

A history of motorsport in Qld Part 4

By Malcolm Spiden

The story continues into the 1930 decade. Motor car clubs were able to use new sites for their sport. Acceleration contests were held at Blunder Road Rocklea (24 May 1930), Woody Point on a private section of the Hornibrook Highway on the Redcliffe Peninsular (7 September 1933), and as the unsealed surface at Myrtle town was reported as becoming rough, a new site at Bald Hills just beyond the railway crossing on 21 October 1933 (no additional information to the exact road as yet). A further site on South Pine Road, Strathpine near the Linkfield road corner heading west towards the (now) Powerlink Substation, was used from 18 September 1937 for acceleration contests and gained the title of the Mad Mile. (35). Instructions to this site were to 'drive across the Strathpine Railway crossing after leaving the Redcliffe Road, taking the first turn to the left and then proceed straight ahead about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile'. (36). Eatons Crossing on South Pine Road at Clear Mountain commenced as a hill climb venue on 24 June 1933. The 510 yard course was described as demanding skilful driving especially the last corner where a large tree necessitated a wide berth to negotiate this obstacle.

The formation of a (not the) Brisbane Sporting Car Club was suggested as those yearning for more competition and an 'outlet for their enthusiasm' desiring an event per fortnight or even each week. At this time the motor cyclist enthusiast enjoyed a larger range of activities and on more occasions. As was stated in the RACQ Journal there had been instances where small clubs had not been able to successfully organise events. Problems had occurred where officials may have lacked experience, not having the eye necessary for detail or were not competent to conduct an event. However the desire for a sporting club and an outlet for enthusiasm were evident but would have to wait for this to come to fruition. (37). Again on 7 June 1934 competitors and RACQ officials met to discuss ways of providing those wanting events to display their car and driver ability. Both the Southport Promenade and South Beach were suggested as well as road races as possible answers. (38). A further meeting of the competitors and RACQ Fixtures Committee on 19 March 1936 looked at the possibilities of events including a 50 to 100 mile race over a selected circuit, a Queensland championship flying mile provided a suitable course could be found a straight of at least 2.5 miles, or to conduct motor sports not necessary based on speed to be held occasionally on a Saturday afternoon. (39).

Riley Car Club was first formed in October 1933 and held its first event on 18 November 1933, a combination of a hill climb followed by a picnic. Mt Cotton was the location of the hill climb with details of 'at the foot of the hill fairly steep hill about 500 yards long with a bend about 20 yards from the start and another half way loose gravel surface near a small creek' which appears may be on West Mt Cotton road near the mount itself. (40). (Jon McCarthy told us that a hill climb was at Mt Cotton before our complex - yes Jon has always been right)

The Brisbane City Council enabled the Whites Hill Reserve to be available as a new climb site from 16 November 1935 and was in use until 15 November 1953. Entry into the reserve was from Boundary Road Camp Hill opposite the Cruces and Capella Street corner. The course was originally 4/10 mile long which ascended to the kiosk at the summit. This site and course could still found up to the 1986 UBD, before the site being redeveloped into a sports field complex.

First Whites Hill event was held under the International Classes as per AIACR (Alliance Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus) with the Australian Automobile Association being the Australian representative that covered the local motoring clubs, and thus the RACQ being the Queensland representative club on the national body. Classes were based on engine size as Class H 500ccs to 750ccs; G 750 to 1100; F 1100 to 1500; E 1500 to 2000; D 2000 to 3000; C over 3000 ccs. Records were established in class G by N.E.McIlwain (1934 MG Midget – 44.3 secs); Theo Treventhan (1926 Bugatti – 40.8); class D by R.B.Tibbets (1923 Bentley – 43.0); class C by Claude Barron (1927 Wensum Vauxhall – 39.5). On handicap class F went to John Pike (Austin 7 Manx Roadster) handicap 6.3 secs = nett time 34.3 secs; class D to Theo Trevetan (Bugatti “Berescia”) handicap 4.4 = nett 36.6; class C to A.J. Lavarack (Crossley) handicap 4.5 = nett 38.7 secs. (41)

The closest event to the first road race in Queensland occurred on 1 August 1936 at Woody point. With the approval of the Redcliffe Council a high speed reliability contest was held on the Peninsula. The course (again on unsealed roads) commenced in Lilla Street into Oxley Ave, then Duffield Road, Ernest St, Albert St, Gayundah Esplanade and back to the start. As Alderman A.H. Langdon, the Mayor of Redcliffe, dropped the starting flag, each competitor was required to change a spark plug before commencing the first of 27 loops, as well as a pit stop during the event to change a wheel without assistance from other people. Drivers were required to maintain an average speed for their class. Class A (up to 1000 ccs engine capacity) were to maintain a 35 mph average, Class B (1000 to 2000 ccs) 39 mph and Class C (over 2000 ccs) 42 mph. Of the 26 who started the event 15 finished, with J.P. love (Alvis) being the victor ahead of S Butters (Willys 77) and Chas Whatmore (Riley) third. N. McIlwain finished in 9th position in his MG Midget. (42). There is no evidence of a second event being held.

