

HISTORY OF PIARC + PHILLIP ISLAND GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT

INTRODUCTION – SIXTY YEARS, FROM 1952 TO 2012

Phillip Island, located in Victoria, Australia, has long been associated with motorsport. The first Australian Grand Prix was held there in 1928 and for eight consecutive years, until 1935, Phillip Island hosted the race on a rectangular public road circuit[1]. The end of public road racing on Phillip Island in 1935 and the development of the closed circuit (that is, a purpose built permanent motor racing circuit) in 1956 were separated by 21 years. Despite the gap between the running of events at the two venues, the existence of an earlier motor racing presence on “Phillip Island gave credence to the concept of the island being an ideal venue for a permanent motor racing circuit.

The opening of the Phillip Island Race Circuit in 1956 was the first time in Australia that a full length dedicated paved race circuit that catered for all levels of motor racing had been built. At this time the only circuits were Mt Panorama, Bathurst - New South Wales, Albert Park - Victoria (both raced on twice a year), and Port Wakefield - South Australia, all of which were public road circuits[2].

Phillip Island Race Circuit was conceived and developed by volunteers and amateur motor racing enthusiasts. This is in stark contrast to the more recent circuit development in Australia, notably in Adelaide and Albert Park, which has been undertaken by professional organisations[3] in conjunction with their State Governments. The contrast is also evident at an international level, especially in England which has been one of the key centres of world motorsport development, where much of the recent circuit development has tended to be carried out by commercial operations rather than volunteers[4].

The Phillip Island Auto Racing Club Ltd. (PIARC) originally established and managed the circuit and even today still continues to promote and/or help co-ordinate a large number of the race meetings held at the Phillip Island Race Circuit. At times its paid membership has been over 3000. At this time of writing, the circuit has had three owners and these have coincided with the three separate operating periods of the circuit; 1956 – 1962 with PIARC, 1967 – 1978 with Len Lukey, and 1985 – 2004 with Placetac Pty. Ltd. The vision of the original design and development of the circuit has been validated by its current operating period which is the most continuous and arguably its most successful in the circuit's history. It is apparent that the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit has a long history, which has previously never been fully documented. Given its current place as one of the premier

circuits in the world, as evidenced by the annual running of two rounds of World Championship motorsport, a full and comprehensive history of the circuit is warranted.

There has been little previous research into the history of the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit. Despite its longevity, there is no mention of the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit in publications where other Australian circuits are described. The Concise Dictionary of Motorsport [5] briefly describes 31 international motor racing circuits including three Australian circuits. The Australian circuits described are Lakeside (Queensland), Surfers Paradise (Queensland) and Warwick Farm (New South Wales). Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit is not included. Within Australia both The Oxford Companion of Australian Sport (1997)[6] and the Encyclopedia of Australia Sport [7](1980) fail to mention the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit. This is despite the fact that the Encyclopedia of Australian Sport[8] lists 36 other Australian Motor Racing Circuits that either have existed in the past or are operating today.

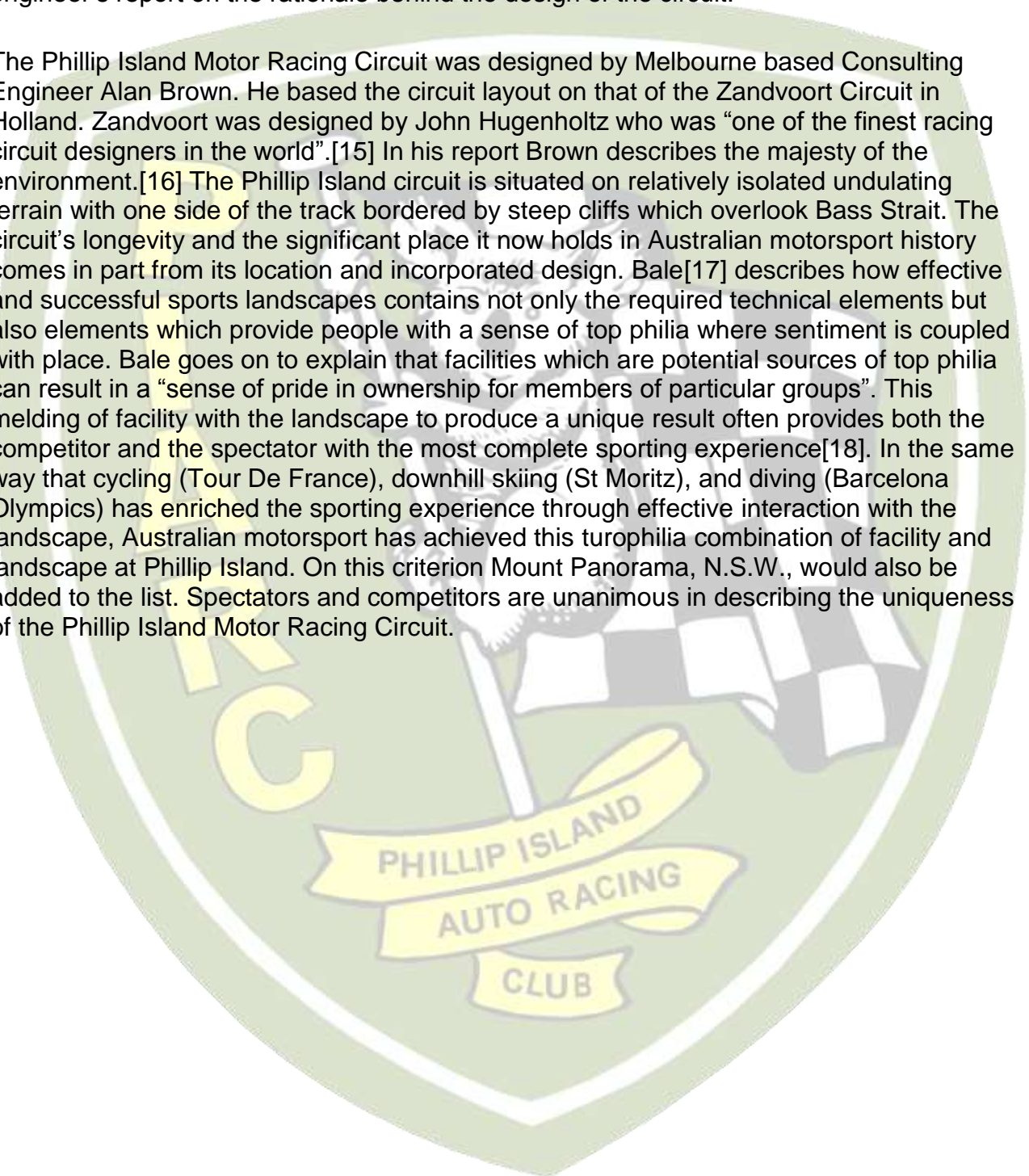
The omission of the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit in the reference literature reflects the fact that there has been very little historical documentation of the development of Australian motor racing circuits. In 1965 Tuckey wrote one of the few books which detailed Australian motorsport circuit development. Twenty-one Australian circuits are described and although he briefly mentions the Phillip Island track, his description fails to add to our historical knowledge of the circuit. The only comparative research of Australian motorsport research to this study is a historical documentation of the history of the Longford Road Circuit in Tasmania[9]. A further publication pertinent to the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit is the detailed historical analysis given to three key events held there in 1960 – 1962[10]. Known as the “Armstrong 500”, these races were the forerunner to the modern Bathurst 1000 motor race which is arguably Australia’s premier domestic motorsport event. The detail provided by these authors does provide some insight into the operation and development of the circuit at that time.

In terms of international literature, a compendium of 72 major motorsport circuits from around the world has recently been published, but Mount Panorama, New South Wales, is the only Australian circuit discussed.[11] Higham and Jones highlight the fact that although other circuits were worthy of discussion there is often very little documentation available on the evolution and development of circuits. It is notable that even recent publications relating to motorsport circuits have been descriptive in nature rather than historical. [12]

Primarily due to the infusion of corporate dollars and the subsequent professionalism of motorsport event management in Australia, during the past two decades both the Adelaide’s Parklands Grand Prix Circuit and Melbourne’s Albert Park Grand Prix Circuit have been extensively analysed in terms of infrastructure, economic and social impacts.[13] [14] Circuit development and the development of supporting club infrastructure were examined in detail by Beck-Burridge and Walton (2000). By outlining a brief history of every circuit in Britain and linking that to the role of volunteers in the development of motorsport infrastructure there is good comparative information to use in subsequent historical research enquiries. In particular, Thruxton, Silverstone and Brands Hatch are circuits with long histories, and significant volunteer involvement in their evolution. Like Phillip Island, both Brands Hatch and Silverstone prospered after gaining rights to host World Championship rounds of motorsport. Brands Hatch and Phillip Island both have challenging layouts which have become increasingly rare after many tracks in the seventies were designed primarily around safety considerations. 4

The primary source of data for this research is the substantial amount of archival documentation generated by the Phillip Island Auto Racing Club Limited which, as a volunteer club incorporated under State of Victoria Law, was required to keep many official documents relating to both club and circuit development. These documents include minutes of meetings, financial statements and progress reports. Among these documents are associated materials which have value in themselves. An example of this is the original engineer's report on the rationale behind the design of the circuit.

The Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit was designed by Melbourne based Consulting Engineer Alan Brown. He based the circuit layout on that of the Zandvoort Circuit in Holland. Zandvoort was designed by John Hugenholtz who was "one of the finest racing circuit designers in the world".[15] In his report Brown describes the majesty of the environment.[16] The Phillip Island circuit is situated on relatively isolated undulating terrain with one side of the track bordered by steep cliffs which overlook Bass Strait. The circuit's longevity and the significant place it now holds in Australian motorsport history comes in part from its location and incorporated design. Bale[17] describes how effective and successful sports landscapes contains not only the required technical elements but also elements which provide people with a sense of topophilia where sentiment is coupled with place. Bale goes on to explain that facilities which are potential sources of topophilia can result in a "sense of pride in ownership for members of particular groups". This melding of facility with the landscape to produce a unique result often provides both the competitor and the spectator with the most complete sporting experience[18]. In the same way that cycling (Tour De France), downhill skiing (St Moritz), and diving (Barcelona Olympics) has enriched the sporting experience through effective interaction with the landscape, Australian motorsport has achieved this topophilia combination of facility and landscape at Phillip Island. On this criterion Mount Panorama, N.S.W., would also be added to the list. Spectators and competitors are unanimous in describing the uniqueness of the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit.



CHAPTER 1 - FARMING OR RACE CIRCUIT?

How did a piece of isolated rural farming land 150km from Melbourne become one of the most exciting race tracks in the world?

Of every idea there is an originator, of every scheme there is a prime mover, and the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit is no exception. Back in the 1920's when racing first originated at Phillip Island, the Victorian Light Car Club was the instigator. Then, after the bygone era of the late 1930's and 40's, it was left to two men to rediscover the benefits that Motor Racing could bring to the "Island"; one man farsighted enough to see the possibility of a huge motor racing complex that would bring the crowds flocking there, and another to put into action an idea, to start the long road of development that would eventually lead to the fruition of the Phillip Island Motor Racing Circuit.

Racing first came to Phillip Island in 1927 in the form of a 200mile road race for motorcycles on a circuit encompassing Cowes and Rhyll. In the next year, a shorter rectangular course, again on public roads, was used for the running of what became the first Australian Grand Prix. Eight successive Australian Grand Prix were run on this course before the race was moved elsewhere. Finally, in 1935, racing was discontinued and Phillip Island lapsed into the tranquillity and peacefulness of its quiet country and beach atmosphere.

A Phillip Island transport operator never forgot the thrill and excitement that racing had brought to the small Island community. It occurred to him that perhaps here was the answer to flagging businesses - to build a Motor Racing complex that would draw thousands of people to "The Island" community, and it was towards this end that Bernard Denham started to direct his attention. However, the dream was big and how to put it into practice was a problem of almost insurmountable proportions. The man who was responsible for turning what was an almost unreachable dream into reality was Winston Maguire, who ultimately became the founding President of PIARC Together these two enlisted the aid of four other businessmen on "The Island" - Vern Curtin, John Elliot, Bill Evans, and Herbert Watchorn. In mid-1951 these six gentlemen met in Mac's Coffee Lounge to discuss the feasibility of such a mammoth project. Mac's Coffee Lounge was situated in Cowes and owned by Maguire. Indeed, for many years Mac's Cafe was the postal address of the club. It was from this meeting that PIARC was created in August 1951.[19]

The first immediate hurdle to overcome was the locating and purchasing of a suitable site. Denham and Maguire examined several areas of land on "The Island", finding that only two fitted the criteria that was required for a racing circuit. The first site was situated on the foreshore side at the fork where the main road to Cowes intersects Back Beach Rd and was highly desirable as the land formed a natural amphitheatre in which the circuit could be built. Unfortunately, further enquiries revealed that the land was being farmed and not for sale.

This led to the purchasing of the present site from businessman P. Whitlock who at the time owned Brighton Beach Motors in Melbourne. It was fortunate for the viability of the scheme that Whitlock was a keen motor racing enthusiast, so much so, that he sold the

land for a very generous £6525 and on only £100 deposit. This deposit was raised by the six businessmen involved and from this point on PIARC was off and running.

Actually it wasn't until later on that the name Phillip Island Auto Racing Club came into being. Originally the group was called the Phillip Island Motor Racing Club. Several factors over the next few months brought about the name change. The main factor was that organisers wanted motorcycle racing (as well as car racing) at the circuit and regulations prevented motorcycle riders from belonging to more than one motorcycle club. The name change to the Phillip Island Auto Racing Club meant that they would be joining a car club with the new name, besides indicating auto cycles as well as automobiles, providing useable initials for a shortened name. Along with the name change came the appearance of the now famous emblem of the Koala and Chequered Flag Shield designed originally by Hector Goodall. Enthusiasts will have noted the resemblance of this shield with that of the British Racing Drivers Club, that being a rampant lion with the chequered flag.

In the early stages of the club's conception the small Island-based committee comprised of businessmen who while being keen to get the venture going, had little knowledge of the inside workings of motor sport in Victoria and thus were not quite sure just where to start in Melbourne to gain support. The very first real publicity came in the form of a lengthy article in the motoring section of "The Age". This article gave the club the very publicity it was looking for and it wasn't long before leading clubs in Melbourne began to ask pertinent questions.

One of the first experienced administrators to contact the club was Roy Linden, who was able to guide the club through its initial development stage. At this point in time, the proposal was to develop a scheme in which all motor sport clubs (including motorcycles) could join with PIARC in building a circuit which, although essentially controlled by PIARC, would be available for all clubs to use.

In 1952, PIARC held its first formal meeting and at this meeting were representatives from other clubs in Melbourne. Held in the clubrooms of the Light Car Club of Australia (LCCA) it was at this meeting that it was decided to approach Alan Brown; a consulting engineer and surveyor, to design a proposed plan of the circuit.

Basing his work on the Zandvoort circuit in Holland, Brown designed a circuit with long sweeping turns and a magnificent mile long straight. In subsequent years this design would prove very popular with drivers as it provided a real test of driving skills. While receiving credit for the final design, Brown had based the initial drawing on a series of stakes originally laid out around the property by PIARC committee members. Although the layout was significantly altered and developed by Brown there is no doubt that the people who originally drove around the large expanse of farm land and hammered in a series of wooden stakes outlining the path of the circuit had tremendous vision and foresight. This layout coupled with the panoramic view out over Bass Strait and the fact that it was an excellent spectator's circuit, ensured that it would become one of the best circuits in this country. Interestingly, when designing the circuit Brown aimed for a track which allowed for as high a lap speed as possible.

In his design report Brown wrote "Generally winding bends have been avoided where straights could be substituted. This has been done so that the lap speed will be as high as

possible. A track with never ending curves could be most tiring on drivers.....from a spectator's point of view, high lap speeds are important and should be borne in mind when the final layout is decided on"[20]

This is certainly a far cry from today where at many of the world's major circuits, extra chicanes are being built in an attempt to lower lap speeds. To increase the safety, Brown allowed for a space of 150 feet between the apex of bends and fence lines. The original stakes as laid out by the PIARC committee also took the track edge to within 10 feet of the 100 foot cliffs. Brown wisely proposed that the track be moved well away from the edge of the cliffs. One of the highlights of the current circuit layout is the hairpin (Turn 4) that competitors navigate prior to entering Siberia (Turn 6). Ironically Brown had only added the hairpin so that the circuit length would exactly equal three miles. The other interesting factor was that Brown designed the layout to accommodate an average crowd of 15000.

The proposed design of the project was then presented at a public meeting held at the old Savoy Hotel in Melbourne on March 26, 1952. In an overwhelming show of support for what PIARC was attempting to achieve, hundreds of people crammed the hotel conference room to hear the design of the circuit discussed. The proposals were eventually accepted except for one very important and major detail.

In 1952 any major public road curve where speeds exceeded 25 M.P.H. were of a transition type. This meant that the deeper the corner became the tighter it got, so preventing a driver from accelerating out of a corner early. Brown, when he drew up the plans for the circuit, unassumingly incorporated transition curves in the design. Naturally when the committee received the plans they were horrified at the thought of racing cars hurtling into a corner which became tighter the further it went on. Although the problem was a major one the solution was ingeniously simple - just reverse the intended direction of racing. Thus, racing has always occurred in an anticlockwise direction throughout the history of the circuit even though the design was intended otherwise. One imagines the fast (and dangerous) downhill run from the top of Lukey Heights (Turn 9) to Siberia (Turn 6) only to enter a turn where the radius increased the further the corner went. One can only guess at how long it would have taken for smaller capacity cars and bikes to grind their way up the main straight, around the sweeper and up to Lukey Heights!

