

# Chapter 1

## 1953-1957

### Getting established and finding our feet

There was an A7 Club prior to WWII but the first minutes of our Club in its present form are recorded on 29 June 1953 at a meeting held at the private house of Mr Lloyd Thorpe in Moseley Street, Glenelg. Max Bowden was at that meeting and he recalls how he came to be there. *"I had a half-made A7 which I drove to work and parked under the Morphett Street Bridge. Don Beavis left a note on the car advising of a meeting of Austin 7 enthusiasts at a house in Glenelg and I went along"*. The Secretary was Mr Don Beavis and five new members – including Max, were accepted to the Club.

A second meeting followed on 27 July and a Club run to Sellick Beach was proposed. Tony Grove was at this meeting and he recalls: *"My car was an A7 with rudimentary framework but no body. A few friends and I had been placing pamphlets on Austin 7s that we encountered, trying to get some sort of a club together. Don Beavis saw one of these and rang me and told me of the club meeting at Glenelg, so I went along. My first run with the Club was up Cement Works Hill to Sellicks Beach"*. Brian Langeluddecke also recalls how he and Ross Roberts came to be members: *"Ross saw a notice in the paper about a meeting to see if there was any interest in forming a club for Austin 7 enthusiasts and that meeting would be held in Glenelg at Lloyd Thorpe's home. We naturally were hooked and went along"*.

At the meeting on 31 August 1953, the first elections were held, resulting in these office bearers:  
Chairman – Dick Wise  
Secretary – Don Beavis  
Assistant Sec. – John Pickering  
Comp. Sec. – Moss Marchant  
Committee – John Walsh, J Main  
Auditor – Keith Dobson

Following the elections, the meeting discussed distributing the Constitution; the purchase of £20 worth of tools for the Club workshop, with a levy proposed for those members who used the workshop, and the pooling of engineering knowledge amongst members. Club activities would be announced in Adelaide's newspapers.

For September, a run to St Kilda for a "chop picnic"; a run to view the Redex Trial competitors and an informal trial were organised. Plans were made for visits in October to the Port Wakefield races and Collingrove hillclimb – evidence of a strong motor sport following by the new members.

Committee meetings were held on the first Monday of each month with the General meetings on the last Monday. At the September 1953 general meeting, Don Beavis resigned as Secretary: he was thanked for the great amount of work he had put into the formation of the Club. Max Bowden recalls: *"Don Beavis was from the UK and had been a member of an A7 Club there. He had met with the Victorian Club and he started the movement for the Club in SA"*. A restructuring of committee positions saw Keith Dobson take the duties of Secretary and Don Beavis became Trials Secretary.

The Club's relationship with the Victorian Austin 7 Club was outlined at this meeting and membership cards were to be purchased from them. The first of the Club's perpetual trophies – *The Wise Engineering Trophy* – was donated.

Owners of Austin 7 Specials were obviously keen competitors, as an approach was to be made to Rowley Park Speedway to hold an event for A7s – 5 cars were suggested as entrants. (No further reference to this event is made, although there is one for a similar approach to Skyline Speedway by Moss Marchant in November 1954).

By the end of 1953, the Club had 56 financial members plus 10 workshop members and was meeting in the Druids Hall behind a billiards saloon on Norwood Parade.

Club meetings continued here until July 1962 except for one at the "All British Motor House", the Austin-Morris agents in Pirie Street and one at the Sporting Car Club. The hall hire was covered by the sale of Coca Cola in summer and bingo in winter.

The July 1954 general meeting removed the distinction of "workshop members", and all members now paid the same fee. The value of these "workshop members" to the Club is shown in this extract from an article by Albert Ludgate for the September 1954 issue of "CARS", titled *Motor Sports "Boom" in South Australia*.

The Austin 7 Club is the youngest sporting motor club in the State. Started by Lloyd Thorpe and with an ever-increasing membership, the Club has already made a name for itself in motor racing circles. The Club has a workshop of its own, where members can work on their cars. Tools and equipment are provided and as a result, it is perhaps the best example of motor racing on the cheap. Many members have bought cars for a few pounds, spent £60 on hotting up and then are able to challenge more recent sports cars. It only needs care and attention to bring out the A7 performance and the SA members are doing just that.

