

Dick Willis, HSRCA Group JKL Registrar  
PO Box 280, Coffs Harbour, NSW, 2450.

P: 66522099 M: 0427 400158

[willisrg@smartchat.net.au](mailto:willisrg@smartchat.net.au)

*"Racing is life, anything else before or after is just waiting"*

(Steve McQueen) I saw the above quote on the side of a trailer at Eastern Creek last weekend and it truly epitomises the way many of us feel about our racing in Historics.

As usual the HSRCA Tasman committee put a lot of effort into ensuring the success of the biannual Tasman Revival meeting, a brave attitude in this world where so many of the uninitiated believe that racing cars should have roofs. At this meeting the "taxi racers" were few and far between and rightly so when the cars of the Tasman era were the feature of the meeting. In general I feel sure the ambitions of the Tasman committee were achieved apart from a few hiccups during the running of the feature race.

From a JKL point of view, 29 cars were on the track for qualifying with some diverse combinations ensuring some competitive events. L Racing-6, L Sports-3, M Racing-1, M&O Sports-2, Sa-10, front engined Formula Juniors-7. The latter cars really added to the atmosphere of the events with some exotic makes amongst them such as Volpini, Stanguellini, Alexis, Gemini, Lola, the outstanding front wheel drive Emeryson Elfin from New Zealand and of course our home grown Nota FJ. The Reid Brothers were notable non starters, despite preparing for this event for most of 2012 the Faux Pas "blew up" while being dyno tested prior to the event and Mal Reid's PRAD was still afflicted with the gearbox problems it experienced at Wakefield Park in September. It was good too see Geoff Piggott back racing with us again in the MG ARA as he is busy working overseas these days. John Rowe was over from WA in the ex Lukey Cooper Climax having had a good run at the WA Historics a fortnight before. Another Cooper returnee was Paul Savoy with the ex Patterson Bobtail now with a C of D albeit Group O. John Murn had given up his drive in his Decca Major in favour of Japanese driver Masayoshi Oka and Grant Craft was back from Hong Kong with the Sharp Holden and hungering for success in the absence of the usual quick NSW Holden engined specials.

Most interest of all though in this Group was centered on the Jaguar engined cars, Rod Jolley's polished alloy Lister Jaguar Monzapolis from the UK sitting on huge 18" wheels. Some inspired thinking from the HSRCA resulted in Les Wright being invited to race in this group with the Dalro but in fairness he was somewhat handicapped with unsuitable tyres, the only ones available were 550/15 Dunlops, much smaller than the usual rubber which the Dalro runs in Group M. Consequently his times were several seconds shy of his usual times and he had several spins while exploring their limits. So too did Rod Jolley while learning Eastern Creek's braking points. After qualifying and four races their best laps were in the 1.51's, they had one DNF each, Rod won 2 races, Les had a first and a second and they finished 17<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in the handicap so it was very entertaining contest and we thank both drivers for their enthusiasm. Despite expectations, the Group L lap record set some 12 years ago remained intact.

I still think Eastern Creek is a great circuit, second only to Bathurst in Australia. Those fast flowing corners really get the adrenalin going and are very satisfying when taken on the right line. Turn 1 taken at about 100mph with some attitude on really holds your attention but the rewards are there in a fast exit which enables one to hold good speed into turn 2. Maybe this is one of the failings of Eastern Creek as these quick corners may spook some JKL competitors who are more used to the stop/go type of corners. I am often told that the long straight is too fast for some of our older cars but we should remember the example of Andrew Halliday who enters for all of our meetings there in his little Cooper 500 fitted with appropriate gearing,

Behind this duo there was more close racing with plenty of changes of place, the general order being, Brian Duffy, Healey 3000, Andrew Gibson, TR3A and Dick Willis Nota Major, latter lapping as low as 1.56 to the great satisfaction of its driver. In Sunday's feature race for the perpetual trophies the winner of the Alec Mildren Trophy was Grant Craft, capping off a very successful weekend for him. The Frank Gardner Trophy for Group L sports cars went to Peter Lubrano, the TC Special running very reliably all weekend.

This meeting enabled our annual pointscores to be finalised, based on the results of the first scratch race after qualifying at our four race meetings of the year. This year however no points were awarded from the June race meeting at Eastern Creek as JKL cars weren't invited. This left the two Wakefield Park meetings and the Tasman meeting to determine the placings.

