

## THE NORTHLAND SPECIAL

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In 1955 I heard that there was a racing car parked up Maunu Road by the Reliance Tyre Depot. This was opposite the end of Porowini Ave where now there is a Supermarket. At lunchtime I raced up to view it and it's new owner Lionel Bulcraig. The Reliance Tyre Depot was managed by John MacDonald who was the Northland Car Clubs first president.

The car started life as the Jackson Special with a side-valve Mercury V8 engine and was built around 1950. It then changed hands and became the Logan Special, was fitted with torsion bar front suspension and Edelbrock aluminium heads and 4 twin choke carburettors. Then it got into George Palmers hands and was called the Palmer Special before Lionel bought it in 1955 and named it the Northland Special.

To me this is the name by which it will always be affectionately known although Ken McLennan renamed it the Offenhauser Special and it's present owner is Fred Courtney of Kaikohe.

Lionel raced the car for several seasons and I have records of him competing at Puhipuhi hillclimb in 1956, '57 and '58. Best time recorded was a 53.0 in 1957. He owned a Chrysler/Hillman dealership in Kawakawa and also raced a Cooper Climax single seater and [ a very rare car] an Aston Martin single seater with a 2.5 litre engine. I was working as mechanic at the Dairy Factory in Te Hana when one day I heard the sound of a racing engine and saw Lionel drive past in the Aston Martin driving it up to Kawakawa. What a buzz that would be driving a single seater on the main road.

Then the car went through 2 or 3 owners in Auckland one of whom was Graeme Harvey who competed in it at Waipu Gorge doing 71.8 secs which was a course record at that time [ 25:02:1962]

To backtrack a fraction Lionel had tried to sell it to some Australian hopefuls who had painted it white and had "Roo Special" sign written on the nose and they turned up at Puhipuhi in white overalls determined to show us how good they were. However they were pitifully slow and disappeared from the scene.

Then in 1964 Johnny Windelburn bought it and he and Ken McLennan shared driving at Austins Road on 19:04:1964 with Johnny doing 47.2 and Ken a 46.95.

Ken bought the car off Johnny and hillclimbed it at Puhipuhi, McLeans Road, [07.04.1968, 63.9 secs new hill record] Ormandy Road [21.02.1965, 77.1 secs new record] Austins Road, Doctors Hill Road, Kara, Griffens Road Maungaturoto and Oparakau Road near Paparoa.

Ken surely got the best out of this unwieldy beast, power-sliding the corners and being a fine mechanic. He eventually removed the Mercury V8 and fitted a Jaguar DOHC 3.4 litre engine which perhaps made more weight up front.

Eventually Ken sold it to Fred Courteny of Kaikohe and Fred still competes forcefully in events all over the North Island.

Brian Skudder

Ken McLennan working on car.



Ken McLennan coming out of the Puhipuhi