



## Templestowe Hillclimb

by Craig Watson

We're a nostalgic lot, we motorsport enthusiasts. How often have you got talking with someone about the "good old days" at a particular circuit? Well, forgive my sentimentality as I relive some of my fondest memories of the old Templestowe Hillclimb track in Melbourne's northeast, at the northern end of Blackburn Road.

It was here that I had my only taste of motorsport glory when I won the 998cc class in the Moke Owners Association's annual club hillclimb - in a borrowed Moke.

The Moke club had been competing at the track for many years and in 1983 I made my first attempt at the hill, clocking a respectable (in my opinion at least for a one-litre powered brick) 69.4 secs. Okay, it was a far cry from the club record, set on the same day, of 60.5 secs, let alone the outright record. That was set at 49.2 seconds by Allan Hamilton in his Porsche in 1967 and equalled the following year by Dick White in the White 1500 hillclimb special.

I was thrilled with the layout of the track. Blasting away from the start, up a slight rise, selecting second just before the crest, then hard on the brakes and into the tight left-hander of the Esses, which drops away sharply. Down onto what was known as Banana Straight, though more a flat-out left curve, and accelerate hard, third gear, over the concrete causeway at the creek, brake hard again for the right-hand hairpin (Monks Corner), second gear, accelerate hard as



The brake shoes awaiting restoration at Rob Roy hillclimb track.

you start to climb across The Shelf, then you hit The Wall. Appropriately named, this incline was so steep it was difficult to walk up and if you missed the gear change or didn't have the revs up when you hit it, in a 998cc Moke at least, you may not even make it to the top.

All going well, you would reach the top of the wall with the engine screaming, but watch out because the track kinks right over the crest and drops away almost as sharply. Barely time to gather yourself and it's hard on the brakes again for The Hole, a left-hand hairpin, which is entered down hill and exited uphill. Accelerate hard up to another crest with a very slight kink to the left, down a slight hill and another right-hand hairpin (Baron's Corner), up a bit of a rise and over the finish line.



Brandt Campbell heads over the top of The Wall.



Front of programme from 1964 shows the famous brake shoes at the start.

Total distance was just 1,060 yards (980m) of adrenaline-pumping excitement. Then time to relax as you slowly negotiated the gravel return track along the eastern boundary to the start for your next run.

Sadly, the track was closed in December 1987, but I was at the final event there, run by the MG Car Club. Hundreds of people turned up for an historic end to what was considered by many to be Victoria's, if not Australia's, premier hillclimb track.

The history of the venue goes back to March 1951, when the Victorian Sporting Car Club, under the direction of CAMS' first president, Maurie Monk, organised a hillclimb on what was then a dirt track.

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Moke club was one of last to use the track.