The Club had created the positions of Trials Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Librarian, Social Secretary, Organiser, Publicity Officer and Tours Secretary – first held by Tony Grove – and the Sunday runs had been put on a formal footing – not left as a "casual run"!

At the 1954 Annual General Meeting, Keith Dobson and Max Bowden took over as President and Secretary respectively and Doug Trengove was elected to the Committee. Max Bowden recalls: *"In the first few months the Club grew very quickly and then just as suddenly it started to die. At the 1954 Annual Meeting a new committee was formed to keep the Club alive"*.

The new President and Secretary provided the stability needed for the Club to grow, as they served in these positions until the end of 1959. Lloyd Thorpe was awarded life membership at the next general meeting.

During this period, the Club's events were decided on a month-by-month basis and the motoring pages of *The News* and *The Advertiser* were used to inform members and to seek new members. The committee's intention was to set a yearly calendar for 1955.

#### The News 2 August 1954

The Austin 7 Club made Mr Lloyd Thorpe a life member at its meeting last week. Mr Thorpe, one of its founders, has been an office holder since its inception. He captained his A30, entered in the Club's name, in the Redex Trial.

#### The Advertiser 5 October 1954

Austin 7 Club Awards were presented at the Austin 7 Club's monthly general meeting last week to: Moss Marchant - Glen Motors Trophy for the Club's 1000 mile trial; Ross Roberts - Wise Trials Trophy; Derek Jolly - G H Scott Hillclimb Trophy; John Walsh, - C H Lutzow Speed Trophy for outstanding speed performance of the year in a side-valve A7.

John Walsh's performances in his A7 were praised in the "CARS" article mentioned above. After discussing various specials and their builders, the following appeared:

At the other end of the scale is J.L.G. Walsh and his remarkable Austin 7. He has spent many years modifying this basically 1929 model and it is now the fastest of its type in Australia.

At a recent Port Wakefield meeting, he won the Group C scratch race and was in an invincible position in the "News handicap" when the crankshaft broke! Since then, Jack has spent hours producing a new crankshaft from the solid in his own workshop. It was a revelation to see the car leading others with three times its capacity at a recent meeting. It is a remarkable car with a performance which indicates just what care, and attention to detail can do.

Another A7 exponent, Derek Jolly, has also modified his car over a number of years. It is now very light and has already achieved considerable success in local hillclimbs.

The 1953 Redex Trial of 6500 miles had been long enough and tough enough to capture everyone's imagination as few events before it, so the 1954 event was eagerly awaited. Traversing 9600 miles around Australia, it attracted 260 entrants, including an A30 entered

by A7CSA and driven by Lloyd Thorpe. (For the 1955 Redex Trial, the Club decided against again entering the Thorpe A30).

This event gave the fledgling CAMS great publicity and the value of belonging to the new controlling body of motor sport in Australia became apparent to A7C members wanting to compete in mainstream motor sport events. Moves that were begun in late 1954 to affiliate with CAMS had progressed by April 1956 to the setting up of a subcommittee to investigate fully with Mr Douglas Vercoe, SA CAMS Delegate - affiliation was finally completed in September 1957.

The Club had ongoing contacts with existing Car Clubs including the MGCC, SCC and RDA (Racing Drivers Association, who ran cars at Rowley Park Speedway) and we took part in RDA-organised Motor Shows in 1954, 1955 and 1956. At the 1954 Show, these cars were displayed: A7 Ulster of John Mark and A7s of John Walsh, Derek Jolly, Garrie Cooper, Doug Trengove, D Gooden and Paul Paneros.

#### The News 23 August 1954

The Austin 7 Club will hold a picture evening at its headquarters, Druids Hall, the Parade, Norwood next Monday night. An invitation has been extended to all owners of Austin 7 cars. On September 5 the Club will conduct a run to Gorge picnic grounds leaving Sir Lewis Cohen Avenue at 11 am.

#### The News 30 August 1954

Placegetters in the Austin 7 Club's 50-mile trial were Doug Trengove (Austin 7) 996 points, Ross Roberts (Austin 7) 995 and P Russell (A30) 994.

As well as motoring competition events and Motor Shows, the Club was involved in community events, which did not necessarily mean they were any safer, as the following illustrates.

