

TASMANIAN MOTORSPORT HALL OF FAME

ROBIN BESSANT (Inducted 2014)

Robin Bessant's foray into motorsport started back in 1950 when he competed in a Light Car Club of Tasmania Gymkhana at Deloraine at the age of 16.

It was inevitable he would progress to further competition.

Two years later he competed in the Muddy Creek hillclimb near Launceston in a Morris Minor Tourer and in following years he competed in trials and club events before making his circuit racing debut at Quorn Hall in 1955 in an MG TF.

Looking for something faster he then moved to an Austin Healey 100/4, in 1956 taking a second place at Quorn Hall in the sports car scratch race.

He also competed at the Trevallyn Hillclimb.

Over the next two years Robin competed on a regular basis in the ex-Warwick Hine MG TC special, achieving considerable success, including two second places at the opening Baskerville meeting, before taking a break from the sport when he got married.

He returned to the sport in 1960 in a modified silver VW beetle, which then made way after two seasons for the famous red supercharged beetle which was acclaimed as the fastest of its kind. Despite having a standard bottom end, the remarkably reliable VW produced more than twice the horsepower of a standard car and revved to 6600 rpm.

Robin and the Number 90 car enjoyed a great deal of giant killing results before he made the move to an immaculate Lotus Cortina, which he raced between 1965 and 1968, often against the similar car of Garth Wigston.

The car also competed at Calder Raceway and the now defunct Hume Weir circuit in Victoria against some tough opposition.

Robin then moved to the ex Peter "Skinny" Manton Morris Mini Cooper S, which he raced from 1968 to 1971, enjoying considerable success as a member of the Shell Racing Team.

From 1971 to 1973 Robin raced the ex-Don Elliott Ford Mustang in the Shell Racing colours, achieving excellent results in Tasmania and the mainland.

Not only were the three cars very competitive, but they proved to be extremely reliable, which Robin always attributed to the undoubted skill of chief mechanic and good friend John Dixon.

At the end of 1973 Robin retired from active competition to concentrate on his business interests, but continued to keep an interest in the sport.

The introduction of Targa Tasmania in 1992 saw Robin come out of retirement to compete in a V12 Jaguar XJS.

Apart from competition Robin, was a member of the Light Car Club of Tasmania committee for 20 years and was also a state delegate to the National Motor Race Panel for 10 years.

Together with the late John Youl and John Barrenger, he was involved in pegging out the Symmons Plains circuit, which is one of the oldest continuously running circuits in Australia.

In business, Robin ran the very successful Bessant Motors Toyota franchise in Launceston in the 1980s and was awarded the prestigious Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award.

(Profile by Barry Oliver)