



In 2008 a number of West Australians participated in the Golden Jubilee for Formula Juniors in New Zealand. During these events we all experienced great hospitality and friendship from the locals. So when Jim Barclay asked if we would be interested in participating in the Bruce McLaren Festival we jumped at the opportunity. The first task was to work out who wanted to go and how to get them there. We already had a 20' container which we had used to get 4 cars to international events and I had designed a racking system to get 9 cars into a 40' container; so that made it possible to get 13 cars to New Zealand and hopefully bring them home through Phillip Island.

We contacted all the locals to see who was interested and in no time we had 13 guys with their hands up to come. We then bought a 40' container and I built the racking and Lance fitted it into the box. By November 2009 the container was complete and a trial run allowed us to fill the box with cars. A couple of guys then had engine troubles and pulled out of the event. As we had room for 13 cars, we then put in some more of the West Australian Racing Museum's cars. In the end the Museum brought 7 out of the 13 cars in our two containers. In addition, Tom Benson organized a 40' container to take his BMH Special, Charlie Mitchell's TS Special and John Rowe's Mercury Special.

The loading of the containers took place just before Christmas and the cars that finally were loaded were: 20' Container held the Lotus 20/22 to be driven by Neil McCrudden, the Befu by James McDonald, The McEntee by Colin McKee and the Macon FF by Glen Swarbrick. In addition we also took 6 spare engines, 2 gearboxes and enough spares to almost sink a ship. The 40' Container held 9 cars. This comprised of the Macon F2 to be driven by Calven Bonney, the Jane Brabham by Lance Carwardine and the Repco R4 by Neil McCrudden. In addition, Martin Bullock brought his Chevron, Henry Oosterbaan his Alton, Kevin Taylor his Brabham, David Watkins his Royale, Allan Beats his Palliser and finally Ed Farrar with his MG J2.



The 20' container with 4 cars



The 40' container with 9 cars



Two containers on their way to New Zealand

Mandy and myself were greeted at the airport by Nigel Russell from New Zealand and after spending the first night with Nigel and Maree at their lovely home in Birkenhead we picked up our camper and headed off to Hampton downs to have a look. The containers were still at Calven Bonney's yard where the local MAF inspectors were checking each car for bio hazards. What we noticed was that they were still pouring concrete on some of the site works and a large marquee was erected in the pits to house the international cars. The ground was crushed rocks which would make it difficult to find anything we dropped.



Dennis and Neil inspecting the large international marquee with the crushed rock

I phoned Lance Carwardine who was staying with friends and we decided that we should try and get hold of some reject carpet to put in down before the cars went in. Lance was on the case. On Wednesday morning we were given the tip off that the containers were at the track and that Thursday was scheduled for unloading. We managed to talk Martin (the head of operations) into letting us take out our cars on Wednesday afternoon as Thursday would be chaos if 30 containers were being unloaded simultaneously. A text message was sent saying “we will unload at 3pm for those that can make it”. Lance had borrowed a trailer and sourced 15 rolls of reject carpet. One of the West Australian guys (Dennis Coomber) who has a Cosworth powered sport racer was there to help out and immediately put on his red overalls. In a broad Cockney accent he offered to sort out the carpet whilst we unloaded the containers. As he was laying the carpet on the rocks he was approached by the other international drivers from the east coast of Australia who also wanted to get there hands on some carpet as well. He said that the “West Australian team had flown him in from England to lay the carpet” and they all walked away shaking their heads. Finally we had the carpet down and the cars proudly standing in the covered pits and it was Wednesday evening.



Macon F2, Alton, Recco and MG J2 at Hampton Downs (Photo Cris Farrar)



Palliser FF, McEntee FJ, Macon FF, Brabham F3, Royale FF, Befu F2, Jane Brabham and Chevron B17 at Hampton Downs as they were unpacked from the containers. (Photo Cris Farrar)

The next morning the rest of the internationals unloaded their cars and took up position in the large marquee. Friday morning was scheduled for practice and then qualifying. First thing on Friday morning there was no race fuel available at the track and some of the other West Australians were getting anxious. I had acquired 80 litres of Av Gas from another source and distributed it to members of the WARM team that were out early in the program. Lance was then able to buy Av Gas at the track which we used for the Macon, Lotus and a couple of other cars. No good deed shall go unpunished. Little did we know at the time that the fuel was not Av Gas but some other race fuel containing ethanol and other components (E85) which had been sold as Av Gas. Calven Bonney fired up the Macon and took it out for practice. After about 6 laps he came in saying the motor was very hot and had gone off song. We found that number 3 and 4 cylinders were only reading 30 lbs of compression. We decided that it may have been a head gasket and Ray Mushett, Dennis, Bundy (a friend of the Swarbricks) and Russell removed the head only to find that the head gasket looked fine.