#### The Advertiser 24 Sept. 1954

**Soapbox Derby Entries Closing:** Entries for the Northern Districts Soapbox Derby, to be conducted by the Motor Manual Goodwill Club and the Austin 7 Club SA on October 30 at Enfield, will close on Saturday. Applications should be addressed to the Secretary of the A7 Club Mr Max Bowden or to the Secre-

#### 1954-55 COMMITTEE

**President** - Keith Dobson  
**Treasurer/VPres.** - Peter Hatherley  
**Secretary** - Max Bowden  
**Assistant Sec.** - Paul Paneros  
**Committee** - Doug Trengove,  
 William Miller,  
 A Day, J Main

*Life membership to Lloyd Thorpe*

tary of the Motor Manual Goodwill Club. The derby will run down Darlington Street from Park Terrace to Main North Road.

#### The Advertiser 1 November 1954

##### **Crash Stops Soap Box Derby**

An accident in which a soapbox car knocked down a boy standing on the track caused cancellation of the remaining races in the soapbox derby in Darlington Street Clearview yesterday. The derby was arranged by the Motor Manual Goodwill Club and the Austin 7 Club SA in aid of the Gepps Cross Boy Scouts building fund. The boy run down was treated for minor injuries by a St John Ambulance Brigade attendant.

*Results were given for Scratch Championship (hard tyres), handicap (solid tyres) and scratch (pneumatic tyres).*

#### The Advertiser 28 Sept. 1954

Entries for the Austin 7 Club's 70-mile spring trial will close on Thursday. The trial will start from Sir Lewis Cohen Avenue at 2 pm. Vantage points, for members not competing, to see the trial will be arranged by the Club. The Club has been rejuvenated recently with the appointment of new officers and meets regularly at the Druids Hall Norwood.

Sir Lewis Cohen Avenue in the city was the preferred starting point for many Club events - note that entries closed only four days before the above event, in which a team of three cars from the Morris Minor Car Club were invited to enter. Cars were divided into "Austin 7" and "Others". A7 winner was J Barnett 890 points from Ross Roberts 830. Other cars winner was R Todd 990 points (car unknown).

Another historic event occurred on 5 March 1955, although its significance was certainly not recognised at the time. The first Border Run departed from the Old Gum Tree at Glen Osmond "with the

hope that it would be an annual event" – very prophetic and historic. Five cars from Adelaide and seven from Melbourne, including two A7s in each group, travelled to Bordertown: it was recorded that the average speed for the trip was 38 mph. Attendees were recorded in the "Blue Book" and this practice continues today.

The Advertiser 15 March 1955

**Austin 7 Club's Border meeting.**

So successful was the Austin 7 Club's run to the Victorian border to meet the Victorian Austin 7 Club that members are clamouring for a repeat performance. Five SA cars and seven Victorian cars met at the Border between Bordertown and Kaniva shortly after noon on Saturday March 5, when a general discussion was held. The clubs combined for a chop picnic at Kaniva (Vic) that night and the return journeys to Melbourne and Adelaide were made the next day. Next Sunday the Club will conduct a tour and fishing outing to Port Noarlunga leaving Sir Lewis Cohen Avenue at 11 a.m.

At the next meeting, the Vice President and Secretary reported on their "business discussions" with the Victorians while at the Border and it was noted that the fishing trip referred to above, attracted "few cars and even fewer fish!"

The March dates for the Border Run had been established and for the next four years members duly left for the annual meeting with the Victorians at this time of the year.

Brian Langeluddecke recalls one border run adventure. "*Ross Roberts and I went to Nhill on two Border Runs. On the way home the second time, Ross's car broke down at Tailem Bend, so John Newmarch kindly offered to tow us home to Clovelly Park. As it was getting late, John said he would have to put his foot down to make up time. Man, it was a sight believe me – there was John's flaming big V8 and on the end of the rope a poor insignificant brave little A7. It seemed at times the wheels were 6 inches above the road! However, when we got to Shepherd's Hill Road the roles were reversed as we went in front of the V8 and John was at the rear as the brakes on the Austin were by now non-existent. That*

*made a few eyes pop!*" Not for the only time did Border Run cars finish on towropes or trailers.

To support Club members who were keen trials drivers, in 1955 the Committee agreed to finance the costs of additional third party cover (an extra 20%), with the proviso that drivers must compete in at least four trials during the year. Jack Barnett, who was a trials winner in his A7, asked, "that it be emphasised that other cars could enter trials and that lady drivers were eligible also". Entry fees for trials remained at 5/-, when the year's subscription was 12/6.