The Dick Cobden Trophy for Group L racing cars went to myself in the Nota Major with 18 points from Garry Simkin in the Cooper Vincent on 14 and Brian Simpson in the Cooper JAP on 13. The Longford Trophy for Group L sports cars was won by Paul Armstrong in the Jewitt with 20 points and no-one else within a bulls roar of this. The Tom Sulman Trophy for JK cars went to Graeme Raper in Monoskate on a countback from Rod McMullin. Thanks everyone for their competition but these trophies are really designed to encourage participation in all our race meetings and at the moment we are not achieving the desired effects. Interstate participation is very poor these days, not only at our meetings, even at Sandown I was the only JKL competitor from NSW. In NSW we need to reciprocate more if we expect interstaters to visit us.

Sandown, November 9/10/12, "Return of the Thunder" with obvious preference to the V8 taxi cars and JKL playing something of a fill in category but with 31 starters for qualifying and almost all JKLs ( one Sa and one invited M ) this was quite a good turnout for what I regard as fairly average circuit, a couple of long straights joined by some wriggly bits at either end. It is in the heart of Melbourne so most of the entrants don't have far to travel, unlike me ! This was the first event of Rod Jolley's Australian tour, as well as Eastern Creek he is staying for Phillip Island. He had some competition from Michael Russo in the Carter Corvette, a car very much suited to Sandown and as well as pole position he won two races compared to the Lister's one victory. In fairness though, the Lister had a brake problem and post race some frantic phone calls to the UK were required to locate some new brake discs, eventually some were located in Melbourne.

Behind this duo there was some really close racing with Nick Daunt in the Cooper Bobtail finishing second in Saturday's race from Graeme Raper in Monoskate, Shane Bowden in the PRAD sports, Dick O'Keefe in the Photon and Samantha Dymond (back from maternity leave) in the Lola all covered by a mere 3 seconds at the finish of the 7 laps. In the Sunday morning race V8 power narrowly prevailed over the 1460 ccs of the Bobtail, the PRAD was out with no brakes and Jim Russell's Ford and Russell Budge's Zephysca were starting to make an impression on the leading bunch. By Sunday afternoon attrition was becoming prevalent with 7 DNF's besides those that had fallen by the wayside earlier, victor Michael Russo was followed home by Graeme Raper, Dick O'Keefe and Samantha Dymond. Because of the afore mentioned attrition and with the benefit of progressive grids my Nota Major, outgunned

on the straights by the big power cars, was starting to come into the picture finishing sixth after a race long duel with Bob Boast in the Cigar MG, maybe I shouldn't have sold that MG some 20 years ago. This race was notable for the intense competition between the square rigger TC specials of Bill Schapel, Terry White and Ian Mawson. Its not often these days that we are treated to the sight of a pair of Type 35 Straight Eight Bugattis but full credit to Bob King and George Hetrel for bringing theirs and letting us enjoy those great cars. One has to wonder at progress though when Australian specials such as the Nota Major can comfortably pass a Bugatti in the straights. Even though, as I previously commented, I am not really in love with the circuit I really enjoyed the racing and the camaraderie and hospitality extended to me during my visit was most appreciated.

There has been some car movement recently, as previously reported the Cooper Climax recently purchased in the UK by John Davies of WA is now on its way to Australia and the plan is to give it its maiden run at Phillip Island next March. With the price of his Austin Healey 4 drastically reduced it soon found a buyer at Sandown with Healey 3000 racer, Peter Jackson the new owner. Terry Perkins of Port Macquarie recently auctioned his Scarab Triumph through Shannons and it was sold to Ian Barton of Melbourne for \$18,000. Ian Edgar of Melbourne recently became the owner of the "Meatsafe" MG TC special formerly raced for many years by the Forde Brothers who last raced it at Winton in 2001. It is known as the Meatsafe special because of the perforated bonnet sides which resemble the vents on an old meatsafe. Ian has previously raced a TC and has recently been racing a Formula Ford, glad that he has seen the light ! Rumoured to be on the move at last is the Cooper MG which has been a part of our Historic racing for so many years, more on this later. Recently there have four Lynx racing cars advertised in the AFJA newsletter, some for sale for quite some time but recently they have all been snapped up by a UK buyer out here for the Tasman Revival. They must know something we don't but I guess by their standards they are relatively inexpensive. The cars sold are no. 104 ex Robert Ingram, no. 107 ex the late Dennis Neal ( the ex Kevin Bartlett car ), no. 108 ex Howard Tucker (the ex Peter Wherrett, Tom Sulman car) no. 109 the Lynx Borgward ex Kelvin Prior. Some more cars with important Australian racing history now lost to this country, someday someone here will wake up ! Also in the UK in Lynx no. 113 ex Ern Tadgell, Ivan Tighe, Graham Brown etc which has been making quite an impression over there. Meanwhile my Lynx no 103 is still here currently being fitted with a TC motor which it was fitted

with when it was originally built, much to the displeasure of CAMS but sometimes we really have to go with what we really believe in and these days there are plenty places to race a car besides events under CAMS jurisdiction.

