	Holden	D	21.58	83.87	134.97
A. Wickham	Holden	D	21.97	78.39	126.15
C. Chapman	Ford	?	22.64	76.79	123.58
E. Jones	Chevrolet	C?	22.27	did not run	
D. Hohn	Holden	D	NA	72.47	116.63
J. Swiehart	Holden	D	NA	76.40	122.95

SPORTS CARS

R. Jorgensen	Austin Healey	D	17.55	106.50	171.39
E. Jones	Austin Healey	D	17.57	106.63	171.60
K. Ebeling	Triumph TR2	E	18.63	99.00	159.32
G. Bramwell	Standard	?	31.06	N/A	

RACING CARS

R. Taylor	Alfa Romeo	D	NA	104.40	168.01
E. Wendt	Jaguar XK120	C	16.62	129.31	208.09

Note: It appears that Wendt ran in the racing car class where he felt he had a chance of breaking the class record for the flying. In this he succeeded, the previous record being held by C. Anderson in the Jaguar Special at 125.87 mph (202.56 km/h). In the Sports Car class the record, which was 135.2 mph (217.58 km/h), belonged to the D Type Jaguar of Mrs D. Anderson.

As there were no prizes for events such as these the field was usually made up of T.A.C. members or other enthusiasts living in the district. As Leyburn was a further 74 km south west of Toowoomba, it was hardly worth the trip for competitors from Brisbane.

Motor racing, Lowood, Sunday August 31, 1958

This Queensland Racing Drivers Club event saw me only in the role of spectator. As C.A.M.S. had designated the main race, "The 1958 Lowood Trophy", as one of those counting toward the Gold Star award for the Champion Racing Driver this event had attracted a number of name drivers from the south. These were, from Victoria: E.W. Gray (Tornado entered by L.J. Abrahams), S.J. Jones (Maserati) and L. Lukey (Lukey Bristol) and from the ACT, A G Mildren (Cooper Climax). In 1957, and more so in 1958, there were increasing numbers of true racing cars appearing on the Queensland circuits along with a number of highly developed specials.

The cars entered for the "Champions" Scratch Race (they also ran in the main event) were one each of Maserati, Jaguar D Type, Tornado, Sabakat, Lukey Bristol, Repco Holden, Lotus Climax, a Cooper-MG S/C and three of Cooper Climax.

While the field for sports car events still included a large contingent of touring type sports cars there were increasing numbers of more specialised vehicles. Apart from six saloon cars, three of Simca and three of Holden, entered in the "Sports and Saloon Car Handicap" there was one each of Jaguar "D" Type, Cooper Climax, Lotus Climax, Lotus Holden, Jaguar XK140 and a Godfrey Special and twelve of more conventional breed. These were Porsche (2), Austin Healey (1), Triumph "TR2", one with a Buchanan body, (2), followed by MG "TC" (3), "TD" (1), TF (2) and TF S/C (1).

Prize money too was increasing with first place in the "Trophy" race being worth \$200 and the trophy. The minor places attracted \$120, \$80, \$40, \$30 down to \$20 for sixth. There was also a handicap section in the same race with first worth \$60 and descending to \$4 for seventh place.

The lap chart in my programme indicates that the unofficial finishing order was A.B. Mildren (Cooper Climax) followed by S.J. Jones (Maserati), L. Lukey (Lukey Bristol), W.L. Pitt (Jaguar D Type) and A.A. Griffiths (Cooper Climax).

Hill climb, Millmerran

This event organised by the Millmerran club was a new venue and to the best of my knowledge was used only once. It was probably held during the middle of the year as we had some friends, who came up from Brisbane, stay with us before the event and I remember the night as being very cold.

We went to the event in the MG Magnette belonging, I think, to a friend of Vince Jordan. There was a party or barbecue after the event and the owner of the M was a little the worse for wear and Vince drove us home to Toowoomba.

I have no programme or results of the meeting but examination of my photograph album shows that the competitors included the following - the Holden Special of G. Scott, a Cooper, possibly Ford engined, driven by Vince Jordan and a small special being built up by Ray Jorgensen. There were also a number of saloons including at least one each of Holden, Morris Major and Morris Minor. There were two MGs, one the "MGA" coupe of Len Austin and the other, a black tourer possibly that of Joe Marano. Joe Marano and Vince Jordan, who had not brought his car, were two regular competitors both of whom drove a black MG "MGA".