The Savoy meeting saw the acceptance of the plan for the circuit and the voting into office of the first full committee of PIARC. The committee was comprised of fifteen men including both car and motor cycle club representatives - Reg Mutt, Roy Linden, Henry Brind, Phil Irving, Henry Lowe, Hedley Thompson, George Manley, Lawrence Lynch, and Frank MacDonald. Also included, of course, were the six original businessmen from Phillip Island, being Bill Evans, Winston Maguire, Herbert Watchorn, Vern Curtin, Bernard Denham and John Elliot.

The other major plan that was adopted at the Savoy meeting was that of a membership drive which within five years would result in PIARC becoming the largest club of its kind in the country, with an incredible 3000 members. And this was all before the track was even built.

Publicity for the circuit received a significant boost in August and September, 1952. Winston Maguire (President of PIARC) was friends with Sir Keith Murdoch, then owner of the Herald and Weekly Times (and father of Rupert Murdoch). Following a meeting

between Sir Keith, Maguire and Roy Linden (Secretary of PIARC) the Herald published a feature article of PIARC's scheme. This one article was picked up and reported by radio station 3AR, The Sydney Daily Telegraph, and the ABC, and also gained international exposure through Radio Australia.[21]

Certainly, PIARC stepped into the racing arena at the right time with Melbourne badly needing a full scale racing facility. The only track in operation at this time was that of Fishermen's Bend, although the road circuit surrounding Albert Park Lake was also occasionally utilised, (Sandown and Calder didn't come into operation until the early 1960's). Today Sandown and Calder are still in operation and the site of the Fishermen Bend circuit is now industrial land.

From then on, with enthusiasm high and a steady income (via £10 memberships) the project slowly began to develop. The land was finally paid off in January, 1953 and rotary hoeing of the pegged out circuit began.

Throughout the history of the circuit, the members of PIARC, and particularly the various committees that came and went, were always a group of extremely optimistic (though many said short-sighted) people. This optimism was very evident in early 1953, when an extremely ambitious opening date of October 19, 1953, was announced. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be. By 30th November, 1953 PIARC had raised 13000 pounds in membership funds and was signing new members at the rate of 80 per month.[22] Members and enthusiasts lived as far away as England. Three such international members were Formula One drivers, Stirling Moss, Peter Collins, and Roy Salvadori. Stirling Moss, of course, was destined to become known as one of the best drivers never to win a Formula One World Championship. The membership drive was in part successful due to the pricing structure. PIARC was offering 10year foundation memberships for the sum of 1 pound per year payable in advance. This foundation membership would entitle the member to free entry into race meetings for ten years once the circuit opened. This was in comparison to membership of the British Auto Racing Club where race entry cost a further 37 shillings per meeting.[23] By June 30th, 1955 when foundation memberships closed PIARC had attracted 2730 financial members with 610 new members joining in the last month.[24] The incredible enthusiasm of the people involved was evidenced by the fact that before the circuit actually opened in December, 1956, there would be a further six proposed opening dates. One such proposed opening in early 1954 even saw PIARC try to get the Duke of Edinburgh to officially open the circuit.[25]

January, 1953 also saw the first leasing of part of the circuit for advertising purposes, with the very tight right hand corner (Turn 10) being known as "Lanes MG" corner. This annual lease cost Lane's Motors 150 pounds.[26] PIARC's ultimate aim was always to achieve industry support for their project. Slowly but surely commercial companies found an attraction in investing in the proposed racing complex. The first of these was Redex (Vic.) who sponsored the publication which PIARC distributed in its ongoing, intensive membership campaign. Redex, of course, was about to become a household name with the sponsoring of the Round-Australia reliability trials.

Then PIARC received an offer from a major oil company suggesting that if awarded sole fuel supply rights at the circuit they would back the whole venture. This was significant in terms of commercial sponsorship in Australia as, until late 1953, all Oil Companies in Australia had a self-imposed agreement not to become involved in motorsport sponsorship. It was through PIARC's lobbying efforts, that despite the agreement, the

above offer of sponsorship was made.[27] Unfortunately, the offer came in a form that was unacceptable. It was PIARC's policy that no single company should have a monopoly on advertising a product at the circuit so the offer was refused. It did however indicate that commercial support for the project was a realistic aim. As the circuit development neared completion more industry support was forthcoming with Repco initiating a long term lease for the naming rights to the 'U' bend opposite Grandstand Hill (Turn 4), which then became known as "Repco Corner".[28]

Further industry support came from the main national motorsport publication of the day. One of the consequences of a large membership list was the cost of communicating with members. A single mail out to all members was costing PIARC approximately 60 pounds. Mid 1955 saw Australian Motor Sports magazine agree to carry one page per edition exclusively for PIARC news and information.[29] Although not the highest selling motorsport magazine in Australia, Australian Motor Sports was officially chosen as it had the unique capacity to accept items up until the day prior to publication as opposed to the six week lead times required by at least one other national motor sports publication.[30] It also helped that the managing editor of Australian Motor Sports was a PIARC committeeman and was to produce the race programs when the circuit opened.

The most significant evidence of industry support was from Repco Company and Olympic Tyre Company who guaranteed bank loans of £10,000 and £7,000 respectively.[31] These bank guarantees in 1955 were the most significant single factor in ensuring the circuit's development was completed. Both Repco and Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company would provide further funds as naming-rights sponsors of selected corners on the circuit.

PIARC had very a clear although not very realistic idea of the financial viability of the race circuit. In its initial stages of development, it was PIARC's publicly stated intention to donate the entire proceeds of one race meeting per year to charity through three hospital organisations.[32] Even before the circuit was finished, PIARC demonstrated its altruism by donating 32 pounds to the Children's Hospital in 1954.[33]

Throughout this early stage of development, many working bees were regularly held at the circuit and slowly but surely what once seemed a wild, almost foolhardy idea was taking shape. In keeping with its policy of creating a high quality permanent racing complex, PIARC was determined not to open the circuit until the racing surface was in an absolute 100% fit state for racing. This turned out to be an extremely sound policy as problems at other Melbourne circuits were a clear warning to PIARC of the pitfalls of using a track while it was still "green". One example of a circuit that was hurriedly built and opened was at Altona in 1954. With sharp corners, narrow straights and a dangerous lack of shoulders running along the edge of the circuit the track started to deteriorate from the very first race. With four cars rolling over at the same spot and several parts of the track crumbling to powder, it was clear that the track was doomed from the beginning. This was despite a relatively low average lap speed of below 65mph.[34] The writing was also on the wall for the Fishermen's Bend circuit and the pundits were forecasting its' closure in the near future. The Fishermen's Bend race circuit was developed utilising a redundant airstrip and, as the surface deteriorated, the Government was unwilling to resurface just for the sake of motor racing.

Clearly there was a very large need for a closed circuit of the type and quality that PIARC was endeavouring to build on Phillip Island. Hence, PIARC wasn't going to take any chances with the racing circuit and its preparation. This determination was one of the

main reasons for the many opening dates that were announced by PIARC before December, 1956.

No-one could have foreseen the disaster that almost brought a halt to PIARC's ambitious plans on "The Island". During an eighteen-month period extending through 1954 and into 1955 Phillip Island weathered torrential rainfalls. Record falls of rain were recorded on all parts of "The Island". So constant were the downpours that no public roads were built or repaired during this time. Although their enthusiasm was dampened somewhat, PIARC members soldiered on and work on the track continued. However, for those closely involved with the project the rains exposed a problem that would plague the circuit for decades. The problem was poor natural drainage. This resulted in the newly graded but unsealed track turning into a virtual mud-bog. Indeed, at the first hairpin tractors had to be kept constantly on the move to prevent them from sinking into the mud.

The first meeting held at "The Island" track was on 17th October, 1954. Held in the format of a members-only car rally, this gave members the opportunity to drive around the as yet unsealed track and compete in a series of gymkhana events. The convoy of cars in the rally began at the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne and was led by Robert Lane of Lanes Motors, one of the key initial commercial sponsors of the circuit.[35] Despite the long drive from Melbourne, nearly 2000 members and their guests made the journey to "The Island".[36] All were impressed by the broad and undulating layout of the circuit with its magnificent panoramas of Bass Strait and nearby grazing country. This rally was also widely acclaimed by the press and provided the club with a large amount of publicity.

The success of the first rally prompted PIARC to organise a second members rally day on the 27 February, 1955. Once at the circuit this meeting included a regularity contest. While common in England, this was the first time such an event had been held in Australia. The aim was for competitors to complete each lap (6 in total) in exactly five minutes which meant an average speed of 36 m.p.h. Competitors were penalised for every second they were under or over the five-minute lap time. One of the six laps also required a compulsory tyre change.[37] Once again the rally was a huge success and PIARC used this opportunity to inform members that only £6000 out of the original £30000 estimated to build the track was needed.