Until now all reliability trials and events had been conducted during the daylight hours. On Saturday evening and Sunday morning 14 & 15 November 1936 a night reliability trial with the start in Brisbane before venturing to Caboolture, then via Woodford, Kilcoy, Esk to Ipswich and return to Brisbane. Crews were to maintain an average different average speed during each of the 3 legs, the first to Caboolture, next to Ipswich and to Brisbane. Considering the headlight of the day and the state of development of the major roads this would have been an adventure. Of the 12 who commenced the route, all completed the event with Claude Barron (Oldsmobile) winning from Chas Whatmore (Riley 99) and H. Kyne (Morris 12/4). (43)

In 1938 the Queensland Motor Sport Club (QMSC) was first formed as the RACQ focused more on assisting the stranded motorist. It was ultimately decided to form a

separate club and a smaller body to run sporting events whose members all took an active interest in the sport and could do it much more effectively. The club received official AAA recognition and would organise events under AAA competition rules. (44) QMSC continued to provide events for members such as gymkhanas (now motorkhanas) at Rocklea showgrounds (tests of the day included such events as Flag Relay race, Potato race, Figure Eight, High Speed Reversing Lap Dash Test, Cigarette Lighting, or Balloon race) (45), trials, social events, with hill climbs at Whites Hill. On 5 August 1939, QMSC joined with the Auto Cycle Union under the High Speed Alliance, to organize motor cycle and motor car races on the old racecourse at Rosewood. A report states 'for some time Messes H.C.Collett and D. Boughen,Ipswich, have been engaged in converting the old Rosewood Racecourse into a high speed racing circuit'. The track (dirt surface) was about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the lap and 60 foot wide. (46) Instructions to the site were 'turn corner at Rosewood Police station'. (47). Further events were held on 30 September 1939, and 26 November 1939.

A 24 hour reliability trial was conducted on 24-25 September 1938 where 25 competitors left Wickham Terrace in Brisbane at 2pm travelled to Gympie via Petrie, Dayboro, Munt Mee, Woodford, Peachester, Beerwah, Landsborough, Maleny, Kenilworth, and Tuchekoi. That evening they returned to Brisbane by way of Eumundi, Nambour, Landsborough, Caboolture and Petrie. This was followed by a round trip via Kenmore, Ugly Gully, Mount Crosby, Ipswich, Marburg, Gatton, Toowoomba, Allora, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Legume, Wodenbong, Rathdowney and Beaudesert to return to Brisbane, a distance of 616 miles. The early morning run on the Darling Downs apparently was cold especially for those in open small roadsters. To make the event interesting, the crews were required to find 25 controls (3 were hidden, 19 secret, and 4 known locations). Keith Thallon (Vauxhall 14 tourer) lost fewer points than others and thus won the event with Ian Junner (Standard 10 tourer) next and G.F.G. Lee (Chevrolet coupe) third. A teams prize went to the Chryslers of V.Hallahan, Dr L. A. Little, and R. Uhlmann (with a loss of 76 points) from the team of Tallon, Chas Whatmore (Vauxhall 10 tourer) and David Munro (Chevrolet sedan with a loss of 77 points). (48)

It is interesting to see the record set at the acceleration contests especially those of the flying quarter mile. At Myrtle town, J. Macklehan in his Ford V/8 set a record of 81.82mph with an 11 second run during the 7 July 1934 event. Over the gavel surface at Strathpine, R. Uhlmann (1934 Chrysler sedan) raised that to 83.9 mph (10.77 secs) on 18 September 1937, followed by Chas Whatmore (88.45 mph in 10.13 secs) in his Ford V/8 roadster on 19 February 1938. Theo Trevethan held the class F record (1100 to 1500 ccs) in his Bugatti Brescia with a time of 12.5 secs for the flying quarter mile course. On 27 August 1938 Charles Cheetham (1292 ccs 1936 MG Magnette) lowered the class F record to 11.06 secs (equates to 81.37 mph) and was also the fastest under 2000 cc car on the day. Second fastest in class was F.H. See (MG Midget) with a 13.66 time. The newspaper reports state that the standing quarter mile contest was delayed as course officials marshaled hundreds of spectator vehicles travelling home up the course (49).