The Advertiser October 1955

The spring navigation trial of the Austin 7 Club, over a distance of 109 miles, will begin from Gepps Cross at 11 a.m. on October 23. Lunch control (1 pm to 2 pm) will be about half a mile past Sandy Creek. Members are asked to take cut lunches.

The five perpetual trophies presented at the 1955 AGM show the competitive nature of the Club at this stage. The winners were John Walsh – *Lutzow Speed* and *Scott Hillclimb Trophies*; Jack Barnett – *Wise Engine Trophy*; Ross Roberts – *Glen Motors Trophy* and Max Bowden – *Aggregate points trophy*.

In July 1955 the need for a quarterly newsletter was recognised and Jack Barnett was appointed as editor of *Austin 7 Journals*. Despite several mentions in the Club minutes, regarding deadlines for articles, the Journal was not a success and in July 1957 it was decided, "that it should be held in abeyance."

The Advertiser 21 February 1956

**Austin 7 Club Treasure Hunt** will be conducted on the evening of February 27. Members will leave from the Clubrooms, Druids Hall Norwood at 7.45 pm. A run to the SA-Victorian border will be conducted on March 3 and 4. The tour will begin from the Glen Osmond tram terminus at 4.30 am. Members from the Victorian Austin 7 Club will meet SA members at the border at noon on March 3. A chop picnic to be held at Kaniva the same evening will be the highlight of the run.

Club-run competitions to this stage consisted of navigation and

## 1955-56 COMMITTEE

**President** - Keith Dobson

**Treasurer/VPres.** – D Marks,  
*replaced after resignation by*  
Arch Millikan

**Secretary** – Max Bowden

**Assistant Secretary** – D Rogers

**Committee** – Jack Barnett,

Peter Hatherley,

Peter Wilkinson, Ian Fooks,

Ross Roberts

*Life membership to Max Bowden*

English-type trials, treasure hunts and gymkhanas. (Note from the newspaper article above that some events were held after or before monthly general meetings. This practice continued for many years).

The Advertiser 3 April 1956

**Austin 7 Club Gymkhana** Austin 7 Club members who propose to attend the mystery gymkhana on Sunday April 8 are asked to meet at Gepps Cross at 10.30 am. The club welcomes all Austin 7 and A30 owners to this function.

The need for speed events was burning strongly among members and the Committee began to search for a site to run sprints - one being the Gawler Airstrip but this came to nothing. Another site within the Mallala District Council was under consideration in October 1955 but "the poor ground and risk of infringing Government regulations" caused the Club to defer the date until a better site could be found.

In February 1956 the Salisbury Council granted approval to use a dirt road that is now the entrance to the Bolivar Treatment Works, which were non-existent at the time, and on 28 October 1956 the Club's first 9 Chain Sprint was held.

Tony Grove was an entrant and he recalls: "*Permission had been obtained to close half this dirt road for a distance of 9 chains and as the start was near a bend in the road, the whole event, including timing, was conducted with a series of flag signals – all very primitive. The announcer and the timekeeper sat on the tray of a truck in an adjacent paddock in line with the finish line.*

*The timekeeper started the stopwatch when the starting flag dropped and stopped it as the car crossed the finish line”.*

The deficiencies of this method of timing were obvious, so the Club turned to Bruce Went – not for the only time as it turned out – to build electric timing equipment, which was first used at the third sprint on 15 May 1957 (the second sprint having been on 24 March). At this time the Club was still in the process of affiliating with CAMS and it was necessary to apply to CAMS for a waiver to run each sprint.

Entries for sprints, like trials, were divided into “Austin 7” and “Others”. The results of the first sprint show: A7s - Brian Cutt 11.75 secs winning from Brian Langeluddecke and Ross Roberts. *Other cars* – Dave O’Sullivan MGTC 12.0 secs from John Newmarch (Ford V8) and Bob Phillips (Holden ute).

The second sprint results were: A7s – Brian Cutt 12.5 secs from Allan Kempster and Ross Shelton; *Others* - John Newmarch 12.0 secs (Ford V8), Garrie Cooper 12.5 (MGA), Moss Marchant 12.5 (Ford V8) Murray Lewis 12.5 (MGTC) and Ian Fooks 13.0 (Holden). At the third sprint Brian Cutt, 12.5 secs and Garrie Cooper, 12.2 secs, each won their respective category.