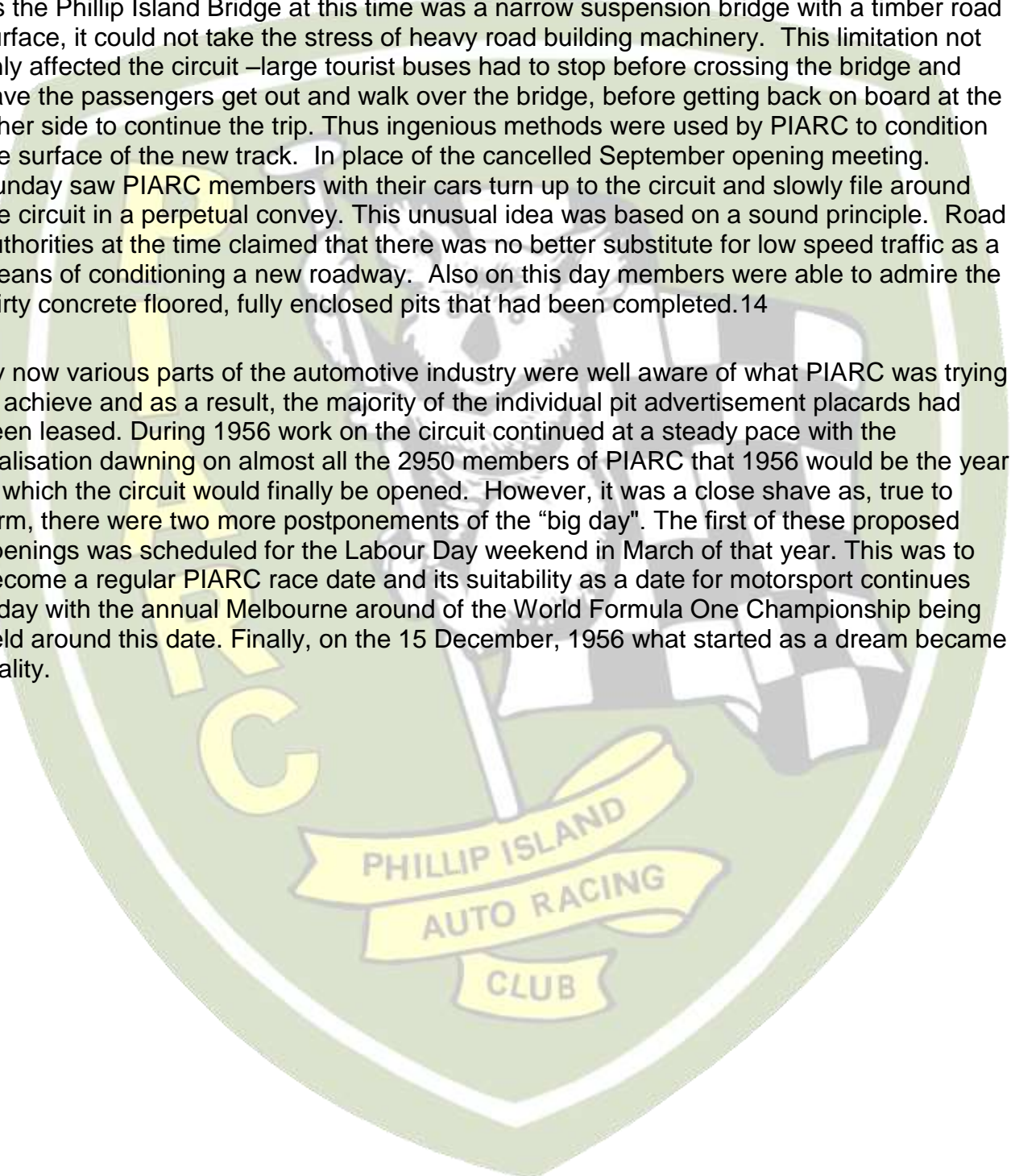
The injection of funds inspired PIARC to once again announce an opening date for the circuit. However, the scheduled meeting for 23 September, 1955, unfortunately and perhaps predictably, had to be postponed due to bad weather having delayed the final sealing coat. As the surface of the track was "green" due to the late sealing, the Confederation of Australian Motorsport (CAMS) track inspection committee would not grant the necessary operating permits.[38] The PIARC committee was understandably frustrated at the non-granting of permits but were beholden to CAMS as the controlling body of Australian motorsport. The cancellation of the meeting was perhaps fortuitous as "The Island" experienced extreme weather on the Saturday including torrential rain, hail storms, and even a waterspout half a mile offshore from the circuit.

As background, CAMS had been established in 1953, taking over the administration of car racing in Australia from the Royal Automobile Club. CAMS was responsible for uniform rules of racing, and for approval of circuits to be raced on.

September, 1955 saw the resignation of Bernard Denham from the club committee. Bernard Denham's contribution to the circuit development was summarised by Winston Maguire "as I have pointed out on many occasions, the original idea of reviving motor racing on Phillip Island by the establishment of a suitable circuit on private property was yours (Denham) alone".[39]

As the Phillip Island Bridge at this time was a narrow suspension bridge with a timber road surface, it could not take the stress of heavy road building machinery. This limitation not only affected the circuit –large tourist buses had to stop before crossing the bridge and have the passengers get out and walk over the bridge, before getting back on board at the other side to continue the trip. Thus ingenious methods were used by PIARC to condition the surface of the new track. In place of the cancelled September opening meeting. Sunday saw PIARC members with their cars turn up to the circuit and slowly file around the circuit in a perpetual convey. This unusual idea was based on a sound principle. Road authorities at the time claimed that there was no better substitute for low speed traffic as a means of conditioning a new roadway. Also on this day members were able to admire the thirty concrete floored, fully enclosed pits that had been completed.¹⁴

By now various parts of the automotive industry were well aware of what PIARC was trying to achieve and as a result, the majority of the individual pit advertisement placards had been leased. During 1956 work on the circuit continued at a steady pace with the realisation dawning on almost all the 2950 members of PIARC that 1956 would be the year in which the circuit would finally be opened. However, it was a close shave as, true to form, there were two more postponements of the "big day". The first of these proposed openings was scheduled for the Labour Day weekend in March of that year. This was to become a regular PIARC race date and its suitability as a date for motorsport continues today with the annual Melbourne around of the World Formula One Championship being held around this date. Finally, on the 15 December, 1956 what started as a dream became reality.



CHAPTER 2 – THE SECOND ERA OF MOTOR RACING AT PHILLIP ISLAND – “THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY”.

On the eve of the opening day the weather was fine and clear and to the members of PIARC who had worked so long and hard it heralded what was to be the start of a new era in Australia's motoring history. On a shoestring budget and having overcome a myriad of obstacles, a handful of dedicated enthusiasts were able to take pride in the fact that they now had a shining monument to their dedication and enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, the powers to be that control the heavens decided that it wasn't such a shining monument and at dawn on the 15 December, 1956, PIARC members were greeted with grey skies and a steady drizzle. However, it was going to take more than rain to dampen the pride and enthusiasm that both officials and spectators felt that day.

The opening meeting saw a level of co-operation between car clubs that is probably unparalleled to this day. While PIARC organised the meeting, the Australian Motor Sport Club were responsible for crowd control; the University Car Club supplied and ran the timing equipment; the Victorian Amateur Drivers Club provided competent flag marshals; The Austin 7 Club laid down the complete communications system (a system that PIARC would later buy off the Austin 7 Club). Also helping on the day were the Victorian Sports Car Club and the Light Car Club of Australia (LCCA). In what has now become a common practice for sporting event organisers, PIARC also had to pay for ambulance and police to be in attendance.[40] As befitting an opening meeting a souvenir program was produced that ran to 80 pages.

Unfortunately for those involved, a relatively poor crowd turned out to witness history in the making and this can be attributed to several factors. The main factor was of course the weather, which over the previous three years had made PIARC's job of building the circuit difficult if not near impossible. Another reason for the poor crowd was the fact that the meeting was held on a Saturday. In Victoria in the 1950's, football in winter and cricket in summer had a comprehensive monopoly on the sporting spectators on Saturday afternoons. The reason the meeting was held on a Saturday was that at the time it was actually illegal to run such an event on a Sunday in Victoria. Finally, to many people in the mid 1950's, a journey to Phillip Island was of such proportions that it could be likened to going on a holiday. This meant that PIARC had to educate the race-going public into believing that what they had to offer was worth the long trip down.

Due to the poor crowd, the budgeted income from the meeting was overestimated and so started a twenty-two-year battle by PIARC to constantly obtain sufficient funds to maintain the circuit in the condition which it deserved.

As there is some justice in the world, those who ventured to “The Island” for the opening meeting were treated to an exciting 10 race programme. Lex Davison had the honour of taking the chequered flag in the first race of the day on the new track. Appropriately it was Phil Irving who had prepared Davison's race winning car that day. Irving was one of the original PIARC committeemen and would later become famous as one of the main people involved in the design and construction of the Repco-Brabham engine. This engine would power Jack Brabham to his third World Drivers Championship and his first World

Constructors Championship. Irving had earlier made his name in England as designer of the famous HRD racing motorcycles.