Motor racing, Toowoomba, Saturday September 20, 1958

This meeting was advertised as the "Carnival of Flowers Road Racing Championships" and was a supporting event for the well known carnival held each year. This was not a competitive event for me but I was certainly involved. My job for the day as a member of the T.A.C., the organising club, was that of grid marshall. The circuit used the streets of the Toowoomba suburb of Middle Ridge for a lap distance of 2.6 miles (4.2 km.). It was used again the following year (1959) but despite representations to the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport the club was not allowed to use it in 1960. The start line was in Stenner Street (Redman Straight) which curved immediately into Mackenzie Street (Gazelle Straight) followed by a right angle turn (Hillman Corner) into Alderley Street (Morgan Motors Straight). At Humber Corner there was another right angle turn into Rowbotham Street (Tempo Straight) then another right turn (Gazelle Corner) followed by a short section called the Tempo Wiggle at the beginning of Redman Straight.

Percy Morgan Redman had motor dealerships throughout southern Queensland plus Murwillumbah and Lismore which dealt with products of the then Rootes Group, Fiat tractors and the Tempo range of Rapide and Matador commercial vehicles. Gordon Motors was another Toowoomba dealer of Rootes Group vehicles. The names for the features of the circuit and the amount of advertising in the programme indicate that they were major sponsors of the event.

The entries for the "Carnival of Flowers Championship" included four entries from New South Wales. These were the Ferrari entry of Capitol Motors (driver A. Glass), the L.J.C.Motors entry of MG "TC" (driver M. Williams), R.Hodgson (Ford Zephyr) and Lou Kingsley (Holden Sedan). The likely top runners from the Queensland entries would have been A. Griffiths (Cooper Climax), G. Scott (Repcos Holden), C.(?) Tadjell (Sabakat), C. Whatmore (Lotus Climax) and W. Anderson (Lotus Holden). The remaining Queensland entries were a very mixed bag. There were three taking the names of Holden, Godfrey and R.P. There were two Porsches, two Jaguars (one each of XK120 and XK140) two MG (a "TC" and a "TF"), a Cooper, three Fords (one each of Anglia, Zephyr and Fordomatic), four Simcas and a Hillman. Cars entered for events other than the championship were another two Holden sedans, a Simca, an MG TC, an MG TF and a Lloyd. Not the sort of fields you would meet up with in the nineteen eighties.

As I said earlier my bower bird instincts had deserted me in 1958 and I have no record of the results despite having a programme and a poster advertising the event. When, if ever, I rewrite "K. C's Story" I may research the results of this and some other events.

My only clear recollection of the meeting is an incident before the start of, most probably, the main event. The car which had gained pole position, on the right hand side of the straight leading almost immediately into a right hand curve, had withdrawn and I was told to leave the position vacant. Arnold Glass who had qualified for the other position on the front row, complained that it would leave the car in number three position with an unhindered run into the first curve as there was no car in front of him. I advised him that I was only doing as instructed. This instruction was soon countermanded on the orders of the Clerk of Course Stan Mossetter when Arnold Glass raised the matter with him. Arnold Glass was of course intended as the star driver for the meeting despite the fact that the poster for the event says "See STAN JONES (Maserati) and other leading Australian Drivers". Stan Jones did not compete.

Hill climb, Currumbin, Sunday, December 28, 1958

This Pacific Car Club event was held on the new Currumbin Heights Estate opposite the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary. My only involvement was as a spectator.

The programme lists the following entries.

Saloon cars (up to 2000cc)

A Morris Minor (P.F. O'Hare) and a Morris 1000 (M. Grande).

Saloon cars (unlimited)

This group, of four Holden drivers, consisted of J.C.French, N.P.Chaffey, R.A.Sawyer and J. Wild.

Sports cars (up to 1500cc)

MG "TC" (J.H.Frizell and D.A.Bright).

MG "TF" (P.F.Kinnane).

