



HISTORY OF THE TRIUMPH SPORTS OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF NSW. INC.

Bruce Meppem

The Triumph Sports Owners Association began in NSW at an official meeting on Tuesday August 23rd 1960. Ray Cook, a founder member of TSOA Victoria, had moved in June of that year to NSW and became friendly with a few enthusiastic TR owners. Together with the help of Mr K.N. White, Assistant Manager of Standard Triumph (Australia) Pty Ltd, who made the William Street premises available for meetings and assisted with owners' names from Triumph sales records, the club was launched with Ray Cook elected as President, Michael Fogarty as Secretary, Peter Addison as Events Secretary and Mike Read as Treasurer. The first "tour" as it was described was a great success, with a turnout of 20 TRs.



Ray Cook and Alan Wright



You can't start them too young!

Anthony Cook (2 years), son of TSOA's Founding President Ray Cook, behind the wheel of John McSkimming's TR3A in 1968. TSOA Concours d'Elegance, Palm Beach, Sydney

1963 the committee advised members that "associate membership" was available to "... wives, girlfriends and miss...s on the nomination of a financial member"! A CAMS licence cost two pounds ten shillings per year. In early 1963 club bulletins recorded eight new members with TR4s and Ray Cook donated an annual trophy for the top car in the Concours d'Elegance. Even in those days the then President, F.S.L. Price commented "Well Gentlemen, the fact that all our club members are nice chaps seems finally to be sinking in. At each of our meetings we have a larger proportion of members and to some extent this applies to social and competitive events, but the faces I can rely on seeing are the same old stalwarts, a very small proportion of our full membership... how about the rank and file standing behind their committee. Show them that you are at least appreciative of their endeavours on your behalf and turn up in force at our future outings."

The club continued to attract new members in 1964 and 1965 with a new format introduced in the club's newsletter. Now called TSOA Monthly Review, it had a glossy cover and included advertising on the front cover! Noted in the first edition February/March 1965 was the departure of Ray and Jan Cook. They were returning to Victoria. Ray, the founding President in 1960, had also been President in 1962/1963. It was a sad loss for TSOA in NSW.

Hillclimbs at Amaroo Park, sprints at Castlereagh Air Strip, and short circuit racing at Amaroo Park continued to surface as popular sporting fixtures in '65 with rank and file members voting for day trials, sprints, night trials, hillclimbs and dirt circuits in 1966.

The International Meeting at Warwick Farm took place on February 13th

During those early years TSOA club enthusiasts were keen on social events and many pristine and new TRs competed at concours. Early copies of news sheets show concours cars also competed in sprints, motokhanas, economy runs, hillclimbs, trials, tours and timed events. The club participated in CAMS events and Oran Park was a favourite track. One member, Ian Robertson, had a TR2 which not only won the 1963 concours but was also the fastest TR in the club! On July 9th

1966 and now illustrious names like Frank Gardener (Alfa Romeo GTA), Max Volkers (Lotus Cortina), Kevin Bartlett (Alfa Romeo TI) were joined by internationals Jim Clark, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart. Other famous drivers included Bob Jane, Ian Geoghegan, Greg Cusack and Brian Foley.

In February 1967 Ecurie Triumph were notified that the Triumph Racing Team tent would have to make way for Jack Brabham and Repco during the 1967 International Grand Prix at Warwick Farm. TSOA responded graciously. In 1967 CAMS recognised drag racing and TSOA was invited to the NSW Hotrod Club to participate in the National Drag Race. A name that was later to become a TSOA icon, Terry Harris, was welcomed with his wife Noelene at the June '67 meeting and September saw the club's membership increase to 92. Allan Wright again won the Concours d'Elegance in his TR3 and Murray Fox was the first winner of the Bruce McCormack Memorial Trophy as Member of the Year. Membership at the end of 1967 was 105.

The final meeting of the year and new members were under the impression that TSOA was a racing club but the President, Jim Neal, advised that now Ecurie Triumph was established the club would cater for the majority of its members.

A branch of TSOA was formed in Newcastle in 1967 and its first magazine was a Christmas issue and listed Anthony Renwick Smith as President and Gordon Perry as Vice President. In 1970 membership stood at 43. The club was go-ahead and active, organising many competition events, a concours and social runs. It seems that economic pressures and a conflict of personalities contributed to the demise of the very fine sub-branch in the early '70s. Michael Patten, one of the early Newcastle members, together with Michele, his wife, are still stalwarts of TSOA NSW and their immaculate red TR8 is a crowd-pleaser at competition events.

1968 and the first Monthly Review noted 25 TRs would soon be arriving in Australia, one being sold to a TSOA member, Peter Hunt, and 20 would be demonstration models!