On 24 June 1939 Miles Hunter in the MG Magnette, acquired from the estate of C F Cheetham and tuned by the QMSC President Mr Vic Winders, set a new state speed

record of 106.38 mph in 8.46 seconds. This was the first time the 100 mph was bettered in Queensland for the flying quarter mile, and reduced the standing quarter mile time set by Charles Cheetham from 20.04 to 19.83 secs. Miles also set the best time on handicap (8.46 less 1.3 to give a 7.16 time) for the day. (50). Miles Hunter was to be a founding member of the MG Car Club of Queensland and then President from 1956 – 59, as well as Clerk of Course for MG race meetings at the Strathpine race circuit post World War 2. (After some correspondence with Matthew Magilton from the MGCC Victoria, this MG Magnette is a NA vehicle and is believed to be in Sydney).

In 1938 it was announced that the 1942 AGP had been allocated to Queensland. Several locations were examined for their suitability at Southport, or Coolangatta as well as a site off the Redcliffe Road near the Old Gympie Road. The Coolangatta site was believed would be quite satisfactory excepting for the railway crossings, however as only one train passed during the afternoon it was felt the Commissioner for Railways would be willing to assist. (51). To prepare for the AGP it was proposed that two major events be staged. The first a 50 mile race around Southport with the course to start in Scarborough Street near Nerang Street then into Queen Street, High Street, Nind Street and back into Scarborough to complete a 2 mile lap. This event was to be named the 50 Mile Championship of Queensland and hoped to be held in October 1939. The second event, a Queensland Grand Prix would be then held for late October 1940. (52). This proposal was supported by the Southport Town Council and Southport Publicity Committee. However with an interview with the Commissioner of Police 'who was very considerate without being encouraging it was agreed that owing to the war conditions it would be better to defer further considerations on the proposal' (53). The heightening tensions in Europe negated any local entertainment considerations and these world events were to overtake these domestic plans.

New drivers who received regular acknowledgement in this decade: Miles Hunter, J.E. Pike; Chas Whatmore; N.E.McIlwain; Gordon Lee; A.B.Gillespie; Ian Morey, J.F.Barrow, Keith Thallon; K Thomson; E.A.Dolby; J. Mackierhan; David Paul Munro, T.F.Trevethan; G. Russell, R.S.Tibbits, S.V. Butters; E.T. Shepperds, C. Brodribb, Claude Barron, A.J.Laverack, H.E. Collett, K.T.E. Shersby, Frank Jost, Roy Bulcock, O (Snow) Sefton V. Trevethan, Cyril Anderson

New cars of this decade; Austin 7, Riley Nine, MG Midget, MG Magnette, Wolseley Hornet, Morris 8/40, Morris Minor, Willys 77, Bugatti Brescia, Bentley 3litre, Ford V8, Studebaker Vauxhall Wensum, Crossley

Events were programmed for 1940 with a reliability trial on 18 February, Rosewood was to open in April, Ugly Gully (off Mt Crosby Road) hill climb was staged, however all activities would cease in 1940 as both fuel supplies and volunteers were needed for the various military forces.

A BIT OF INTEREST

The 1939 AGP was held at Loebethal in South Australia. As part of the weekend a stock car championship was conducted. Run over 50miles, the rules provide that cars must be fitted with standard bodies, operate on standard fuel, alterations to suspension systems in the interest of safety would be allowed. Cars must be absolutely standard except for engine compression that could be raised, and the suspension may be altered. (54). A handicap race with cars of similar make and model will start together and this was won by T M Brady (SA – Singer Bantam) from J McKinnon (SA – Ford), J K Phillips (Vic – Ford) (55).

35 Wheelspin Display, Pine Rivers Museum, July – August 2007.

36 Courier Mail, 19 February 1938, p9.

37 The Steering Wheel and Society & Home, Vol 1 No 10, September 1933, p70.

38 The RACQ Journal, Vol 1 No 1, July 1934, p11.

39 The RACQ Journal, Vol 2 No 10, April 1936, p33.

40 The Steering Wheel, Vol 12 No 1, December 1933, P16-17.

41 The RACQ Journal, Vol 2 No 6, December 1935, p13-15-17.

42 The Sunday Mail, 2 August 1936, p16.

43 The RACQ Journal, Vol 3 No 6, December 1936, p21.

44 The Steering Wheel, Vol 2 No 10, October 1938, p21.

45 The Telegraph, 6 August 1938, p9.

46 Queensland Times, 6 August 1939, p9.

47 Truth Sunday, 6 August 1939, p10.

48 The Steering Wheel, Vol 2 No 11 November 1938 p8-9.

49 Telegraph, 27 August 1938, p6.

50 Telegraph, 26 June 1939, p14.

51 The Steering Wheel, Vol 3 No 4, April 1939, p11.

52 The Steering Wheel, Vol 3 No 8, August 1939, p15.

53 The Steering Wheel, Vol 3 No 10, October 1939, p9.

54 The Steering Wheel, Vol 2 No 11, November 1938, p29.

55 The Steering Wheel, Vol 3 No 2, February 1939, p9.