MGA (V Jordan and J Marano)

Prefect sports (K W Erbs)

Sports cars (unlimited)

Austin Healey (Ann Thomson and R S Jorgensen)

Jaguar XK120 (C V Warnes)

Porsche (J C Duncan)

Rooke Special (E K Rooke)

Lotus Holden (W S Anderson)

Racing cars (up to 1500cc)

Cooper MG supercharged (L J Ayers)

Ralt (N Hall)

Racing cars (unlimited)

Lukey Bristol (L Lukey)

RepcO Holden (G A Scott)

Holden Special (D J Kelly)

Ford Special (J Poteri)

The Ford Special appears in the only photo I have of the event. It began life as a Cooper with a 500 or 1000cc motor. Jim Poteri, its co-owner, is one of the many friends I made during my motor racing days and is one of the many friends mentioned in my story.

While 1958 had been an enjoyable year of motor sport, there was no doubt that my competition days were more in the past than in the future.

The coming year, 1959, was to see my motor sport activities further reduced. When my family grew to three with the birth of my daughter, Christine, on February 12, it became apparent that a sports car was not a family car. It was quite obvious that the TR2 would have to make way for something a little larger and, almost certainly, less sporting. This matter had been under discussion for some time previously and at one stage my mate Jim Poteri made a weekend visit to Toowoomba in his Volkswagen. While discussing what to buy, and as my wife and I were going to Brisbane the following weekend, Jim suggested we swap cars for the week. This would give me the opportunity to try out the VW commuting to work and on a trip to Brisbane. It was an early model with six volt electrics and lights almost as dim as candles. I didn't mind it around town but on the Friday afternoon trip to Brisbane I began to take a rather dim view of the performance and handling. We took a friend and his wife to Brisbane with us and on a long flat stretch, which is no longer part of the main road, I decided to pass the car in front. I went down a

gear and down went the foot. As time went by, the VW slowly crept past the rear wheel of the other car, and then its centre door pillar, and then I had to pull back. We still had half a car length to go and I couldn't see what was coming towards us behind the hill we were approaching on the wrong side of the road. In the "TR2" it had been only a matter of flicking the gearbox out of overdrive and getting by in half the distance available. Lesson two came on a long, sweeping, downhill bend on the road into Ipswich. The bend is still there but is bypassed by travellers unless they want to visit Ipswich. Half way around the bend, at what I thought was a suitably reduced speed, things became most hairy as the rear wheels seemed to want to tuck under the car and to make up their own minds about where we were going. Gently lifting off the throttle eased the situation but a VW was mentally crossed off the list. The other passengers didn't seem concerned but I certainly had been.

It was only fifteen days after Christine was born that the "TR2" was exchanged for a small sedan, certainly not a Volkswagen. Any participation in motor sport after February 28, 1959 would be confined to an occasional gymkhana, local trial or treasure hunt. In fact the Simca Aronde 1300 was quite a useful performer in gymkhanas.

The changeover date had allowed me a final fling in the Triumph as the T.A.C. had a Speed Trial set down for Leyburn on February 22. As usual I submitted an entry for the Sports Car class. While I have a programme of sorts for the event it did not list starters only the record holders and their times. There was a blank space at the top for those who wished to fill in names of competitors and their times and speeds. This I didn't do and the only results I have are my own. These are shown on a "Certificate of Performance" and a "Certificate of Merit" issued by the club. My only run as a sports car was at a speed of 97.18 mph (156.39 kph) for the flying quarter mile. As I already held the Sports Car Class E record at 101.4 mph (163.18 km/h) it was suggested, by Stan Mossetter or Kev Zimmerle, that I pay another entry fee and run in Racing Car Class "E". This record was held by Pat Kinneally in another Triumph "TR2" and was only 97.07 mph (156.21 km/h). On my fifth run I was able to raise the record to 98.47 mph (158.47 kph). No doubt there are many smaller capacity modern day cars which could easily better those speeds. There has been a lot of development in the last thirty one years.



For some reason I no longer recall, the transfer was made via Gordon Motors P/L of Toowoomba whereby the Triumph was sold to them for \$1800 and the Simca Aronde 1300 purchased from them for the same price. The new owner, Merv Beutel, had previously owned a Triumph "TR2" and later he was to complain that my car lacked the performance of his previous "TR2", which he said, could always make the climb up the range to Toowoomba in top gear. My car would do so if conditions were just right and you were well over the speed limit as you hit the first real climb which was a long straight. It was not then the dual road of today and the up lane used one lane of the present down roadway. He also discovered that both front coil springs were broken. I had known that one was broken but told him, in all truthfulness, that I had not known 'both' springs were broken. He sold it not much later to a local lad who overturned it, without a lot of damage.