The Club’s first Annual Dinner, held on 5 December 1956 at the Largs Pier Hotel, cost 12/6.

In 1957, the financial year was changed from July-June to January-December and subscriptions were raised to 15/- from the 12/6 that had been in force since 1953. The bank balance stood at £19.

The Club ran mud trials in the Kuitpo Forest area, between Clarendon and Meadows, at a site called “cowshed bog”! Murray Lewis recalls, “*It was a disused piece of public road, which was next to a dairy farm and was 2 feet deep in mud*”. Another site at Bulls Creek near Meadows became available for autocrosse events. Murray recalls, “*We marked out a small circuit and sealed it with old sump oil which we had all saved – couldn’t do that now of course!*”

Affiliation with CAMS was completed in September 1957. The first autocrosse held under CAMS’ authority was at Bulls Creek on 10 November with Max Bowden as the Steward and the local tennis club providing afternoon tea. At the second meeting, on 27 April 1958, Bruce Went won the A7 class.

With CAMS affiliation now completed, Keith Dobson and John Gibbs were nominated as the first Club Stewards and Club members were officials at Port Wakefield.

Bruce Went recalls how he joined the band of A7 drivers and his early competitions. “*In 1954 Bryan Cutt, a friend of mine, bought an A7 station sedan, which had a heavy wooden-framed body covered with masonite. Despite this disadvantage, it performed very well compared with other standard bodied A7s in the area. This was due to the fact that it was fitted with a Ricardo high compression aluminium cylinder head, the like of which we had never seen before.*

*Soon a steel sports body was discovered and bought for £5 and fitted it to the ’34 chassis. By now it was 1955 and at Port Wakefield we saw Jack Brabham win the AGP in his bob-tailed Cooper Climax. Returning home fired with enthusiasm, we decided that the Austin, with a few body mods, could be made to look like the Cooper. After cutting bits here and there, we gave up, deciding that a complete rebuild would be the only answer.*

*Bryan decided that we ought to improve the motor as well. We had heard that a certain Garrie Cooper knew all about hotting up A7s, so one night we went to Cooper Motor Bodies factory, where a number of A7 enthusiasts gathered – these weekly meetings became known unofficially as “Coopers Car Club”. Here we met Norm Butler, Murray Lewis and John Gibbs, who were all building A7 specials, and learnt about high lift cams, porting and polishing and also about the Austin 7 Club, which we both joined.*

*Early in 1956, late one Sunday night at Glenelg East, a piercing roar from four stub exhausts rent*

## 1956-57 COMMITTEE

**President** - Keith Dobson  
**Treasurer/VPres** – Arch Millikan  
**Secretary** – Max Bowden  
**Assistant Secretary** – D Rogers  
**Committee** – Jack Barnett,  
Ian Fooks, Ross Roberts,  
Murray Lewis,  
Moss Marchant

*Life membership to Keith Dobson*

*the air and our special was mobile. The car was quite successful at several A7C 9 chain sprints on the dirt road at Bolivar. At the same time, I was competing in Club trials and gymkhanas in my A8 but I now had a yearning for my own A7 special, so I bought the beginnings of a car from Bruce “Blue” Berry. After about nine months work, it was mobile and sported a twin choke down-draught carby from a Ford V8 and a body frame with one door but no panels.*

*In this form I competed at most Club events and open hillclimbs at Collingrove. At one meeting I tried a new line around the left hander before the esses and finished upside down – fortunately with little damage to the car and none to myself.*

*In 1958 I fitted two 1 1/8-inch SU carbies, giving some improvement in performance. During this year I competed at a hillclimb at Broken Hill, where a piston broke. This catastrophe was offset by the wonderful hospitality of the locals, resulting in the memories of that weekend being somewhat hazy”.*

## Summary

During these first five years, our Club set the foundations and initiated many events and customs that enabled it to grow and prosper in the coming years. From a founding membership of 62 in 1953, the Club was able to maintain these numbers until 1957, when a falling-off prompted a membership drive, which coincided with the growing interest in sprints and resulted in 84 new members. Membership then passed the 100 needed for CAMS’ affiliation.

