

NSW Hillclimb Championship 2023

Round 3: Historic Huntley Hillclimb – home of the Wollongong Sporting Car Club

By Jacqueline Clark

After the excitement of Bathurst, it was straight back to work for the wider membership of the Wollongong Sporting Car Club, preparing to host Round 3 of the NSW Hillclimb Championship for 2023.

Held on the weekend of 1 and 2 April, there were 34 entries for the state round – 17 of them members of WSCC - along with 3 club entrants competing on the day.

Thankfully the weather was relatively kind on race day, with a couple of showers during the morning sessions and despite the track remaining a bit wet and slippery it was still ready for some standout performances. And then the sun shone on the presentation – when it was all over! Typical. Despite the dubious weather there were some fast times and records broken.

Firstly big congrats to Peter Brown who came second overall in his Mulsane (clearly back in fine form following the broken driveshaft which saw an early retirement from Round 2 at Bathurst last month), AND a class record at 22.81 seconds.

The fastest time of the day came in from regular competitor, and current Australian Hillclimb champion, Dean Tighe, in his Empire Wraith with a time of 20.73. He's edging closer to the 'teens' but still needs to find a couple of seconds to crack the longheld track record for historic Huntley (Sep 2011) of 18.54. Coming in third overall was Matthew Brown in his Audi, with no twinning competition on the day from club member Jason Hickey (apparently enjoying a holiday, or the grand prix – as you do!). The fastest Junior of the day was Mitch Brown in the Pulsar, and sitting only just over half a second off brother Cameron's class record!

And speaking of juniors, young Travis McGeorge made a great debut cutting over 11 seconds from his first to best runs. Great effort!

Of the 3 class records set on the day, the second came from Warren Bell, who was nothing short of stoked. He'd already set a new PB at practice on Saturday and then backed it up on race day setting a new class record of 23.59, a good half a second shaved off his previous record. It seems the special touch of the team at WPVW on the Dyno the week prior left Wazdat ready to rocket.

The third new class record was set by Rick Yates, of the Newcastle MG Car Club in the Mini Cooper S – in fact it was a first time record for this class at Huntley.

Family rivalries

As well as Mitch trying to nudge closer to Cameron's Huntley record, we saw Brown v Brown again in the Renault Clio with Cam edging out dad Ben by just over a tenth of a second – Sooo close... And in a return to the track, Jackson Chantrey (club competitor) couldn't quite challenge dad Ian in the Toyota Supra; though that's to be expected having had a 2-year hiatus. Speaking of the Supra, it sadly took some front end damage when it came off the track at the esses – apparently Ian turned but the car decided to just go straight – onto the tyre wall and ready for a moon take-off.

MIA & Mishaps

As well as Jason, we missed seeing Bob and Klauss in action on the track... oh wait, I think Klauss did get caught on the track, just not in his race car!!! Klauss in fact took some superb video and photos on the day, capturing a few key moments for some of the days' big runs. And while not quite the same level as Wazdat, Bob took the safety car up the hill for a few runs – just to keep his eye in for next time! We hope you are on the mend Bob.

Also missing on the day was Riley who had a few fooled that he was off getting hitched, but in fact the MacQueens were all WA bound for Riley's *sister's* wedding. 😊

In terms of mishaps, there were a few on the day:

- Mick had placed a plastic bag over his clubman's seat to keep the rain off, which prior to racing Joy removed and placed just behind the seat. On take off the bag flew out and had to be retrieved before the next racer could start – oops.
- Stuart has a thing with keys – he forgets them and misplaces them all the time! Well just prior to the lunch break (luckily) the AE86 decided to self-lock with the keys in the ignition at the top of the return road! Big thanks to Waz for his ingenuity in using his window net locking bar to prise the lock open; and thanks also to Chris and Nathan who were on the hunt for implements to help also.
- Richard reported a few little niggles so there was a mini Mini consult with Bob about the fixes that might be useful for next round.
- Michael had a few issues with the #72 Datsun 180B with right half shaft issues on the rear diff, taking the car out for a couple of runs. Luckily, he was able to duck home to get another one and resume racing for the final runs of the day. Gotta love racing near home!
- As mentioned the Chantrey-powered Supra limped home with a very sad face after a meeting with the tyre wall on esses.
- Dave also hit the grass after his left front tyre blew a valve as he entered the esses and sent him and Douglas sailing into the tyres where Ian had previously set himself to launch.
- After a great performance at Bathurst, Chris' Forrester just didn't want to cooperate at its home track. 😞 Maybe it was being weighed down due to him forgetting to remove his race gear bag from behind his race seat!
- Ben F had close encounters with those pesky witches hats not once but on several occasions; and
- Wayne's Phoenix had a crank angle sensor issue that plagued him all day, but despite this Phoenix still managed to put down some impressive times.

Off the track

A big thanks goes to all of the officials and volunteers on the day; including all those that attended the 2 working bees in the lead up to the day to get the track and pit area looking so fantastic. To all the officials including Alison as Clerk of the Course, Michelle on check ins and supporting Vern with the timing so he could focus on controlling the STOP and GO lights, Gail Bates, Christine Cowan and Jo for their efforts and support. A great commentary effort by Garry in the tower, with Steve in support. Trevor was in what has become "his position" manning the finishing line and reporting back on those drivers who weren't slowing down sufficiently after their adrenalin rush. We had 3 people controlling the drivers and spectators at the fork; Tracey, Rob and Richard. Richard kept everyone who ventured up there entertained with his comments and assessments of the competitors as they shot past. Also, a top job by Quinn on the start line with the chock, who maintained a smile on his dial in all the varying weather conditions.

In the canteen we had the smiling faces of Annamaria, Michelle and Charlotte who kept the crowds well fed with BnE rolls, sausage sangas and the popular hot dogs and pulled pork rolls.

For easter we had the bonus of Charlotte's baked banana bread and chocolate muffins, not to mention the easter egg guessing competition where the 3 lucky winners took home a nice chocolate haul. The three happy winners were 1) Kevin, 2) Keith, and 3) Gavin – well done. We hope some chocolate was enjoyed over the recent Easter weekend (if it lasted that long!).

The sun then shined upon the presentation which closed out a great weekend of racing, records and rivalries at Historic Huntley Hillclimb. For the full race results be sure to check out the WSCC website. Here we come Kempsey for Round 4.