The number of Ecurie Triumph registered drivers increased to 19 and President Graeme Laurie went into print, unhappy that the club members weren't participating - so began 1969. The prices of new Triumph models were listed: TR6 hard top - \$4395; Triumph TR6 PI basic \$4195; Triumph GT6 MKII basic \$3578, overdrive \$189 and wire wheels \$118. There was \$900 in the bank and Ian Black paid cash for a Spitfire, from an Englishman, only to have it repossessed. It appears the Englishman still had it under hire purchase.

1970 and the club gained a new magazine, TREAD. There was \$306 in the bank. G. Byrne's TR5 and S. Brown's MKI Spitfire shared top place in the concours. The outright points score went to Alan Higginbotham in a TR and Graeme Laurie took Ecurie Triumph honours.

The CSCA or Combined Sports Car Association was formed in 1971 and consisted of Austin Healey Owners Club, MG Car Club, Morgan Owners Club of Australia, Vintage Sports Car Club and TSOA. The Austin Healey Club won the championship in '71 and '72. TSOA came third in '71 and second in '72. Warwick Farm, Sydney's premier international racing circuit, was closed to motor racing on Monday August 13th 1973 and names like Clark, Courage, Surtees, Brabham, Stewart, Hill and Moss all had their day of glory on the wide two and a quarter miles of hotmix.

In February 1975 TSOA members were excited about the release of Triumph's new TR7 and TREAD carried several pages of reviews, technical information and opinions and reservations. Graham Gay eventually became TSOA's first owner of a TR7 in 1978. March 1975 saw the beginnings of a very sad situation for TSOA - a mooted TR Register that was set to split and eventually break away from the parent club. A well-known and established member of Ecurie Triumph openly pitted his TR3A against the new TR7. Years later he sang the praises of the TR7 as one of the drivers in the 1980/81 TR7 Barclays Pro-Am Series. The club registered 149 members.

David McKay and his experiences driving a TR3A in the 7th Tour of France took much space in three editions of TREAD in 1976 and the then President Ed White had much to say about the proposed acceptance of Dolomite Sprints into the club, with much discussion centring on sedan owners becoming members. Leyland Australia was pushing too far for sedans to be accepted and together with AMI gave much financial support to Victorian and NSW TSOAs. A special meeting of members was called on June 8th 1976 to discuss the matter but the constitution remained unchanged.

Graeme Laurie was presented with Life Membership in May 1977. The



club membership was 110 and 19 Ecurie Triumph drivers contested the TR7 series. Today in 1995 Warwick Dawson, Bob Kennedy, Roger Gates, Ian Black, Rod Chivas and Graeme Rutledge are still front runners and very visible competition drivers.

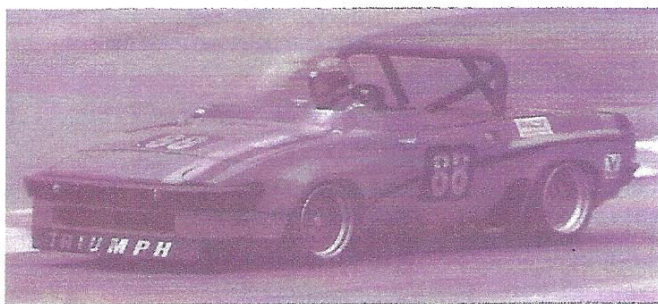
There was much excitement in TSOA in 1979 about the 1980 National Meeting which was to be held in NSW for the first time. 1980 also saw the Leyland venture into motor sport with the TR7 Pro-Am Series. The cars, supplied by Leyland Australia, were virtually stock standard, straight off the showroom floor. Roger Gates, an Ecurie Triumph driver, was offered Geoff Stubbs' TR7 for a week's trial. His subsequent report gave much praise to the new TR7. The series was held at Amaroo Park and was the start of a campaign by Jaguar Rover Triumph Cars to inject a new motor racing concept to the Australian motor sport scene. As Roger Gates reports in his letter of December 12th 1993, the first series was for professional drivers over a five race series. Roger noted that Sir Jack Brabham, three times World Champion, was one of the drivers in the professional series.

Roger purchased the Bob Morris TR7, winner of the 1980 series, and was contracted to race in the '81 series, which was run over six races each of five laps at Amaroo Park. The professionals competing were Colin Bond, Jim Richardson, Bob Norris, Dick Johnson and Ian "Pete" Geoghegan. TSOA's Ed White joined Roger Gates and nine other amateurs to race against the professionals.

1980 also saw an increase in membership to 173. The original letter of introduction from K.N. White, Assistant Manager of Standard Triumph (Australia) Pty Ltd was printed in TREAD. The letter, dated July 14th 1960, states that Standard Triumph (Australia) Pty Ltd agreed to make its William Street premises available for the meetings of TR owners.

In 1982 the position of Vehicle Registrar was approved by the committee and all owners were requested to complete a form detailing owner's name, registration number, commission number, engine number, trim and paint and condition and modifications. Its purpose was to cross-reference and compile records of all TSOA members' cars. Finally in 1982 sedans were admitted to the club as Associate Members. Roger Gates retired as president after serving six years on the committee. TSOA finished third in the CSCA competition.