The hard work of three founding members in establishing the Club had been recognised and life membership had been granted to: Lloyd Thorpe in 1954, Max Bowden in 1955 and Keith Dobson in 1956.

A lot had been achieved – the committee structure to run the Club had evolved with its growing needs, the Border Run was an established event on the Calendar, we were affiliated with CAMS, and a strong competition base, covering sprints, trials, gymkhanas and autocrosse, had been established by members, many of whom had developed considerable skills in building A7-based specials.

### Annual Trophy winners 1956

*Glen Motors* – Moss Marchant  
*Wise Trials* - Ross Roberts  
*Scott Hillclimb* – John Walsh  
*Lutzow Speed Trophy* – John Walsh  
*Aggregate Trophy* – Jack Barnett

### 1957

*Glen Motors* –  
Brian Langeluddecke  
*Wise Trials Trophy* – Jack Barnett  
*Scott Hillclimb Trophy* – Brian Cutt  
*Lutzow Speed Trophy* – Brian Cutt  
*Aggregate Trophy* – Ian Fooks

## Why 9 Chains for a sprint?

A speed event under CAMS' rules was "one in which cars travelled in a forward motion for more than 200 yards" (183 metres), and the permit fees and safety requirements – eg requiring an ambulance to be in attendance – were set accordingly. Any event that ran for less than 200 yards had lesser costs; 9 chains equalled 198 yards (181 m) and thus came in under the limit.

## The first electric timing gear

Built for timing 9 Chain sprints c.1957-58, it consisted of three parts.

1 – a 1/10th second stopwatch, operated by a solenoid taken from the dipping mechanism of an A7 headlight, was controlled by a PMG relay circuit and powered by a 6-volt battery. The process was started with "the hockey stick".

2 – The start contact, known as "the hockey stick", was placed on the ground just forward of a front wheel. When the car started, the wheel ran over a lever that operated an electrical contact and started the stopwatch. The hockey stick was quickly withdrawn before the rear wheel arrived!

3 – The finish contact comprised a length of water-filled rubber tube, placed across the track. One end was sealed and the other was connected to a rubber diaphragm (a vacuum advance mechanism from a car), which operated a switch contact and stopped the watch.

## All Born in 1953 - CAMS, A7CSA and Port Wakefield

### CAMS

Motor sport, like other sports throughout the World, is conducted under an internationally recognised set of rules, which impose on organisers and competitors the same general requirements in every country affiliated to the world-controlling organisation. Of all sports, it is the one with the most inherent danger and therefore the need for the utmost protection of the public and the competitor is most apparent in motoring competitions. The need for control was recognised early in the history of motoring, although it did not become effective for some years. By 1902 the existing Automobile Clubs in various countries had agreed to form an international fed-

eration (now known as the FIA). Based in Paris, the federation delegated control of the sport to the Automobile Club in those countries, and so it was that the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) became the authority for the whole of the British Empire, except for South Africa where their Automobile Club already existed.

Control in Australia (such as it was) became the function of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) in 1934, prior to which it had been exercised from London by the RAC, though in fact there was very little motor sport as we know it. The AAA comprises the various State automobile clubs (RAA etc) and motor sport was a very minor concern to such a large and growing body with many aspects of touring to handle. The AAA exercised its controlling power for almost 20 years, establishing a Competitions Committee of delegates from various states for this purpose. The AAA also set up "AAA Advisory Panels" of delegates from sporting clubs.

With the growth of the sport all over the world after the war, it became increasingly apparent the pre-war methods were no long adequate. In 1952 the AAA found that even with the help of the Advisory Panels it was no longer a workable proposition for them to exercise control of motor sport.

With startling suddenness, in November 1952 they notified all sporting car clubs that they would relinquish control at the end of January 1953. Within five weeks of the AAA announcement, four meetings had been held in Victoria and NSW and delegates from the car clubs discussed draft proposals.

A constitution was adopted, a name was chosen – Confederation of Australian Motor Sport – and from 1 February 1953 CAMS came into being.

As the sport grew, so did the stature of its control and administration. In 1958 the first steps were taken to cut our ties to the RAC and achieve National independence within the FIA – a rapidly remarkable rise from the scratch start only five years before. Approved on probation that year, Australia's separate status was ratified in 1960, with the right to issue our own licences, make our own Competition rules, set up our own titles - and pay our own way.



