



## Eoin Young's Diary

Michael Schumacher is making a GP comeback as a 41-year-old just recovered from a neck injury when it seems that success comes easier from a super-fit teenager in the cockpit. But bear this in mind: when Fangio first raced for Mercedes in 1954, he was 43. He had finished second in the 1953 championship with Maserati despite having missed most of the 1952 season after breaking his neck in a crash earlier in the year. And then he went on to win the 1954-55-56-57 world titles! Different times, of course but it tends to put Michael's re-appearance in perspective!

### McLaren Memories in New Zealand

Bruce McLaren was remembered in exciting style with huge meetings on the new Hampton Downs track and the old Pukekohe circuit on successive weekends in January. It was a week with motor racing memories on track and off. I stayed with Anne Thompson and Wallace McNair in Hamilton and that was an adventure in itself,



**Original McLaren team lineup: Eoin Young, Ray Rowe, Wal Willmott, Mike Barney.**

motoring to Hampton Downs with Wallace in his aero-engined Sunbeam vintage super tourer, a 1924 chassis with a 1917 12-cylinder engine from a Handley Page bomber. Wallace compared the experience with what Sammy Davis, 1927 Le Mans winner for Bentley, described as being propelled into space in a comfortable armchair. Aero engineering is in the McNair genes and we visited son Robert who has fitted a 1930 Riley Nine sports chassis with a 6.1-litre 4-cylinder air-cooled Gipsy Major Tiger Moth motor in place of the original 1100cc. Robert slotted in behind the wheel, checked the aero instruments on the dashboard, pumped up fuel pressure and fired-up the big motor, settling to a rumbling roar. I was trying to work out whether the Tiger motor was as fitted to the Moth, thus with an overhead crankshaft, but that would have put the driveshaft beside the driver's shoulder, so the aero engine had been turned upside down and back to front. It produces a lazy 150bhp at 3000rpm, with 1400rpm equal to the 100kph speed limit. It runs all day long at 2000rpm in the Moth. The car has a Mark Seven Jaguar Moss gearbox. If

that isn't performance enough, Robert plans a supercharger.

He has what looks like a brand new Tiger Moth, immaculately restored at Ardmore, and he flies two or three times a week. He is also helping with the restoration of a twin-engined WW2 Mosquito fighter bomber and is building a Type 59 Bugatti. I asked if he would open the bonnet of the Riley-Moth figuring it looked nigh on impossible with the four big exhausts scything separately out of the engine cover. It was engineering simplicity as he slid the long centre pin out of the bonnet and it opened with ease.

### Bentley-Meteor V12!

Then we visited the spotless garage of Gavin and Myles Hicks in Papakura to see the incredible Meteor-engined special under construction. The Meteor is the land-based unblown version of the Spitfire's 27-litre Merlin V12, 750bhp and 1250 ft/lbs of torque. The big tank V12 is fitted in a Mark 6 Bentley chassis with independent front suspension, a Bedford truck gearbox and a Leyland truck differential. Hicks got the Meteor engine sealed and crated, from the Swiss Army and he has a spare. Phil Mauger has a couple of Meteor motors in Christchurch and he wants to compare notes with the Hicks *per et fils*. Seems the Meteor V12s were reasonably easy to find because there were more tanks than Spitfires, but now that tractor-pull people are fitting a pair of Meteors on nitro, they pull hard...but don't live long.

### Old race mechanics remember Bruce

Racer mechanics of note at both races from the good old days were Brits Mike Barney and Ray Rowe, visiting New Zealand for the first time. They had been Bruce McLaren's mechanics at Cooper and then at the newly formed McLaren team in the mid sixties. They looked immaculate in jackets and ties, as though they had just strolled over from Lord March's Goodwood. "We've been mechanics for fifty years and now we're pukka rock stars," said Mike as they settled in with a dozen other original McLaren team people, signing endless copies of the splendid new book "Bruce McLaren - A Celebration of a Kiwi Icon" put together by Michael Clark, with international contributions.

Mike remembered going to the Italian GP at Monza with three cars tended by Mike and 'Noddy' Grohman, two mechanics for two cars... until John Cooper seized the chance of extra Lira and signed Giorgio Scarlatti to drive the 'spare' car. Two mechanics for three cars. Ray Rowe points out that there are now 150 mechanics for two cars in the modern McLaren team with around 1000 in total at the McLaren Woking headquarters where the staff eats in shifts in the restaurant. Ray is 73 and still works with the team, tending the old cars in the team collection. "I always liked Austin Sevens and now I look after Bruce's original Ulster..."

### Writer's cramp!

We signed for an hour at a time each day at each track and by the end of the last session I actually got writer's cramp! Very painful. Never had that before. Howden Ganley was scoffing at my signature, but I could really see where he

was coming from - his is a swift scribble that only he can recognise. Mind you, Chris Amon's signature isn't a lot better! Ayrton Senna used to hire a journalist at each GP to spend an hour each weekend in the McLaren motorhome, signing Senna's autograph on fanmail postcards...

### Enzo's Secrets - join the queue!

Kiwi journalist David Manton was at Hampton Downs, updating me on the Pat Hoare book he has been writing for the past two years with several visits to Maranello researching the special arrangement Pat seemed to enjoy with Ferrari. I remember being at a Ferrari press conference shortly before Enzo's death and asking whether Hoare enjoyed a special arrangement with Ferrari to get single-seaters to race in New Zealand. Ferrari's right-hand man, Franco Gozzi translated my question and Mr Ferrari replied at some length. "Mr Ferrari says there was no special arrangement." End of story. I found Gozzi after the conference, and taxed him that Enzo had not said there was no special deal for the tall Kiwi. He agreed. So what did Mr Ferrari say? "I'm not telling you..." Still the end of the story. But Manton has gone much deeper in Italy and his book, due out next year, is titled "Enzo's Secrets". David has told me not to write about it, but what the hell. It will launch at Hampton Downs at the special Chris Amon event next January, and I want to be first in the customer queue. If you're any sort of enthusiast of our racing history, I reckon you will be in the queue too. It's a long time since I've looked forward to a book as much as this one. Pat Hoare was always something of a mystery man to me and now I'll get the answer to a lot of questions.

### Brilliant motor sport art

Don Packwood is a brilliant New Zealand motorsporting artist who appeared with a display of his paintings at Hampton Downs. Each one was exciting and accurate with a flourish that captured the spirit of speed. Motor racing art is incredibly difficult as all but a few artists show us, but each of Packwood's paintings on display was worth purchase. Usually there are perhaps a couple in a show of eight or ten, that I might consider purchase given the wherewithal. Packwood scores ten out of ten! Check him on his [www.donpackwood.com](http://www.donpackwood.com) website.



**David Ham with his Lister-Jaguar.**

### New bits for old Lister

David Ham had brought his venerable Lister-Jaguar out from the UK where he has raced it

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