The Simca was not without problems as it was prone to overheating and had at most annoying vibration just over 56km/h. Really it was 35 mph which was then the speed limit in a built up area. To make matters worse, the vibration set up, apparently in sympathy, a most annoying rattle. The rattle, but not the vibration, was discovered after a window winder failed. During the repair I found two pieces of welding rod floating about in the bottom of the door. A check some time later turned up three similar pieces in the other front door. Apparently they had been there since the car had been built. One disadvantage of the Simca was the price of parts. When the time came to replace the clutch plate it was discovered that the price of the clutch plate alone would have bought, for a Holden, a clutch plate, pressure plate and throwout bearing.

My log book tells me that attention was paid to the radiator in October 1959 and that the radiator was cleaned and the head shaved due to warping from overheating in September 1960. There was further attention to the radiator in February 1961 and it was recored in October 1961 at a cost of \$29.45. In 1959 Registration and Third Party Insurance cost \$30.70 while Comprehensive Insurance for \$800 cost \$28.80. Relining the front brakes, in October 1959, cost me \$13.50. This included the cost to machine both drums. Also in 1959 a new tyre cost me \$17.77. In 1960 the cost of a new battery was \$23.30. During the time I owned the Simca the lowest price I had recorded for petrol was three shillings and sixpence and the dearest four shillings and sixpence halfpenny per gallon. That works out at a little less than eight and ten centre per litre respectively. One record in the log book shows petrol consumption of 28.4 miles per gallon or 9.96 litre/100km which is nothing note-worthy. I should record that at first I had felt that the Simca was just as quick off the mark from traffic lights as the Triumph. Later I realised that I had been putting the foot flat to the floor when I took off in the Simca but still had plenty in reserve in the Triumph.

On the day I first drove the Simca to work in February, 1959 I was attending a training course with a group of fellow workers. During the lunch break some of the group were looking at the car which was never very common. While demonstrating the reclining

front seats, which folded to provide a virtually flat platform, I had an idea. This caused me to suggest to a mate of mine, with similar motoring interests, that the car would be ideal for a trip to the Easter motor racing at Bathurst. It was only a passing remark but it is said that 'many a true word is spoken in jest'.

We did go to Bathurst. It involved us in a round trip of 1176 miles (1892 km) including 70 km around Bathurst. The route chosen from Toowoomba was via the New England Highway to Muswellbrook where we left the highway for some secondary roads. This took us through Denman, Sandy Hollow, Bylong, Rylstone, Kandos and Sofala to Bathurst. This route took us on the road which crosses the ranges, between Kerrabee and Bylong, at a place called Cox's Gap. The climb over the gap could be bypassed by using an unused railway tunnel. The tunnel was part of an uncompleted wartime railway building programme. It was completed many years later. For many years it was used by the locals, and others in the know to shorten the trip and eliminate the climb on a narrow winding road. We knew we had to find a side track onto the railway embankment to go through the tunnel but could not find the track on the way south. Approaching the foothills before the gap we saw, on a side track well ahead, a rapidly driven car pull up at a gate which was quickly opened, and closed, after the car was driven through. The car slid onto the road in front of us in a cloud of dust from the dry gravel road we had been on for many miles. As it sped off, we realized he hadn't wanted to drive in our dust and perhaps be held up on the climb by someone unfamiliar with the road. As it turned out, we caught up to him on the climb where he held us up. While watching the motorcycle racing on the Saturday we met a group of my old motorcycle mates. From them we obtained clear directions on how to find the track onto the railway embankment to enter the tunnel from the southern side. It was easily recognized from the abutments of what was to become a railway bridge over the roadway. This tunnel was used some years ago in an advertisement, for an oil company I believe, in which a Porsche was driven through the tunnel.