Also UK bound is the Milano GT which I had in the early sixties, it was recently bought by Phillip Venables who had his initial run in it at Eastern Creek and it is now off to the UK to join the other 2 Milano GT's racing over there and the rear engined Nota Ford FJ which Phillip has had for some time. Remember Project X the petite Mini engined coupe featured in Sports Car World in the mid sixties, built by Mike McCarthy a series on its construction ran for some months, At Eastern Creek someone told me of its current whereabouts so it is good to know that it has survived.

My Nind MG TB project is progressing very well and is on track to make its reappearance mid 2013, hopefully at Winton in May. Even if I say so myself, it looks great so far and I am looking forward to driving it.

If you have been wondering why I haven't been running my Cooper lately, I have been saving it for another trip to New Zealand. The Denny Hulme Festival at Hampton Downs is on two consecutive weekends in January, 19/20 and 26/27. Again, quite a contingent of overseas cars are entered so there should be some great racing.

Coming up early in the New Year is the HSRCA Wakefield Park meeting in February and then Phillip Island on March 8/9/10. In conjunction with the AGP the following weekend a commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1953 AGP will be held. Cars that competed in that event are being sought and surprisingly, almost half are still in Australia.

My book on pre '60 Australian specials is coming along very well with about 70 cars written up so far and there are probably that many again which I need to cover but many of these have more obscure histories so I will have to do some more intense research to be able to provide a meaningful outline of their histories. My thanks go to those who have helped me so far by providing additional information and correcting my grammar ( its a long time since I went to school ! ) However I have been surprised by the reluctance of many to provide information on their cars, sometimes I think there must be something dubious in their car's history which they don't want the whole world to be aware of. As I threatened before, I won't be letting this hold me

back and I will be describing the cars as well as the available information allows so please don't come along after the book is published next year and point out that I have misdescribed your car.

My term and HSRCA Group JKL Registrar has now come to a close and consequently this is the last newsletter I will be sending out in that capacity. Firstly I wish to thank the HSRCA for their support, without that I wouldn't have been able to stay in the Registrar's position for eight years. I also wish to thank all those fellow competitors and followers of JKL for their support and the friendships I have made, particularly interstate. There have been some high points, particularly some of those September Wakefield meetings and there have been some low points. I have been disappointed that so many people race their cars rarely and by the reluctance of many to travel interstate. The camaraderie that can be experienced among fellow competitors in many cases outweighs the joys of racing. Even when I have asked people to bring their car along for display I have had a very limited response. But probably the single factor standing in the way of progress for JKL is the diehard attitude of CAMS, yes we may have the most authentic historic racing cars in the world but when only a handful of them turn up for some meetings surely we must ask ourselves if we have lost sight of the real objective. It seems too easy for prospective competitors to join Group N and S where no history is required or take the alternative courses of running permanently in Regularity, AASA events or GEAR, these are competitors we should have in JKL. In NSW and Qld it is probably already too late with AASA, FOSC and Gear eagerly benefiting from disenchanting CAMS competitors who will never return to the CAMS fold, other states should learn from our misfortune and actively lobby CAMS to become more realistic. I have become frustrated by people asking me for advice because their cars are being refused C of D's because of trivial matters by CAMS. Surely there is room for some middle ground and perhaps there may be some light at the end of the tunnel as apparently, according to Graham Howard's Auto Action column last week, the FIA are asking CAMS to consider aligning their regulations with the FIA.

You have probably worked out by now that I am passionate about the continuance in good shape of JKL racing and will continue to be one of its greatest supporters. If you are ever in doubt look at all the "Formula" racing, either modern or Historic, where all the cars are meant to be the same and then look at a good JKL race where there is such variety when engineers

sought to arrive at the finishing line by so many different routes, the variety is truly fascinating.

I hope you will give my successor, whose identity is yet to be revealed, your full support.

Try to remember the opening statement at the beginning of this newsletter and I look forward to catching up with you all in 2013 even though I won't then be the Registrar.

Good Racing, Dick Willis.