

CAR TRIALS

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Stimulated by seeing the Northland Special parked up Maunu Road I spoke to John MacDonald who invited me to an inaugural meeting of the Northland Car Club. This meeting [from memory] was held in the Druids Hall up Bank Street and John MacDonald was elected President. Later a meeting was held in a small room in the front of the Winter Show Buildings in Lower Dent Street. There it was put to the meeting that somebody should design a badge for the club and although previously I claimed Geoff Ralls designed this badge Bob Martin spoke to me some years ago and said he designed it.

At this stage full of over-confidence and enthusiasm I volunteered myself as an experienced navigator into the crew of Tui Cameron, with an Austin A70 Hampshire.

I built a table for the back seat workers with reading lights and an extra speedo and on our first trial demonstrated my complete lack of knowledge by getting us hopelessly lost.

Tui lost interest after this but the club carried on with trialing and certain crews started to become quite a threat in N.Z Championship events.

Members like the late Vic Simpkin, Graham Wright, Bruce Burling and Neil Johns entered local events and Championship Gold Star events based in Auckland and Dargaville. Trials in those days were N.Z's main motor sport [except for Ardmore, Levin and Wigram] and were 12hr or 24hr non-stop marathons. I remember deep in the night winding through some back roads between the Bombay Hills and Tuakau and spotting Neil Johns driving his father's Austin [A105, I think] heading in the wrong direction with bewildered looks on all the crews faces.

Mrs Dot Simpkin, Judy Burling, Shirley Scampton and Liz Fuge formed a ladies crew and had several successes. I joined Graham Wrights crew for the 1956, 57, 58 seasons. For the first two years in a Volkswagen and the last year in a 1956 Mk1 Zephyr.

In 1958 our crew was Graham Wright driver, Colin Fuge co-driver, Roy Billington time - keeper and myself as map-reader/spotter. After a grueling but successful season we finished 3rd in the N.Z Gold Star Trials Championship. Graham was a very smooth driver who, even when speeding through rain or fog making up lost time always placed the car through corners with polished precision.

The club held 4 to 6 trials a year and I plotted quite a few. While living in Te Hana I plotted a night trial and on the night of the event it poured with rain. The most amusing story involves my good friend Vic Simpkin who drove into a flooded road in his Vauxhall Velox, decided the water was too deep and then opened his drivers door to see to reverse out. Water poured into the car and I believe a pair of slippers floated off never to be seen again.

Brian Skudder

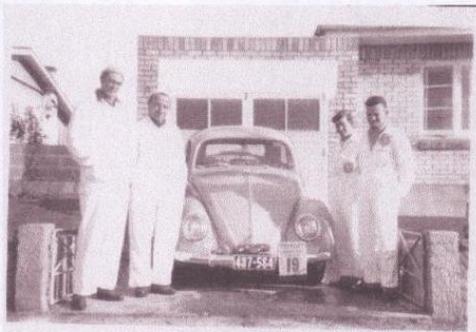
Northland Car Club car badge.



Renault 750 1955 Hepolite Car trial
Driver unknown



Sunbeam Talbot Mk3
1955 Hepolite Car trial
Driver unknown



In Hamilton prior to the start of the
Indianapolis Gold Star trial.
From left. Noel Robinson, Graham
Wright, Graham White and Brian
Skudder