

A history of motorsport in Qld Part 3

By Malcolm Spiden

For the enthusiast not wishing to engage in hill climbing yet still wanting something competitive, acceleration contests were promoted. Originally these contests were sub-events of multiday reliability trials; the first stand-alone event was on 11 July 1925. This was on 'the Banyo Road' with directions of 'the first road after the (early site) of the Nudgee School on Nudgee Road and about 2 miles the town side of the Nudgee Waterholes, this is Tufnell Road'. A road nearby, Buchanan Road off Nudgee Road, was used on 7 May 1927 when the road was about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long, many decades before the construction of the Gateway Motorway had reduced its length. Two classes were provided, class A for private motorists where all cars were to retain their equipment as per general touring and class B for trades members' cars with no restrictions.

An event at Coopers Plains on 12 May 1928 used a new class structure of the vehicle purchase price and enabled the results to be based on time only, not the previous weighted formula. Photographs of the event show bush surroundings and an unsealed surface. The instructions to the site direct people past the tram terminus on Ipswich Road (corner of Ipswich and Beaudesert Roads according to the Brisbane Tram Museum map) and follow signs to the byroad past Salisbury on the way to Sunnybank. The road appears to be Boundary Road. In the report of the event, Frank P Jost (who scribed under the name of 'Wayfarer') questioned why the Brisbane City Council allowed 'armies of cyclists' to race on (public) roads on every Saturday afternoon without any opposition, yet the Council opposed motoring clubs seeking sanction to hold competitive events at 'very infrequent intervals'. He describes this opposition of the Council as 'being carried to almost ludicrous extremes'. This forces clubs to hold events 'many miles from town' on 'little used roads' (25)

This plea may not have fallen on deaf ears for, on 13 July 1929, the Council sanctioned the RACQ to conduct 'acceleration tests or speed events on the road' as reported by Wayfarer. Instead of clubs having to resort to stealth in order to hold events, a little used road between Pinkenba and Luggage Point (the last straight) was available. This appears to be the Main Myrtle town Road. The first event attracted 22 entrants and was used until 22 February 1936. (26).

However, without the City Council support, events could be halted as occurred to the East Brisbane Sporting Club's flying $\frac{1}{2}$ mile speed contest on Blunder Road Rocklea on 24 May 1930 when a BCC official informed officials they could not continue(27). The East Brisbane Sporting Club, formed about June 1927, was active in promoting events as economy runs, a 24 hour trial in June 1930, acceleration contests and hill climbs at Mt Gravatt during 1929 and 1930. Other clubs such as the Queensland Austin club conducted economy runs as did the Queensland distributors for Whippet cars (E.G.Eager and Son Ltd) which conducted a fuel consumption event for Whippet cars. Their event included a hill climb along the Cash's Crossing Road a few miles from Samford. (28)

Further south in Victoria, racing on public roads was prohibited under the Highway and Vehicle Act. However, in January 1928, the Victorian Light Car Club had been granted permission by the Philip Island and Woolamai Shire to hold a road race on closed public roads around a rectangular 6.5 mile circuit near Cowes. Thus the first Australian Grand Prix (AGP) was run on 26 March 1928. (29). This first AGP and those up to the 1931 events were run as a class event: Class A up to 750 cc; Class B 750 to 1100; Class C 1100 to 1500; and Class D 1500 to 2000. The AGP was run as 2 separate races, the first for classes B and D, then class A and C. The winner of the fastest race would become the overall victor. From 1932 the AGP was held on a time handicap basis with each car being flagged away with the winner being the quickest over the journey. (30). Philip Island was the home of the AGP until 1935 when South Australia conducted Centenary celebrations and legislation enacted to allow this event at Victor Harbour in 1936. The 1949 AGP at Leyburn was the first such event held as a scratch race (all start at the same time). (31).