1988 and the Marque Representatives were elected. Mike and Michele Patten's show-stopping TR8, first unveiled in 1985, was voted the "Best Triumph" at the Queensland National Meeting. In January 1989 club members were looking toward revitalising the club in the '90s and glimmers of unrest surfaced among sedan owners.



At speed – the TR8 driven by Mike Patten, Amaroo Park 1993

A new President, Grant Turnbull, was elected in 1990, the year of the 11th Annual National Meeting which was held in NSW in August. It was also the occasion of 30 years celebrations of TSOA in NSW. There was an ambience of expectancy and enthusiasm in the club. Mike Patten not only took out the Ecurie Triumph point score but the prestigious Interstate Challenge Shield at the January Historic Car Racing at Amaroo Park in the TR8.

Activity and member enthusiasm continued in 1991 and rose to fever pitch in 1992 when TSOA concentrated much effort to win the CSCA Championships. It seemed the entire club talked of nothing else but the championship and TSOA led from the first round and was never headed – a joyous win, the first since 1977! The \$20,000 barrier between cheque and investment accounts enabled the purchase of two computers and a photocopier. A sub-committee was formed to research and complete the club's incorporation. The 350th General Meeting was held on April 14th 1992. A National Challenge Cup was contested and won by NSW at the National Meeting in Victoria. TSOA NSW was the first CSCA club to

Bruce Meppem and friend with his original, unrestored multiple-winning 1969 MK1 2.5PI saloon at the 1986 TSOA Concours d'Elegance

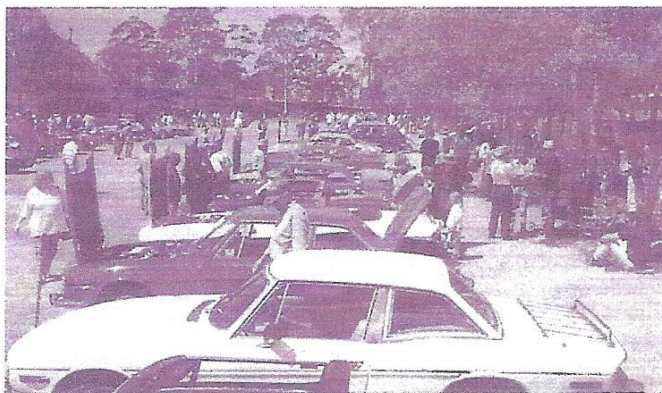


conduct an event at the controversial new Eastern Creek Raceway.

Linda Turnbull won the Clubman point score. Rod Chivas was the Ecurie Triumph competition winner and the overall winner of the concours was a

beautifully prepared TR4A owned and restored by Elliott Camp. David and Margaret Clark's TR5 was second and Warren Bromley's TR6 was third. Bruce Meppem's original 1969 MK1 2.5 PI won the sedan class for the fourth time. Most members regarded 1992 a vintage year!

A new President and incorporation was the big news in 1993. President Roy Lowe and committee, after much research and hard work were rewarded on February 21st 1994 when the Director, Consumer Affairs, granted TSOA incorporation and its full title now read: Triumph Sports Owners Association (Ecurie Triumph) of Australia (NSW Branch Incorporated). TREAD took on new finery with full colour on the April issue cover. A Winter Classic Rally and Motathlon was organised by Ron and James Pope. TSOA was asked by the promoters of the Tooheys 1000 at Bathurst to provide 16 Stags as presentation cars for the street display and Parade of Honour for the drivers of the famous classic. The parade and street display was seen on Australian and international television. Warren Bromley's excellent TR6 took outright concours honours. 1995 and Graham Olliffe is the new President. NSW will again host the TSOA National Meeting and Triumphs will come from all states to celebrate. The club Stags will again be presentation cars at the Tooheys 1000 Bathurst event during the October long weekend. The well-respected author, Graham Robson, will visit from the UK as guest of honour at the National Meeting. CSCA and Ecurie Triumph activity is healthy and enthusiastic. The All British Display Day and TSOA Concours d'Elegance will be held during the National Meeting. The Marque Representative Challenge, the TSOA Motathlon and the many social events planned will see TSOA looking bigger and better than ever.



Line-up 1994, TSOA NSW Concours d'Elegance and All British Sports Car Display Day

As Registrar and Contact for TSOA, and writer of this club history, my appreciation goes to James Rose, Club Librarian, Life Member, Roger Gates, Denis Smith, a past Vice President, Rod Chivas, Ecurie Triumph driver, Allan Wright another historic figure together with Founding President Ray Cook and Jan Cook for their gracious and speedy assistance in supplying early records, newsletters, magazines and photographs. Without their help I could not have even begun. The available space was limited for TR Action but a copy of the complete history is available on request. The club library has few photographic records so I am grateful to the above people who loaned their own personal photographs.

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