As well as witnessing a fine drive by Jack Brabham in the feature race of the day, the 7000 enthusiasts also witnessed the unfortunate death of 19-year-old novice driver Phillip Rothfield. Rothfield, a first year commerce student at Melbourne University, unknown to his parents was racing his Austin Healy sports car for only the second time. Entering KLG corner (Turn 1) Rothfield lost control of his car, ploughing into an earth bank and rolling twice. Seriously injured, Rothfield was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.

After the long-awaited opening of the circuit in late 1956, 1957 was looked forward to with hope and enthusiasm by both PIARC members and motor enthusiasts everywhere. A glance at the calendar showed that there were to be four open car meetings and at least two motorcycle meetings over the next twelve months.

The first meeting in 1957 was held on the 28 January and was extremely successful in terms of both entries and spectator attendance. At this meeting, however, a problem emerged that continued to undermine PIARC's financial position. One of the main aspects of PIARC's foundation membership campaign had been that for ten years' members and their guests would be able to get into every meeting free of charge. Subsequently, despite over 7000 people passing through the gates, only 3800 were paying racegoers.[41] This meant that while on the surface it appeared that everything was going well, behind the scenes PIARC was unable to pay off the substantial debts it had incurred during the building of the circuit.

Coupled with these debts was the financial burden of running a large club. With almost 3000 members, newsletters and the CAMS capitation fees weighed heavily on PIARC's account sheets. Thus a decision was taken to levy members £4 pounds which was calculated on the basis of 2 pounds for the current financial year and 2 pounds in advance for the following year.²² This was a brave decision and deliberately done with the knowledge that membership numbers within PIARC would be reduced. It was hoped that the increased income and the reduced membership base would leave PIARC in a healthier financial state. To put it in perspective, here was a group of amateur sporting enthusiasts who had developed what in effect was a major sporting facility of international standard. The development of a facility of this kind in Australia by volunteers was unique and certainly would not occur today.

Unfortunately for PIARC, many members (almost 2000) chose to leave the club rather than pay the levy. Despite the reduction in membership numbers, the concurrent collection of almost 4050 pounds in levies resulted in the future of PIARC now being on sounder financial footing.[42]

Following the first two meetings, the Phillip Island circuit began to see constant action with an Easter meeting being the first meeting that saw the circuit being leased to another club. In this case it was the Hartwell Motorcycle Club, with whom PIARC would have a long association. Established in 1931, the Hartwell Motorcycle Club was the premier motorcycle club in Melbourne at that time, with a strong emphasis on racing.

Slowly, with meetings being regularly held at "The Island", the motoring public began to accept the track and this was shown by the fact that just four meetings after it was opened

a £1106 loss had turned into a £993 profit. Although a profit was being made, the first four meetings combined made a net profit of 1223 pounds which was not a large sum considering both the size and ongoing development requirements of the complex.[43]

One of the unfortunate aspects of the 1957/58 season was the cancellation of the proposed LCCA run meeting on Labour Day. The cancellation was caused by the unusually low number of entries that were received (38). This was blamed by the LCCA on the fact that the date clashed with race meetings at Longford (Tasmania) and the B.P. Victorian Rally.[44] There were also those competitors who felt that racing at the Phillip Island circuit resulted in excessive tyre wear. This was no idle complaint by competitors as a large mistake had been made in the compound of the racing surface when it was laid. Instead of using gravel that was 3/16-inch-thick aimed at giving a smooth ideal racing surface, gravel 5/8 inch thick was used. This was the type of crushed rock that was used in the construction of roads at the time as it provided a rough surface which offered good grip for road cars. Unfortunately, the rubber-destroying effect it had on race tyres wasn't discovered until after the circuit was built.

From Personal Recall – Night-time Drama

As Phil Irving told us, “It seems that one night in the fifties, there was once a group of competitors and officials camping in the tea-tree in what is now the Museum area at the circuit when there was a loud explosion. Phil along with others in the vicinity, rushed to the tent where the explosion had happened and the first one there rushed in. He quickly came back out with ashened face, telling all that they should not go in because it is too horrible - gore all over the tent walls and two bodies on the floor. On subsequent investigation, it was discovered that the occupants had been cooking a can of spaghetti. The pot had boiled dry because the occupants had both passed out for one reason or another. The can of spaghetti exploded as it overheated, spraying spaghetti all over the inside of the tent while the cooks continued to sleep it off on the floor.”

Another story from of Phil Irving was that cars driving onto the track at night were regularly a problem and the officials tired of going out to stop the offenders. One night, the sound of a car on the track was heard and for once, they said “bugger it” and refused to respond. All was soon quiet again and the problem forgotten. Next morning, a car was found at Siberia, on its roof. No wonder all went quiet.

The next season came around quickly and with it came much enthusiasm. This enthusiasm was partly buoyed up by the fact that Kramer Productions, a large film-making corporation from Hollywood, were interested in using the Phillip Island circuit in a film called "On The Beach". This film was based on the novel of the same name written by Australian author Neville Shute. The filming involved setting up the main straight and pit area as it would be on a race day, even to the extent of engaging the services of seventeen top Australian drivers and their cars to add to the authenticity of the film. For PIARC, the landing of such a contract with Kramer Productions was a goldmine as PIARC was financially rewarded for the use of the track and in addition, the circuit gained valuable publicity.

The 1958 Easter meeting was, like so many other PIARC activities affected by the weather. For this meeting a large programme of 12 events had been scheduled.

Unfortunately, the last two events were cancelled due to a very heavy fog (an unusual experience on "The Island"), this completely blanketing the circuit and nearby coastline.

1958 also saw the circuit leased out for £100 to a nearby farmer for grazing purposes. This arrangement was put into writing and was conditional on the track being swept clear of droppings in preparation for any motor sport activities.

By the end of the 1958/59 season, PIARC had run eleven open meetings under its own name and leased the track on several occasions to other clubs. The PIARC innovation of programming a full day of short, competitive races proved to be very popular with spectators. PIARC by now had invested in excess of £55000 which in the 1950's was an incredible amount of money and was a credit to every single person involved in the planning, building, and maintenance of the circuit. The December meeting also saw the first live television telecast from "The Island" circuit, hosted by GTV9

Despite this, PIARC was once again in dire financial difficulties. The main reason for this relatively poor financial position was the escalation of estimated costs since the circuit was first proposed. In 1952 the estimated cost to build the circuit was £30000; the real figure ended up over £50000. In 1952, the cost of running a meeting (excluding prize money) was estimated at £200, in actual fact it was £600. It had also been estimated that crowds of only 7000 would be required at a meeting to make it a financial success. However, as mentioned earlier, the reality that many of the crowd would be foundation members and thus non-paying spectators hadn't been considered. Also adding to PIARC's financial woes was a huge storm which had hit the circuit completely destroying the pit garages. These wooden garages were later rebuilt in brick making them the first of their kind in Australia. There was even talk at this stage of the club winding down and the circuit being closed. In a draft circular to members in 1959, the then President John Pryce clearly outlined the desperate state the club was in and how near the circuit was to closing.[45] The frank almost pessimistic circular was changed considerably before release, but still contained a message that was perhaps influenced by the fact that racing had discontinued at Albert Park thus resulting in the end of Melbourne's Australian Grand Prix (revived in 1996 by the Victorian State Government, utilising much of the original circuit). Thankfully, in the interests of Australian motor sport, this line of thought wasn't pursued and racing continued although PIARC as circuit owners would always labour under an ongoing liquidity problem. Ironically, PIARC finally became financially sound at the very time the circuit was for sale at the end of the second era. However, due to reasons detailed further on it was not able to purchase the facility.

During the early years of 1957 to 1959, PIARC had been forced to pay a substantial amount of government entertainment tax. In 1958/59 this payment was almost 700 pounds.[46] As the club had been set up purely for the purpose of building a race circuit the committee thought that this was somewhat unfair. Subsequently they appealed to the Taxation Board of Review and in 1960 were called up to justify their view to the Commissioner of Taxation. This is an interesting aside because for PIARC to win their case they had to prove that motor racing was an 'athletic sport'. At the time Section 23(g) (111) provided an income exemption for a non-profit club or association which has been established for the encouragement or promotion of an athletic game or athletic sport in which human beings are the sole participants. At that stage of common law there was no judicial definition of the word "athletic" so definitions were utilised from the Oxford Dictionary. The only similar case had been the Melbourne Hunt Club vs the Federal Commissioner of Taxation (1930) in which ruled that under the Land Tax Assessment Act

fox-hunting was an athletic sport or exercise. To justify their claim PIARC stated that a high degree of physical fitness and skill was required to drive a race car and had a well-known driver to claim as much.