Over this decade new vehicle names to appear included Amilcar, Armstrong-Siddeley, Austin 7 Sports, Bean, Bugatti Brescia, Chrysler Imp, Citroen Sports, Columbia, Erskine, Essex, Fiat 509 Sports, HCS, Jewett Sports, Lexington, Napier, Nash, Oakland, Morris, Nash, Oakland, Paige, Rhode, Rollin, Rugby, Senechal, Templa, Wolseley. Also running were a Grand Prix Bugatti, Overland Whippet, Alvis Sports, Fronty Ford, and Morris Oxford MG Special.

Regular competitors added to many from the previous decade included Maldwyn Davies, Henry Horstmann, Harry Gessner, Jack Booth, Jules Moxon, Keith Mackay, Wally Webb, J.H.F. Moran, E.V. (Taffy) Welsh, R H Billington, E B "Gus" Gustavson, J S McCormack, H Hounsell, J A Cadell-Garrick, E C Campbell, Miss E.L. Carter, Chas Whatmore, Eric Jacob, N J Peel, Warrick Whatmore, J K Richardson, Wally Lang, Hugh Corley, Merv Dodwell, B V Bohrdt, F W Thiel and W S Power.

In the 1930s the motor cycle clubs in the South East corner were the Brisbane, Kedron, Indian, Metropolitan, Queensland, Toowoomba and the Triumph and Dunelt clubs which again were still proactive in promoting their sport. Obviously they did not suffer from the same strict control of the City Council for these clubs were able to hold events as flying furlong at Chambers Flat, at Kingston (2 circuits one of 5 miles the second of about 10 miles) and in August 1931 a road race (the Barry Cup held annually from 1917) of 5 laps of the Kingston circuit to give a 49.98 mile distance followed the next weekend by the Indian Cup over similar distance. By 10 December 1932 a 100 mile Queensland Grand Prix at Kingston (32); on 22 October 1922 the Queensland Hill Climb Championships for motor cycles at the Unemployment Hill outside Toowoomba (33); and the Queensland Hill Climb Championships at Mt Gravatt on 16 December 1937.

So how can we weave MG into this history? Under a headline 'Latest Morris Sports Astonishes', the Sunday Truth road tested the latest Morris Sports, the MG Sports. The reviewer described the car as a "very much 'hotted up' edition of the Morris Minor with

the necessary chassis alterations to give a big margin of safety". They were impressed with the performance from the 33hp engine at 4000 revolutions considering the small size of the engine. Features which impressed included its riding and road holding qualities, steadiness at speed, superb cornering abilities, ease in changing gear, liveliness with good hill climbing ability especially the hill on Kelvin Grove road, light steering, steadiness at speed, ease in reaching 25 mph with 50 mph is about ordinary cruising speed and to cap it off was the style and appearance especially with cycle guards and strong wire wheels. Their conclusion was 'the further one drives an MG the more does it appeal'. Given the appearance and performance 'it lifts it out of the ordinary and the owner of an MG will be a very much envied person'. (34).

Given that MG became available, those who first competed in sporting events in Queensland and were mentioned in reports are Roy Bulcock (1933 MG Midget, 847 cc), A.B.Gillespie (1930 MG Midget, 847cc), N McIlwain (1934 MG Midget, 847cc), R Cameron (MG Midget) and Miles Hunter (1936 MG Magnette).

25 The Brisbane Courier, 14 May 1928, p9.

26 The Brisbane Courier, 15 July 1929, p8.

27 The Brisbane Courier, 26 May 1930, p7.

28 The Brisbane Courier, 9 May 1928, p10

29 Scaysbrook, Jim, 'Philip Island' Bookwork P/L, Sydney, 2005, p11.

30 Howard, Graham and Wilson, Stewart; Australian Grand Prix, R & T Publishing, Sydney, 1986, p14

31 Howard and Wilson, p11.

32 Truth Sunday, 11 December 1932, p4.

33 The Brisbane Courier, 24 October 1932, p6.

34 Truth Sunday, 28 September 1930, p10.