Les Jordan and I left Toowoomba at 6.55am on March 27, Good Friday in 1959. We had a full tank of petrol and a couple of drums in the boot. Back then, 24 hour petrol was not readily available particularly at Easter. We managed to put 83.7 km behind us in the first hour and 241.3 km in the first three hours. We stopped for petrol at Wallangarra and again at Glencoe where Les took over the driving. We took a few minutes to admire the scenery from the lookout at the top of the Moonbi Range and to make a driver change. What was then a rather steep narrow section has long since been bypassed with dual lanes and easier grades. We paused for petrol at Moonbi as we took the opportunity to top up even if only ten or twelve litres were needed. We stopped for lunch at Tamworth and defied Christian principles by having ham and salad for lunch before leaving that city at 1.43 pm. At 2.55 pm after eight hours travelling we had averaged 75.5 km/h including stops. We stopped at Aberdeen for petrol and for Les to again get behind the wheel. At Muswellbrook at 3.35 pm we left the highway for our inland route. We made a slight detour into Sandy Hollow for a cool drink in anticipation of the dusty road ahead and another change of driver. We met the gravel road and the dust only a few kilometres after crossing the Goulburn River not far from Sandy Hollow. The Goulburn is a tributary of the Hunter River. After eleven hours on the road we had covered 796 km and averaged

72.4 km/h. In this section there were many kilometers of winding, climbing and descending roads with more to come. At Kandos, just before dark, we paused to ask directions. Just before Ilford we missed the turnoff for Safala and had to backtrack a short distance. About 16 kilometres before Bathurst we were well pleased to again see the bitumen, even though it was narrow, and hurry on to arrive at Bathurst at 7.50 pm. In another five minutes we would have been on the road for 13 hours.

The trip odometer read 570 miles (917.3 km). Including the time for all stops we had averaged 71 km/h. After a trip around the mountain circuit we drove to Bathurst. After supper we returned to Reid Park, one of the camping areas on the mountain. We paid the fee and set up camp near a tree which allowed us to anchor our tarpaulin to cover the car and to give us some shelter. Les had brought a folding canvas stretcher which turned out to be a good idea as it was far more comfortable than the folded down seats of the Simca.



The Simca set up for camping

We were awake early Saturday morning and although a ticket collector came around the area he didn't call on us so we were able to watch the motorcycle races for free. While wandering around we met up with a number of my motorcycle friends of earlier years. These included Gordon Gillies and Les Makin and his wife. Gordon and Les had been with me in my MG "TC" when we went off the road near Bathurst during Easter 1951. The group also included Max James and his wife. From them we were able to get directions for finding the track to the tunnel we had looked for on the trip down. It became a miserable day with light rain falling intermittently. The final race finished in almost continuous rain. We waited for the crowd to disperse before driving down to Bathurst for supper and a souvenir teaspoon to take home to my wife.

We slept in on Sunday morning and then walked down to the esses to watch the car practice sessions. The saloon cars were far more spectacular than the sports, and racing cars. The saloon cars included the Austin A30 of B. Muir and the Morris Minor of K. Bartlett. There was also a Simca, four Peugeots and no less than ten Holdens entered for the saloon car race. Other runners were one each of Ford Consul and Zephyr, 3.4 Jaguar (J McKay), s/c Austin (an A90 according to a pencilled note), a Morris Major and an Austin Lancer. The latter was entered by Leaton Motors, driver B. Foley, and was

reputed to have an MGA twin cam motor fitted. The quoted capacity of 1620 cc doesn't seem to fit but it certainly screamed through the esses. Lionel Ayers, one of the Queensland contingent and an acquaintance from my motorcycle days, had trouble with the blower belts of his s/c Cooper MG and pulled up just opposite our vantage point. We had a short chat while he waited for the track to clear. Once again it had been a day of intermittent light rain. On the way, into Bathurst for supper we took the opportunity of a clear road and we each did a lap of the circuit, at touring speed mostly. We were awake early on Monday morning and after breakfast cleaned up our camp site and packed the car. As we wanted to get away early, if possible, we parked the car near the gate from Reid Park into McPhillamy Park to make exit easier. We did after all have to be in Toowoomba to start work at 8am on Tuesday morning.

When we arrived at our previously chosen vantage point we found it occupied and had to settle for a spot nearby. We had plenty of time as the first race, the first qualifying heat for the Bathurst "100", was late starting. My unofficial results, most likely correct unless the Public Address system announcement was indistinct, show the winner, as the Queenslander Glyn Scott (Repc Holden) with a best lap time of 3m 9.1s and a race time for the three laps of 9m 41.3s. Then followed the Orlando s/c MG, driver unlisted, and the Dal-Ro Jaguar, driver A. Rose. The second qualifying heat, for which I have no times, was won by Stan Jones (Maserati 250F) followed by Ross Jensen of New Zealand in a similar car and Alec Mildren (Cooper Climax). It was in all probability the fastest heat as all three were on the front row of the grid for the Bathurst '100' which was won by Ross Jensen (Maserati 250F). The three leading cars in the first heat were not fast enough to get onto the second row which was occupied by L. Lukey (Cooper Climax) and, my record says, entrant number 6 which was a saloon car. This is an obvious mistake on my part and was probably Number 16 D. Whiteford (Maserati 300S). The three cars from Heat I occupied positions 7, 8 and 9. The only race remaining was a sports car scratch race which we decided to miss. This enabled us to get away before the mass exodus which would have held us up for longer than we could afford. By using a bit of persuasion we were able to get to the access road and leave the circuit.