In a powerful argument, PIARC also claimed that many athletic sports required the use of outside implements to aid propulsion, from cycling to Olympic sprinting where the wearing of spikes is an accepted practice. Furthermore, PIARC maintained that not unlike motor sports, both yachting and equestrian events completely rely on an outside force for propulsion, yet are considered 'athletic sports'. They even quoted pistol shooting which although requiring a high degree of manual dexterity derives its force from the explosion of a chemical propellant. However, despite these convincing arguments, the commissioner when handing down his decision stated:

"In my opinion, where motor car and motor cycle racing is concerned, the most important factor is the capability of the car or cycle, and I find it difficult therefore, to find. that motor car and motor cycle racing can be regarded as an athletic game or athletic sport. I do not deny that the driver or rider must have considerable ability."

The Commissioner in his full judgment further explained that his determination was based on the principle objectives and activities of the club. Nowhere in any literature either completed or designed by the club could the commissioner find any reference to motor racing being an athletic activity or that one of the aims of the activity is the physical development of the individual. [47] Even today in contemporary motor sport although it is well known that race drivers require a high degree of fitness, very rarely if ever is it used in promotional or regulatory documents. Usually the whole emphasis is on the cars themselves, and the driving skill of the drivers.

As previously mentioned as well as being a 'driver's' circuit, Phillip Island was also a real 'spectators' circuit. In many places a spectator could see most of the majestic three-mile track. Appropriately, PIARC capitalised on this and by June, 1961 the new promotional phrase that headed advertising was "Phillip Island - The Circuit where you can see".

Early 1960 saw a problem typical of a sport that was fragmented in its running. The proposed Easter Monday Meeting had to be changed due to clashes with major races occurring at two other Australian circuits (Bathurst and Port Wakefield).[48] The Queen's Birthday meeting the same year was again telecast by GTV9 and their support also was evident in their donating of prize money for a feature race. Even with a live telecast, this race meeting achieved a record attendance.

Early in 1960, Armstrong York Engineering Pty Ltd., manufacturers of quality shock absorbers, approached PIARC with the concept of sponsoring an endurance race of 500 miles. Organised by the LCCA and run at Phillip Island, the race was open to stock saloon cars manufactured or assembled in Australia. Despite being the inaugural ""Armstrong 500"" the race attracted keen interest and several manufacturers entered works teams. Interestingly, GMH was not one of them, and the three Holden's that had been entered were withdrawn prior to the races due to lack of assistance from the factory.

Starting at the early time of 7.30am, the 45 cars driven by Australia's top drivers were to take over 8 hours to complete the 167 laps of the circuit. Despite the organisers efforts to avoid giving credit to the outright winners (in preference to simply awarding class prizes),

the history books recorded the Vauxhall Cresta of John Roxburgh and Frank Coad as the first to cross the line.

Even without the advantage of television coverage the event proved a huge success. Few observers realised the impact that this race would have on Australian motor sport in future years. The 1960 "Armstrong 500" was the forerunner of the annual 1000km Touring Car event at Bathurst in N.S.W. The respect and enthusiasm that drivers had for the circuit was evident by the donation of 1000 pounds by top drivers Bill Patterson, Bib Stillwell and Stan Jones (father of Alan Jones, World Formula One Champion in 1980). This donation was specifically for use in repairing the track surface so that the Gold Star (Premier National Open Wheeler Championship) meeting in December could proceed. Industry support was also still strong with the naming rights of Lane's corner (Turn 10) quickly changing to Total corner (Total Oil Products) once Robert Lane relinquished the rights. Only a few weeks later even the hill at the far side of the circuit was leased for naming rights and from January 1961 became known as Lucas Heights. This lease cost Joseph Lucas (Aust.) Pty Ltd the not inconsequential sum of 250 pounds per annum.[49]

By the time the "Armstrong 500" was held, the Phillip Island circuit had experienced a great many racing laps not to mention an untold amount of tyre testing laps by a major rubber tyre company (much of which was without PIARC's knowledge or permission). As a result, track damage was fairly extensive with foundation and pavement failure occurring in quite a few places. The strain of modern race cars and the poor drainage at the circuit would ultimately be the contributing factors which would result in the circuit's closure. At this stage PIARC wasn't ready to consider closure as an option, and 1961 also saw extensive resurfacing of many sections of the track. By this stage PIARC had a new President at its helm. In the late 1950's Winston Maguire had moved from "The Island" to Portland. Subsequently he resigned in 1960 allowing former English war hero John Pryce to accept the pressure-laden job.

Formerly President of the Austin 7 Club, Pryce was familiar with the structure and issues facing car clubs. Although he was President for less than three years, Pryce instigated a total change of direction and finance. It was due to these efforts that the circuit remained open in the early 1960s. Unfortunately, few around Pryce at the time realised or acknowledged this.

For the second year running the "Armstrong 500" was held at Phillip Island and once again the formula of racing showroom condition cars against each other proved to be popular with spectators. This was perhaps due to the variety of cars that entered the race. Indeed, out of the 37 cars in the field there were 17 different makes. Once again the track suffered extensive damage due mainly to the constant pounding of heavy race machinery. Subsequently with a succession of meetings held at "The Island" in a fairly short time span, the problem didn't improve despite the efforts by a tireless committee and the rebuilding of two complete sections of the track. This unforeseen redevelopment resulted in yet another race meeting being cancelled for October, 1961.[50]

Late 1961 also saw PIARC start to lose the wholesale support of the local council. In September of that year the Shire of Phillip Island issued notice of a formal breach of the Health Act (1958) which required PIARC to remedy a variety of problems relating to the provision of toilets. If not completed in 30 days, the Shire threatened to obtain a court order against PIARC[51]

Also causing problems at the circuit was the fact that very little rain fell for several months during 1961/ 62. It wasn't unusual for spectators and competitors to be greeted by great swirling clouds of dust. The writing was on the wall for the Phillip Island circuit, due in part, to the fact that the Sandown Motor Racing Circuit and Calder Park Raceway both opened in 1962. With a quick succession of meetings held in Victoria, the motor racing public became overburdened with racing and circuits were struggling to draw reasonable crowds. Further pressure was added by the fact that officials were also in demand, with many officials attending meetings at a variety of circuits. Adding to the concern of organisers who needed meetings to be financially healthy and attract large scale interest, was the example of Longford. Longford in Tasmania was able to attract some of the best drivers in the world yet was still forced to close through financial and community pressures.

Despite these pressures, the PIARC committee was still focused on circuit development. For a period of months, concrete foundation blocks had been in place awaiting the construction of a three storey 30foot high control tower. Also occupying PIARC's attention was club solidarity and morale. The PIARC committee as owners and operators of a major sporting facility were busy with circuit development and the running of five race meetings a year. Unlike most sporting clubs, PIARC had no central clubrooms where members could meet, socialise, and strengthen their club identity and culture. The committee was under pressure to find and develop central meeting place and investigations to this end were commenced.[52]

Soon after Sandown opened, Calder Raceway opened, meaning that the motoring public of Melbourne now had two new circuits within easy access compared to Phillip Island. Late 1962 also saw the first meeting run by the Benalla Auto Club at Winton. Despite this the 1962 "Armstrong 500" attracted one of the largest crowds seen at "The Island" for some time. The 1962 Armstrong also featured strong industrial support with not only Armstrong shock absorbers buying the naming rights, but Repco also funding unconditional lap money over the entire distance of the race.[53] This meant that every driver would receive money for every lap completed. An interesting sponsorship was funded by diagonal seat belt manufacturers Britax who paid prize money to those winners using their belts. Safety concerns also dictated a rule change from the stock standard showroom cars by allowing the fitting of windscreen wipers. An unusual feature designed to create crowd interest was the Le Mans start. These required drivers to be seated in their cars while the co-drivers stood on the other side of the track holding their respective car keys. When the flag was dropped (by the then Federal Minister of Shipping and Transport, Mr. Hubert Opperman) the co-drivers were required to race the keys across the track to the waiting drivers. Unfortunately, the race left the track in the worst state it had seen since its inception in 1956.³⁶ According to observers dozens of potholes dotted the corners and their approaches, and towards the end of the race even the main straight began to break up. Television viewers of the event could see lumps of track flying through the air after cars passed certain section of the track. The poor state of the racing surface was widely reported in the Melbourne daily newspapers[54] and the circuit's reputation was badly damaged. To compound the matter, the lease signed by the event organisers (the LCCA) did not include a damages clause so PIARC was not able to claim any compensation, and the organisers did not offer any assistance.

The sobering implications of the extensive track damage was that the 1962 "Armstrong 500" would be the last race run at the circuit for many years. The Phillip Island Auto

Racing Club, generally considered one of the pioneers of the sport in Australia, had for seven years maintained a circuit which was the proving ground for many of Australia's greatest drivers. However, by late 1962 the club faced massive financial and road building problems ahead of it if ever racing was to occur at "The Island" again. For those who had been involved with the project from the beginning it was a sad moment, noting that eleven history making years had elapsed before the dream had ended.



