

RACERS OLD & NEW FLY AT NORTHAM

Words & photos: Shane Cassidy



The Front Engine Racing Car class attracted a large field of 21 vehicles.

The 2007 Northam Flying 50 Round the Houses regularity race event attracted 138 historic race cars from the Vintage Sports Car Club out to the WA town on Sunday 1 April where over 100 local volunteers had blocked off the streets used for the street race. At 10am, the first of 7 practice sessions started but, unfortunately, on practice 6 for Classic Touring Cars, Richard Griffiths smashed his '71 Ford Escort into a concrete safety wall at high speed, extensively damaging the front end of the car. Richard was lucky just to spend the rest of the event spectating.

This year's record field of cars, up substantially from just over 100 in 2006, included the return of a replica of the BMH that won the 1957 AGP at Caversham. Aubrey Badger, a Northam resident, constructed the original BMH car in 1952. The Front Engine Racing Car class enjoyed a large field of 21 vehicles including a 1939 Morgan with 1960s and '70s model cars, and the Sports Car class had 24 cars, mainly MGs, Triumphs, Alfa Romeos, Datsuns, Porches and a Lotus Eclat. The Open Wheeler racing cars drew a small field of 11 cars, mostly from the WA Racing Museum.

Andrew Gifford's 1967 GWG Formula 3 was especially fast. Museum owner Neil McCrudden drove a 1971 Fielding F2.



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Damage to Richard Griffiths' Escort during practice was so severe, he wasn't able to race.

As a 24-race programme rolled out, the Lottery West Sports Car Challenge was the most exciting to watch as 25 cars chopped and changed on the tight 1.76km street circuit. Just under half the field were MGs but the 1974 Lotus Europa Special of Terry Smith was extremely fast, putting in some great racing duels with the three front

running MGs. On the parkland behind the pit area on the Avon River, a car display featured more MGs, Escorts, Mustangs, Falcons and hot rods. If the rapid growth of the Northam event signals future trends, the premium Round the Houses event, the Albany classic, on 2-3 June should be spectacular.