Bathurst racing

We left the main street of Bathurst at 5 pm after filling up with petrol and resetting the trip mileage recorder to zero. It was reading 614 miles (988 km) before being reset. After one hours travelling we had covered 67.6 km of which only 16 km had been bitumen. We

had difficulty overtaking other traffic in the narrow winding roads of this section. After a dusty drive behind a VW for several kilometres we finally got safely past only to have him, pass us a few minutes later. We had stopped to help the driver of a Morris Minor in trouble with a slowly deflating tyre. He was able to put in some air using the pump I was still carrying some 30 years later. It was not the only time it has been of assistance to others. At Kandos we were overtaken by darkness but were still able to average 77.2 km/h on the bitumen section from there to Rylstone. At 7.40 pm, after 172.2 km, we easily found the track onto the embankment leading to the tunnel. The instructions, particularly from Max, had been quite clear. We drove through the tunnel hoping no one was going to come the other way, and left the embankment about 4.8 km later. We had to spend a few minutes picking a path through fairly deep water to get back to the road. According to my calculations the tunnel saved about about 13 km and probably 25 minutes spent climbing and descending a narrow section of winding road. At just under 200 km we rejoined the bitumen and left the last of the gravel surface behind us. I noted in my log that soon after, not far from Sandy Hollow, we crossed a stream by a bridge which had been strengthened by a section of army Bailey Bridge. Just beyond Denman I had a hairy moment when I went into a bend too fast in the darkness but recovered with everything intact except my ego.

New England Highway was rejoined at Muswellbrook at 9.45 pm with Les driving. The stop of 53 minutes dropped our overall average to 52.8 km/h. A petrol stop, and another driver change, was made at Moonbi at two minutes to midnight and we climbed over the Moonbi range without stopping to admire the view from the lookout. At 1.37 am we paused at Guyra with 553.6 km behind us. We transferred the contents of a 'Fillican' into the petrol tank, had a cup of tea and made another driver change. The latter became more frequent as the night wore on and tiredness set in and I didn't record all the changes. In the hour between 2.30 and 3.30 am we put 90.1 km behind us, probably the best run of the trip even though it was night time. It was again cup of tea time at Wallangarra at 3.47 am. At 4.54 am the trip odometer read 500 miles (804.6 km) just before reaching Warwick at 5.07 am. We took seven minutes to put the contents of a reserve drum of fuel into the tank and drink the last of our tea. I took over the driving for the final dash for Toowoomba. We arrived home at 6.15 am with 562 miles (904.4 km) on the trip speedometer in time for a cup of tea, some breakfast and a shower before fronting up for work. Our average speed for the trip down and back, with the time and distance at Bathurst excluded, was 67.9 km/h. When allowance is made for the time stopped the average rises to 75.9 km/h. Nothing remarkable even by the standards of those days, I suppose, but we got there and back safely on roads that many of today's drivers would consider totally inadequate.

When lunch time came at 12 noon, I went home to sleep. As my wife and daughter were on the Gold Coast for Easter, I left instructions with my assistant to call me at 1pm if I had not returned by then. I woke with a start when the phone rang at 3pm. My assistant had decided that I needed the sleep. He wasn't wrong either. Les made do with a quick nap during his lunch hour.

Twice since then I have been to Bathurst as a tourist and each time have taken a drive around the circuit. On both these occasions it was in a Ford. These days I watch the motor racing courtesy of the Seven network in far greater comfort and at less expense. Just the same, my fondest recollection of Bathurst was of an incident on Easter Saturday 1951 during my previous visit. To see Eric McPherson, on a 7R AJS racing motorcycle, holding a maximum speed full lock slide through the curve at McPhillamy Park was, in itself, worth the trip.