Dennis (in red overalls) and Kevin examining the engine after the head was removed

We poured fuel into the head chamber looking for leaks and into the bore but it looked fine. We then fitted a new gasket and could not manage to fire up the engine. A leak test showed that compression was still down on 3 and 4 and that it looked like we may have broken a ring. Out with the engine and we pulled it apart only to find that it had overheated and broken a number of piston lands. The top of the pistons showed that it had nipped up. The next strategy was to replace the engine with a spare Lotus engine we had in the container.



Russell, Dennis (in red overalls) Glen Swarbrick, Neil and Ray changing the Macon engine

This was finally done by mid morning on Sunday. I then took it out for the last race and only completed two laps and decided to bring it in. It was hot and ran like a dog with boots on. Little did we know that the fuel we received was the major contributor to our engine problems. The Macon was packed away for Pukekohe. At least we had the Lotus and the Repco.

After the problem with the Macon, Calven decided to drive the Lotus at Hampton Downs. He was running good oil pressure and on about lap 7 the engine also expired. The piston had seized in the bore and it poked a rod out the side of the block. The Lotus was also running the E85 alcohol based fuel. Enough of the engine disasters!!!



The true spirit of the 1960's was evident by the local fans !!

Kevin Taylor was able to work his way up the Formula Junior field to take second position in his Brabham F3. This was a remarkable drive given the top level competition. The McEntee ran midfield with Colin at the wheel which is great given the engine development compared to his opposition. In the Tasman Class Martin Bullock and Lance were very strong at the pointy end with James McDonald not far behind. Henry Oosterbaan was content to push his Holden powered car and thoroughly enjoyed the event. On Sunday, Martin Bullock let Calven Bonney drive his car in the Super Historics and Calven was able to take 2 seconds on Marty's best time. "Crikey" said Marty, "I will need to take my brave pills to get that time". Next race Marty was able to match Calven's time. It is amazing how you perform when you are pushed by someone else.



Charles listening to his dad's (Ed) race strategies. (Photo Cris Farrar)

Charlie Mitchell was firing on all cylinders and had the TS special on song. If it was not for the factory formula 1 Coopers then Charlie would have been spectacular. The Repco and BMH Comic Book Special also ran well. John Rowe managed to have fuel problems too and circulated ahead of Ed Farrar in the oldest car on the track. Everyone was impressed with the design of the circuit and the wide corners which allowed several different lines.

The Formula Fords were also competitive in a very large event with Allan Beats, David Watkins and Glen Swarbrick battling it out mid field.



Henry and Sonny at Hampton Downs (Photo Cris Farrar)

Sunday morning Sonny Rajah was driving Henry Oosterbaan to the track when they stopped at the bakery for breakfast and morning tea for the West Australian team. After breakfast, Sonny was in the car eating his toast and Henry went for the morning tea. Being the perceptive racing driver Henry is, he walked across the car park and opened up the rear door and placed the morning tea on the back seat and then hopped into the front passengers seat. Unfortunately he was not in the same car as Sonny. Next to Henry was a large Maori woman. Both heads turned towards each other and then both doors exploded to find them out of the car. Henry opened the back door, picked up the morning tea and made his way to Sonny's car. The problem was Sonny had just about choked on his toast and needed time to regain himself. To make thing more interesting the other car was a different make and colour. It just shows you the level of skills needed for an international racing driver.



The team at the Muddy Waters in Mercer

Peter and Bev Boel own a property in Mercer between Hampton Downs and Pukekohe and kindly allowed us to park our campers there at night. The local watering hole was the Irish tavern called the Muddy Waters. On Sunday evening as the night was closing, an elderly couple who were having dinner approached the table to have a chat. They too had been at Hampton Downs and realizing that we were all in camper vans offered their property north of Auckland for us to camp on. The couple were in fact a local racing icon Allan Woolf and his wife Colleen. I think the others were too under the weather to fully comprehend the offer, but I was keen to have a look at Allan's collection of race cars and aero engines. The next evening we were in the area and the local eating houses were all caught up in an electrical power failure. We rang Allan and were invited over to the house. Jane their daughter prepared a great meal whilst Allan and myself had a look at his car collection.





