

PUHI PUHI HILLCLIMB

[Reprint of article dated Dec 1979 with additions and corrections] May 2012

The work we used to do on the Puhipuhi road. As our first hillclimb course which grew to holding Gold Star events we took our responsibilities very seriously. Whole weekends were spent metalling and grading the road, forming spectator paths through the scrub, and towards the end of it's use, building a by-pass road down through a farm so we could go over the finish line, turn into this farmers gateway and go down a clay road to link up with a side road that brought us back up to the pits.

On the day there would be a tent with a P.A. system in the pits, crowd marshals and a rope fence on the bank above the hairpin to control the spectators. Our first event attracted Tom Clark, HWM, Ross Jensen Austin Healey 100S, Jim Boyd Buckler s/c, and Ivy Stephenson in a Riley Sports. Club members entered in a variety of cars. MK1 Zephyrs, Riley 2½ litre saloons, Austin A30's etc.

In one of the later meetings Bruce McLaren set the record with a time of 49.8 which became the benchmark for later competitors to strive for. I will chronologically list the record holders at the end of this article.

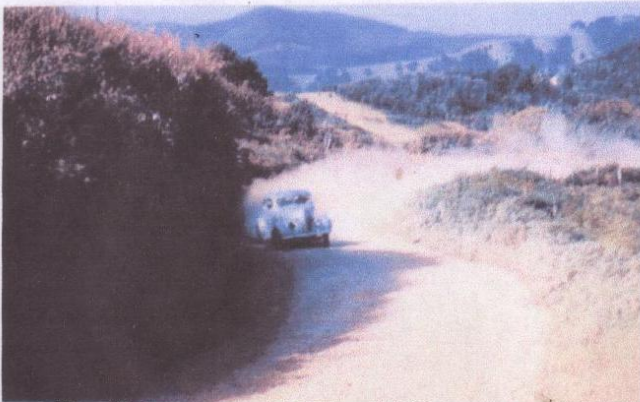
As a hill it only had two real corners but the hairpin at the top was a cracker with a deceptive entry. You would fly up towards it and see the R/H bank starting to curve and lift off only too realise the real corner was a car length or so further on. Ken Sagar competed here on his way to the N.Z. title. Peter Elford and John Grant used to bring their Cooper Bristol and Cooper Vincent on two trailers behind one car. A Humber Super Snipe. A 250F Maserati turned up one year and the Malaysian owner took one look at the road surface and left the car on it's trailer.

Many brave feats were performed and fine cars seen. Geoff and Dot Potter in the Aeolus V8 Special, Ted Thompson in an immaculate 39 V8 coupe with 8 SU carbs, Neil Johns starting in reverse in his Mini Cooper and then spinning it to go up the hill. It was a moderately steep start line so Johnsey thought this would give him more traction.

But the most memorable mind-bending feats of all were performed by Red Dawson and Johnny Riley in V8 coupes. Red in a 38 Ford and Johnny in a 37 Chevrolet, both with Corvette motors they were ex-stock car drivers, hard tough men with a rough sense of humour. When they buried their boot off the line they forgot to take it off again and there would follow the shattering scream of a tortured V8 motor, the clang of rocks, a rooster tail of dust at least half a mile long and the cars sliding sideways - this way - that way always an inch from disaster until the finish line was reached.

Hill Records

16:09:1956	Tom Clark	HWM	51.1
22:09:1957	Bruce McLaren	Cooper Bobtail	49.8
??:?:1958	George Lawton	Cooper Bobtail	49.6
14:12:1963	Roy Lyme	Cooper Porsche	49.0
15:10:1966	Jim Boyd	Lycoming Spl	47.85



Red Dawson '38 Ford V8 coupe



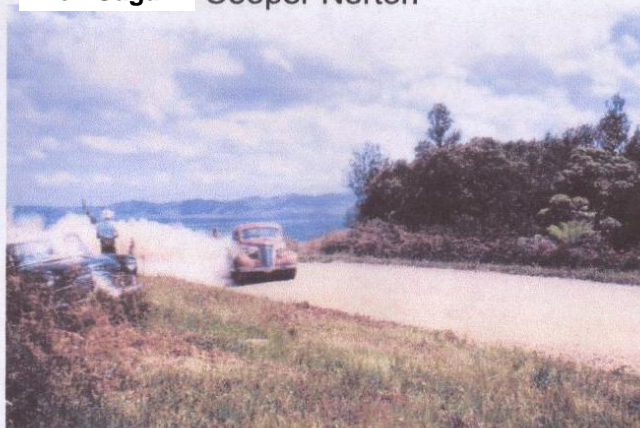
Roy Billington Buckler



Ken Sagar Cooper Norton



G.Quirk Cooper Bristol



Johnny Riley '37 Chev. coupe



Pat Welch Riley 2 1/2 saloon



Pat Welch De Soto Station wagon

An assortment of photos to demonstrate the variety of cars entered