A7 specials of Norm Butler (top) and Brian Cutt at Bolivar 9 chain





## Port Wakefield begins

Prior to 1953, all motor racing in South Australia took place on public roads – e.g. the 1936 Centenary Australian Grand Prix at Victor Harbour, the 1939 AGP at Lobethal and the 1950 AGP at Nuriootpa. Other races were run at Woodside but following two deaths at a meeting in 1951, permission to use public roads was denied, so a new, permanent track was needed if motor racing was to survive in SA: Port Wakefield was the answer.

The opening meeting for cars and motorcycles was on 1 January 1953. *The Advertiser* next day featured a front-page photo of Lex Davison's Alfa Romeo, which had burst a tyre and rolled. The report of the meeting said that he was "catapulted into the air and turned a somersault following a blow out of one of the rear tyres."

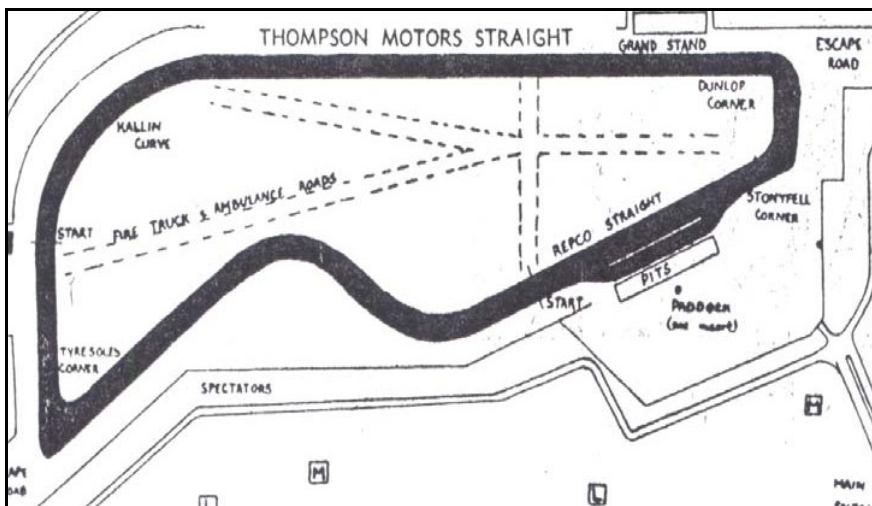
"A crowd of about 25 000 attended the meeting which was opened by the Minister of Lands, Mr Hincks."

The report was very parochial, noting that Victoria had 8 wins, SA 5 and WA 1. Drivers who took placings included Reg Sparks, Clem Smith and Steve Tillett, while motorcycle riders mentioned were Les Diener and Laurie Jamieson.

In 1959, the lap record was held by Alec Mildren, F1 Cooper Climax at 1 minute (88 mph). The saloon car record was 1 minute 10 seconds, Clem Smith, Holden and the sports car record was 1 minute 3 seconds, Derek Jolly Lotus 15.

The track had a short life, falling out of favour with CAMS, and closed in 1961.

**Port Wakefield** race track was 1.3 miles (2.1 km) long and "was of interesting design and incorporated many hazards to test the skill of drivers and cars alike". Racing was clockwise.



## Racing action from Port Wakefield c.1950s

From the top:  
Crowd watches sports car action at Dunlop Corner:  
A Cooper Climax at the same corner (note the hay bales marking track edge, the ambulance officers at the corner and cars in the background):  
A Cooper Bristol sports car (of the type driven by Jack Brabham to win the 1955 AGP) in the pits.





Top row and above: Ready for the first Border Run and scenes at the SA/Victorian Border.

Right: Ross Roberts A7 at the Kuitpo Forest and Cowshed Bog



Bottom Right: JLG Walsh A7 at Port Wakefield

Below, Action at Darley Road ford, Club 50 mile trial, 1954  
Bottom: Doug Trengove/Doug Marks A7 Special  
Top: Murray Lewis/Rob Brosnan Amilcar Special







**A7 Cowshed Bog action**



Top Left: Jack Barnett

Top Right: Ross Roberts

Centre Right: Moss Marchant

Bottom Left: Murray Lewis

Note the clothing worn by competitors and spectators, the spectators close to the action in photo at right and the lack of safety helmets by all the drivers and the only car needing help through the bog is the A30!