Allan Woolf with his Volpini Formula Junior



The Ralph Watson Rotary engine comprising of 7 cylinders which was started by Ralph and completed by Allan

The next morning we had breakfast and visited their other location on the river. All the other West Aussie guys would be envious as they had not had the chance to see it. What a great couple we though, given that Allan is over 80 and still driving a Formula Junior.



Allan, Colleen, Mandy and Neil as guests of the Woolfs

From here we headed south to see parts of New Zealand that we had missed on previous visits. We were ready to camp in a parking bay next to a church at Whakatane when I remembered Nigel Russell mentioned that his parents lived down there and they had a property where we could park the camper for the night. I rang Nigel and within a few minutes we had an address in Ohope where Sheila and Bob Russell lived. With some tight maneuvering we drove the camper down the driveway and were greeted by Bob who said “you can park it there” with ocean views.



Sheila showing Mandy around Ohope

Into the house we ventured to be greeted like long lost relatives. I don't know what Nigel said to his parents but they spoil us for the next day. After that we headed to Napier, the Art Deco hub of the Southern Hemisphere and then back to Taupo.



Mandy admiring the view from Bob and Sheila's house in Ohope

We arrived at Pukekohe early on Thursday morning to unload the containers. Pukekohe is also a horse racing track and every time a horse passed by we all had to stop work and be very quiet.



Unloading the Containers early in the morning at Pukekohe (Photo Cris Farrar)

Once the horses were back in their stables we could make a reasonable amount of noise.



Neil at the 20' container at Pukekohe circuit

The cars were towed up to the pit at the circuit and prepared for the event.

Pukekohe has had little invested on the track in recent years and was extremely bumpy in some of the more critical parts of the circuit. A few of the Tasman guys decided not to run their cars there as it would be too risky to their machinery and possibly their health.

The older cars which had softer suspension coped better with the circuit than the later ground effect cars. Pukekohe is a great circuit with a long back straight which many an engine has suffered from exposure to high revs for long periods.



“I think I have flooded the carby” at Pukekohe on Saturday afternoon. Race cars at Pukekohe after 65mm of rain fell in 1/2 an hour – They abandoned racing for the rest of the day (Photo Henry Oosterbaan)

Kevin Taylor managed to break a valve spring in the Brabham but by the end of the meeting had finished a remarkable 2<sup>nd</sup> in a large field. Charlie Mitchell also had a blinder of an event taking out a trophy for his efforts. The Jane Brabham had a coming together with another car and lost the front right corner, the Chevron stripped the clutch centre and we parked the Macon and Lotus for the Meeting. The Befa performed extremely well and even Henry Oosterbaan managed a top 10 finish in the last event. Colin McKee drove extremely well in the McEntee formula Junior as did Allan Beats and Glen Swarbrick. Unfortunately David Watkins destroyed an engine in his Formula Ford. As the last four events on Saturday were cancelled from the torrential down pour (65mm fell in ½ an hour), the organizers offered extra laps on the Sunday.

The last event of the program was the early historics, comprised of 10 laps. Everyone had a ball and all the West Aussie guys did their state proud with Charlie Mitchell scoring a magnificent trophy.



Charlie being chatted for going too fast. Rob and Jen Ozanne in the background trying to pretend that they do not know him. (photo Henry Oosterbaan)

A number of guys were leaving for Australia on the Monday morning so we decided to clean and load the containers that evening. As it did not get dark till about 9pm we operated like a well oiled machine with all the drivers, their friends and family loading the cars for the trip back to Australia



Repco at Pukekohe

All cars needed to be drained of fuel, their batteries disconnected and battery isolators off. In addition they all had to be spotless. By about 8.30 all cars were secured in the containers and the job was finished. This is what I thought at the time. During the night, as you do, I was thinking about the cars and realized that I had borrowed a fuel float for my Repco and promised to return it. The next morning I enlisted the help of Charles Farrar (8 years old son of Ed and Cris) to work his way to the rear of the container and extract the fuel float. Like a future F1 mechanic he had the job done in a few minutes and we were able to then seal the containers. The adventure was complete.



Charles Farrar cleaning his dads MG J2 before loading it in the container (Photo Cris Farrar)