

REFLECTIONS

A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE



How the Noosa Hillclimb evolved.

It was in 1993, when my wife Marilyn was in hospital in Cooroy, I went to visit her and I decided to take the old Cooroy Noosa Road, known as Gyndier Drive, instead of the boring long hill, that had been built some 15 years before to replace the dangerous old road. This was much more exciting and led me to think, "Why hasn't this been turned into a racing Hillclimb?"

At the time I had a BMW 2002 that just wanted to be driven! Enquiries began and there was a lot of negativity from local old racers, who said hat's been tried and will never happen! Well, that was a challenge and serious investigations began.

Bob Haines, a local engineer and myself, set about how to create a section of the 3.3 kilometre Gyndier Drive, to make a 1km timed stage, pick the best corners, where to start and finish.

The road was in a very poor state, with trees shooting up on the edges and many cracks and worn sections, as a result of being totally forgotten by council for many years. It was not deemed a main thoroughfare and there were no houses or driveways to interfere with when the events were to be held.

Now, we not having the experience in organising a race event and still not having approached the Council, a call was made to the president of the Historic Racing Car Club of Qld, Bill Westerman. He invited a delegation from our club to one of their club meetings, to make a presentation of the proposal for our Hillclimb.

A fellow member, Bob Lewis and I made a video of Gyndier Drive, firstly nice and slow, then much quicker. izt was quite amusing, with Bobs video recorder jammed into the corner of the wind-screen for stability, then him popped out of my M3 BMW sunroof, to get gooo effects.

Armed with our video, we attended the Historic Club meeting and we asked to play our video. We received MUCH enthusiasm and positive feedback from the meeting, now having Historic Racing on board to help with all the red tape etc, that is involved with car racing.

The next step was Council, so armed with copious sheets of white butcher paper, marking pens and a delegation of members, we were invited to attend a council meeting to put our plans forward. At this stage.



I must say, it did help to have a good friend and future Mayor named Bob Abbot on side.

After a lot of sketches and much explanation to council about what Historic Car Racing was about, permission to run one event was given, on the proviso that no complaints were received from the public in the near vicinity, re noise etc.

As Gyndier Drive has many dangerous drop offs on the very tight corners, safety was our first priority.

Bob Haines made 4 steel moulds for concrete blocks to be placed on the most dangerous bends. At the time, I had retired from many years baking and decided to but a cement agitator, so I was still mixing things up! Every day at the concrete plant, trucks would come back with left-overs, so a deal was struck with the drivers, that for every block made, \$5 would go into their Xmas fund. The moulds were made in 2 pieces, so that when filled with cement, they were opened and split apart, leaving a one tonne concrete block, complete with hole in concrete and lifting lug on top.

When 12 blocks were made, I hired a truck with a crane and Bob and I would go up Gyndier Drive and unload the blocks on the necessary corners. There were also two moulds at another concrete plant and the same deal went with them. About 200 blocks were made and placed, with very many more made by Max Parnell, Daryl Shaw and lots of other guys, made in accordance with CAMS regulations to comply with safety regulations.

In preparation for our first event, 1998, working bees were held very frequently and up to 30 members would walk the road, cutting all the regrowth and saplings that had not been touched for many years. The road was seldom used, apart from people using it as a dumping ground for anything from car bodies, and various mechanical parts, washing machines, dryers anything to save going to the tip! Where the pit area now was a veritable dump, with a regrowth pine forest and all types of garden rubbish that did not belong in a national park. This is where we were able to get the National Parks on our side and we were allocated a 5 acre area that was surveyed off by Ian Marshall, my brother in law.

One day, two of us were clearing with chain saws and whippersnippers, when we found a man swinging from a branch at the rear of the pit. Life was just too much for him!

Many business people were helpful. They included Brad Allen asphalts, Kennards Hire, Coates Hire, guys with bob cats and tippers and so many members with all their gear. It is amazing to see what the pits are from what it was before!

So the first event! The Historic Car Club joined us and an agreement drawn up for what each club needs to do. They handle all the details re entries and CAMS licences, all specifics to do with running the event. Our club prepares the track, police and council permits and manpower for gates, parking etc. We decided that a 1 kilometre stage for the first year, as we do not yet have the pit area below. The cars are lined up at a 45 deg. 200 m past the finish line. Twenty cars are sent down the road to turn four, turned around and started.



What a debacle, but great, just the same. There was even a historic Fire Engine at the start line. Some cars did not have reverse, so much muscle was needed on occasion. Entries included, Morgan three wheeler, Alvin, Aston Martin DB2, Austin 7 supercharges, Lea Francis, Frazer Nash, Bugatti, Mustangs, Cooper S, EH Holdens, FJs, Bristol 400 and many specials.

It was a hugely successful event, with no complaints from the public around! Plans for the next year's go ahead.

I remember thinking, "what are we going to do with all that concrete - if council said no?"

The pit area was completed for the next event, the start line moved back to where it is now and we had one and a half kilometres of racing stage, for what is now known to be the **MOST COMPETATIVE HILLCLIMB** in Australia!

Some of the notable racers to have competed on our hill include :

- Vern Schuppan in a Porsche 926 Le Mans
 - Kevin Bartlet in Peter Brock Monaro
 - Glen Seton in TCM Ford two door
 - Dick Johnson in TRU BLU Falcon
 - Steven & Dick Johnson in Lotus Cortina
 - Rob Sherrard in Ford RS 200 group C Rally car
 - A Bizzarini, Shelby Mustang, Audi Quattro, Porsche 930, which was the first one in the world, and loaned to Mayor Bob Abbott to drive.
 - Brabham up the Hill, (slowly) in 2006 and I forgot to get his autograph!
- I apologise for anyone not mentioned here, but there were so many who put their hart into our HILL, we can all be extremely proud!



ROB VAN WEGEN

