

## WAIPU GORGE SPRINT

---

[reprint of article dated Feb. 1980 with additions and corrections] May 2012

A windy but fairly smooth metalled road which turned off at the bottom of the Northern side of Brynderwyn Hill and went through to Maungaturoto.

We started at the first abandoned quarry about a quarter of a mile in on a slight down slope, through a right hander in a dip and up to a big left-hander around a shoulder of the hill, down through a sweeping right, then up the straight to a sharp left around a big bluff with a big drop on the outside. Curve right down to a sweeping left through the bush to a fast right up a short straight to a big left then down and right to the finish line.. Mainly flat but some slight up and downhill bits - no room for mistakes.

We all stopped after our first run through and then we did it all again in the reverse direction. So we used a light beam across the road at the start and finish. We used to run the wire out on a trailer setting up two phone points on the way through. Lousy job running the wire out and reeling it up again and a few times I got phone duty at a point along the course. Crouching in the trees waiting for a car to fly past. Once I had to jump out and stop M.Lawson from Auckland in a Cortina because a member of the public had refused to stop and driven through.

One of the Northland Car Clubs greatest events were our Speed weekends, Puhipuhi on Saturday and Waipu Gorge on Sunday with a dance on the Saturday night. I remember Bruce McLaren in the Cooper Sports at Waipu Gorge, Ron Roycroft in the Bugatti Jaguar, one of the first appearances of the Lycoming sports driven by Ralph Watson, it's builder, Johnny Mansell Alfa Romeo Monza, Laurie Powell Ford V8 Special, Graham Harvey Ford V8 coupe, Bob Highstead in an indecently fast Goggomobil Coupe and Allan Woolf in a 1937 Ford 8 saloon.

Happenings of note I remember were Johnny Mansel in the Alfa entering the straight [I was on the phone part way through] full chat with the R.F wheel out in the high paspalum on the inside of the corner. He didn't know what was under that grass and he wasn't getting out to look. Roy Billington, Buckler Sports upside down, down a bank by the river, stopped by a single tree. Allan Woolf, Ford 8 h.p - on it's side - out of the car onto it's wheels and away again and Joe Lawtons flip over the side, down a bank.

One day when I was on start control an elderly gentleman in a Hillman Minx didn't want to stop and wait. While we remonstrated with him Joe Lawton came through in a full powerslide in his Austin Healey with the nose of the Healey [at right-angles to the road] going past the Hillmans drivers door. After that a very shaken gentleman obeyed our instructions.

The last Waipu Gorge was a bit traumatic John Grant a likeable Auckland had arrived with his Cooper Vincent. When off cam it was a bit lifeless, but when at about 4000 rpm it came on cam all Hell broke loose. It caught John out on one of the straights and veered off into a fence. The barbed fence wires crisscrossed each side of

John's head cutting in below the eye and through the nose. As usual I had brought Westons Motors wrecker out that day and we used it's winch to gently ease the wire s away. We were scared to cut them because they were under such great tension. Scary incident but John recovered and I chatted to him at Bruce Pullmans funeral.

Brian Skudder

Not the actual car but a picture of a Ford 8 h.p Ymodel to show you the sort of car that Allan Woolf started his career in.

He finished up N.Z Saloon Car champion in a highly modified Triumph Vitesse.



Ron Roycroft Bugatti Jaguar

Johnny Mansell in the Alfa Romeo Monza entering the grass. This car won the German GP in 1935. Sold at auction recently for millions



Nigel Swann Buckler Ford Sports. R/F mudguard broken after hitting bank.

Westons Motors wrecker which attended many events at no charge to the club.