CHAPTER 3 – THE END OF AN ERA – “THE DEATH AND REBIRTH OF A CIRCUIT”.

Following the running of the “Armstrong 500” in 1962 there was the sad realisation by the circuit management that the surface of the track had deteriorated to such an extent that racing was no longer possible. Logic reasoning told PIARC officials that without race meetings no income would be generated thus the track wouldn't be able to be repaired. During initial fund raising for the circuit Repco Ltd. and Olympic Tyre Co. had instigated bank guarantees for PIARC to the tune of £17000 and now they required proof that PIARC could service the loans. With the assistance of Sir Charles McGrath, then Chairman of Repco and a Patron of the club, the Repco accountants poured over the financial records of PIARC with the club committee, but could not provide a solution that would assist the club out of its difficulties. Without funds to service the loan, legally the club was going to lose the rights to the land so both Repco and PIARC made the regretful decision to sell “The Island” property and wind up the affairs of PIARC

In early 1964 businessman and ex-committee member Len Lukey was talking to racing enthusiast George Coad at Essendon Airport, where Lukey was waiting for a plane. On hearing from Coad that PIARC was being forced to sell the track, Lukey immediately rang the then President of PIARC John Lanyon, and offered to buy the circuit for £13000. After discussions between Repco (the major creditor), PIARC and Lukey, Repco agreed to the offer and Len Lukey became the owner of a broken up race track which had been run by a club whose membership had plummeted to only 40 members from a peak of almost 3000. As part of the deal however, Lukey had imposed one condition on PIARC. That was that racing must once again be revived at the circuit. The deal was that Lukey would develop the property and PIARC had to re-build the track and facilities, and run four events per year at the circuit for the next ten years.

Len Lukey had previously raced at “The Island” in the late 1950's and also had the unique experience of rolling a Ford Custom line there. In addition, up until 1962 the former Gold Star winner had been a member of the PIARC committee. Therefore, he was well aware of the massive amount of finance and work that would be needed to return the circuit to its former glory. Lukey had also spent a considerable period at Phillip Island and developed a love of “The Island” in general. January the following year saw the appearance of a club magazine which marked yet another step in PIARC's fight back into the hub of motor sport. The PIARC committee did a deal with the Southern Sporting Car Club whereby the SSCC. was absorbed into PIARC The revitalised club started to have regular member meetings at the former Prince George Picture Theatre in Church St, Brighton.

By this time the transformation that was occurring at “The Island” circuit was nothing short of staggering. For example, the complete property of 300 acres had been re-grassed (the contour being changed wherever desirable); ten large water tanks had been built at various locations around the circuit and all were full of water; a half-sized Olympic swimming pool had been built, as had a roller skating rink and a children's playground. In the middle of the property a large water storage dam was being built which would double as a water skiing lake. The property was enclosed with a cyclone wire fence and alternatively Cyprus and olive trees were planted around the perimeter. These were all

very ambitious projects and without the colossal finance and enthusiasm contributed by Lukey, it is fairly certain that none of it would have occurred.

While Lukey was building facilities off the track, PIARC led by enthusiastic President John Lanyon were doing a rerun of the 1950's. As was the case with Denham and Maguire, it was a similar story with Lukey and Lanyon. While Lukey had the dream and started the wheel turning again, it was Lanyon who was able to provide the leadership skills to re-invent PIARC and initiate actions which would see Lukey's plan actually come about.

With all the work that was occurring at the circuit during this period, it started to receive considerable publicity. This publicity included a segment on the Tony Charlton Sports Show (a popular sports show which appeared on Channel 9) and a PIARC stand appeared at the 1965 Melbourne Motor Show.

Early 1965 also saw the beginnings of what was to become a three storey control tower. The control tower as purchased comprised the steel girders that formed the framework, and had previously been in use at the Government Aircraft Factory at Fishermen's Bend. Purchased by PIARC through tender at a bargain price, the only negative was that the new owner was required to dismantle and remove it from the airstrip. Transporting a tower and rebuilding it 90 miles away turned out to be a job of considerable magnitude. The original tower is still in use today although relocated 100 metres north of its original position when the circuit was rebuilt in the 1980's for the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix.

Even though much was still to be completed at the island circuit, again the PIARC optimism was evident when there was the suggestion of running a closed meeting at the track in Easter, 1965. When the proposed date came around, the meeting was again postponed. However, membership had now grown to four hundred and working bees were held once every four weeks. These working bees were unique to PIARC, for they gave the ordinary motor sport enthusiast the opportunity to play a role in the rebuilding of the circuit. This fostered club loyalty and indeed, the majority of projects at the circuit throughout its history were completed by ordinary members. Many of the members active in the club in this period are still with the club, prominent amongst them being the 2004 President, Peter Nelson, and Angus Black, a national senior scrutineer and CAMS Track Safety Committeeman. Others have been recognized for their work in this period by the awarding of Life Memberships over the years – Russell Lanyon, Max Morling, John Plowright, and Dave Cook amongst them.

Encouraged by the progress of the working bees, PIARC announced an opening date of March 14, 1966 on the Easter weekend. By now Len Lukey had added barbecue areas, trampolines, and of all things, a golf driving range to the already extensive list of off-track facilities. While this was occurring there were two other facilities which Lukey wanted to build. These facilities were as important to Lukey as the race track and when completed, would fulfil his original vision. Over the next decade Lukey would constantly battle the local Shire in seeking permission to build a private house overlooking the cliffs and a hotel in the same area of the property. Due to his business interests, Lukey regularly visited Japan where he had developed a close relationship with a group of Japanese investors who were very keen to develop the hotel concept. However, a devastated Lukey was denied permission from the local Council. This was one of a series of planning permits Lukey was denied by the Council and not all were related to the race circuit. Lukey had significant ideas on developing various areas of Phillip Island to attract more tourists but was

constantly frustrated by local authorities. Coupled with his very private later battle with illness, this ultimately caused Lukey to lose the will to constantly battle with the council, and to abandon his plans.

November, 1965, finally saw work start on the actual track surface, which after all was of considerable importance if racing was ever to be seen at the circuit again. However, like many times previously the facility lost its battle with the elements. Within hours of the final sealing process due to begin, a fierce storm washed away the foundations forcing the need to rebuild the base of the track. The storm and its consequences forced a postponement of the proposed re-opening of the circuit. Not wishing to miss out on the publicity of the proposed date, PIARC instead of having a race meeting, co-ordinated a three-day music festival with the star performer being the then popular teenage singer, Normie Rowe. The event was promoted as the Phillip Island Easter Family Festival. Rowe was the star performer of a weekend that saw 20 bands play along with associated entertainment. Along with the "Battle of the Bands", thousands of spectators were entertained with a Mr. Muscle contest, a Bathing Beauty contest, dance competitions and other assorted carnival activities. Instead of the Control Tower being the centre of a race meeting, it was the staging and dressing area for the performers. The stage was erected on the track with its back attached to the Tower. The spectators sat on the sloping grass of the spectator area and had a perfect view of the activities. As no caterer was interested in the challenge, PIARC self-catered the event and food and beverages were sold from the pit garages with the unsold remains unceremoniously simply dumped into the ravine at Siberia after being unsuccessfully offered to the local boy's home. This weekend of entertainment was perhaps the world's first outdoor Music Festival and proved to be a very innovative way of attracting a large crowd to "The Island", but it was not motor racing and PIARC vowed never to repeat the exercise in the future.

From Personal Recall – Work at the Track

"Some of the committee spent more time working at the track than did the others and they enjoyed certain privileges because of this. George Thomas traditionally parked his camper van down from the generator shed on the basis that, as the club electrician, he was needed in case of a generator problem. It was a common thing for officials to sneak down to George's van for a cup of tea while the rest of were working hard, and without available power.

Secretary Max Morling and wife Bev spent a lot of his weekends between meetings at the circuit working and because of this had his caravan up by the property manager's house most of the time. Bev even adopted one of the property lambs as a pet for a while, and kept it in the compound by the manager's house".

March, 1966 also saw a visit to the circuit by international drivers Jim Clarke, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart (and Australian stars Frank Gardner and Jack Brabham) who with girlfriends or wives spent the day in picnic style (including golf and water skiing) at the circuit. It was testimony to Lukey's enthusiasm that international F1 drivers could be attracted to a relatively isolated part of Victoria at a non-operational circuit. Through his relationship with Jack Brabham, Lukey had invited the drivers to his "country property" for a BBQ fresh after their racing concluded in the then popular Tasman series. Separately, Lukey informed others and the media that it was the launch of the circuit. While friendly, the international drivers were initially taken aback with the attention they received.

While the drivers participated in a variety of activities including water-skiing on the new "water sports lake" (in reality the large dam built in the middle of the circuit and bordered by sand trucked in from the adjacent beach), various members of the media were sold the idea of the Phillip Island Racing Circuit once again being one of the best in the country. This resulted in the day turning out to be a real publicity bonanza for both PIARC and the circuit. As a bonus, members of the crowd were treated to an air show put on by the pilots who had flown the international drivers and the pilot of Australian driver Bill Patterson who also had his plane there. These pilots engaged in a game of cat and mouse up and down the cliffs punctuated by ground hugging runs around parts of the circuit, ending with a dramatic "buzzing" of the crowd around the swimming pool.

Yet, for all the publicity that was being received, PIARC was still desperately short of funds to complete the resurfacing of the circuit. The money paid by Lukey had been used to pay off the debts to Repco and Olympic. There was very little money left for track repairs. The surface had been left in an appalling state after the last "Armstrong 500" and required breaking up and consolidating before the final surface could be laid. So desperate was the situation that it was only the formation of a very innovative money-making scheme that enabled PIARC to complete the rebuilding of "The Island" circuit.

In 1966 the Victorian Government had introduced a Cooperative Housing Society scheme whereby organisations, with projects proven to be in the public interest, could sell shares in a "Co-operative Society" for 10% of their value. This meant that if an organisation could get a low interest bank loan (guaranteed by the unpaid capitol) with an interest rate of 6.5% (which was 1.5% below prevailing rates), then the State Government would guarantee the loan. As part of the application a detailed financial analysis had to be completed complete with cash flow charts which were then relatively unfashionable. Russell Lanyon and Max Morling developed the proposal by forming the company "PIARC Co-operative Ltd" which issued the \$1.00 shares to members for 10c. This allowed the club to borrow, using uncalled capital as security. Not surprising, all banks approached initially rejected the somewhat outlandish scheme. Finally, a PIARC committee member introduced Russell Lanyon to the manager of the NAB Stock Exchange Branch who agreed to endorse the scheme. Although receiving some resistance at the Government level it was finally approved and PIARC was able to borrow \$40,000. The Co-operative proved very successful and according to former President John Lanyon was the lynchpin in the circuit being re-opened. While no PIARC Cooperative members ever requested the money back, occasionally in later years PIARC would receive calls from the executors of deceased estates who had found the share certificates and wondered if they were worth anything.

Club membership at this stage had grown to over 600 and once again the enthusiastic (and very optimistic) PIARC announced yet another opening date of Easter, 1967. Ultimately, this turned out to be another postponed date, although to be fair to PIARC the postponement was well anticipated by most concerned with the project.

Throughout all this, work had continued on the surface of the track and finally it was possible to announce an opening date (October, 1967) that could be achieved. PIARC now had an almost operational circuit and although it was the longest of its type in Victoria, it was one at which the spectators were able to see the entire circuit without having to look through post and railing fences. Facilities for wives, girlfriends and children who weren't interested in racing were unique for a motorsport facility with a tiled chlorinated swimming

pool, barbecue areas, a roller skating rink, and an extensive playground, all available free of charge.

It was decided that a closed 'Shakedown' meeting would be held on September 24, 1967 for the purpose of testing all the facilities and organisation associated with the circuit. Also having the shakedown meeting, a month prior to the opening meeting gave PIARC ample time to adequately overcome any shortcomings that may be revealed. PIARC had also been working off-track to establishing an organising structure which would conduct race meetings in accordance to strict principles and the most forward thinking guidelines of the period in Australia. The groundwork done in this area of organisation would eventually lead to many of the PIARC officials being invited to form the nucleus of the first Australian F1 Grand Prix organising team in Adelaide in 1985, almost twenty years later.

The seven event meeting was reasonably successful with most drivers being very impressed with the rebuilt circuit. For the October meeting a deluge of entries were received with eight of the twelve races having more than 36 hopeful entrants, this exceeding the track limit as defined by CAMS at that time. However, the international length of the circuit still allowed fields much larger than was possible at other Victorian circuits and most drivers were accommodated.

Despite the large number of entries received, officials and observers believed that Jack Brabham's seven-year-old outright lap record of 2.06 (set in a Cooper Climax) would still exist at the end of the day. Thus everything was in readiness for the reopening of what was a magnificent circuit, both for drivers and spectators alike.

From Personal Recall – The Track Surface

The original track surface was a spray-seal with small stones rolled in to the final surface, as was the re-surface in 1967. Unfortunately, a race circuit never gets the steady rolling-in that a public road does and consequently the surface stones continually pulled out of the surface. These were then picked up by tyres and “shot” backwards. Most cars needed their bonnets and guards re-painted after an “Island” race meeting. The stones banking up on the outside of the corners also created a hazard for competitors slightly off the racing line. This was worse than the traditional “marbles” - balls of rubber built up on the outside of corners. When enough stones were plucked out of the track surface, holes appeared which then rapidly grew larger and larger, and more dangerous as competition continued.

CHAPTER 4 – SECOND ERA – MOTORSPORT AT PHILLIP ISLAND COMES OF AGE

The programme for October 21/22, 1967 proudly announced that "“The Island”" was "Geared up and Going".

The Race Meeting got off to a somewhat sobering start when, in official practice on the Saturday, racing driver David Yates spun on an oil patch spearing off the track near the end of the main straight on the grandstand side, hitting two flag marshals. Although hospitalised suffering leg injuries the two marshals were listed in a satisfactory by the end of the weekend.

Unlike the first opening of the track eleven years previously, race day was an organisers dream. The weather was fine and clear and all was set for a great day. A large crowd of 15000 people streaming through the gates to see the circuit officially opened by the then Minister for Navy and Tourist Activity, Mr. Don Chipp M.H.R.

While this was occurring, planes were continually landing and taking off on the landing strip situated in the middle of the circuit. Many enthusiasts preferring to take the 20-minute plane trip from Moorabbin to the circuit rather than the nose-to-tail three-hour drive that many motorists experienced.

The racing that spectators were treated to that day was as good as could be seen anywhere even though many of the stars of Australian motor racing were absent. The day also turned out to be relatively incident free which was surprising considering the slippery nature of the new surface. Drivers found that the three-mile circuit with its climbs, tight turns, dips, and top speed straight required their machinery to be tough and reliable and as such there were many mechanical failures during the days racing.

Although the outright record was never seriously threatened, the number of new lap records set reflected the advances in motors, suspensions, and tyres that had taken place in the six years since the circuit had last been used. Jim Smith (Mini Cooper S) for example knocked a staggering 11.9 seconds off the outright touring car record previously held by Norm Beechey (Holden). Similarly, Bevan Gibson (Lotus 15) took 7 seconds off Murray Carter's (Corvette) sports car record.

Riding high on the success of actually having an opening meeting and a relatively successful one, a combined motorcycle and car meeting was held on New Year's Day, 1968. Traditionally this had been a motorcycle day at "The Island" and once again PIARC combined forces with the Hartwell Motorcycle Club to produce a meeting of good quality. For traditional car supporters motorcycle racing was a new experience and many couldn't believe the size of the fields that lined up for each race. This amazement had turned to incredulity by the sixth event (The Victorian Junior G.P.) in which 103 riders formed a never ending stream of howling machines which completely filled the three-mile circuit.

With the next meeting scheduled for January 29, 1968 it was seen by many as very brave of PIARC to hold three meetings in such close proximity. However, the gamble paid off and PIARC was rewarded by relatively good crowds for all meetings.

From Personal Recall – Cocktails, anyone?

“Not that alcohol ever caused a major problem, but when it ran short it could be a bother. On one occasion, officials were known to have sampled Old Spice Aftershave as a liquor when all other supplies ran out. On another occasion when our own supply of beer ran out, the track Doctors (Ralph and Barry) used their connections and the plane they had flown to the circuit to from Geelong where they were based, to drop in on a mate on French Island who always kept a spare slab or two of beer for emergencies. The extra supplies were most welcome when returned to the track where the after-race party was still going on”.

To round off their first season of racing for this Era, PIARC organised an Easter meeting, and what a meeting it was. A capacity crowd was treated to undoubtedly the best racing seen at “The Island” for many years. Throughout the day and in near perfect conditions, record after record was broken and by the end of the day only Brabham’s outright racing car record remained unscathed.

After surviving the ordeal of their opening season it was time for PIARC to sort out any running problems that had occurred during the first four meetings. To this end, regular work bees were held at “The Island” to bring it up too standard that many race enthusiasts expected, especially after being fed a diet of glossy Sandown and 'two squirts and a wiggle' Calder.

Meanwhile, off the track it was announced that PIARC was the second largest car club in Australia. Membership however stood at 700, which was relatively poor compared to the 3000 members achieved in the mid 1950's. Probably more than anything else this reflected the current decline in support for motor racing in general during this period, and the fact that there were many more clubs around to vie for the enthusiasts' memberships.

At the same time, PIARC appointed committeeman John Roxburgh as their CAMS delegate. While there was nothing unusual about this, few realised just how far this man's career would reach to the extent of when in 1986 he stood in as temporary President of FISA, the then sporting arm of the FIA, during the absence of long time President, Jean-Marie Balestre. The FIA was, and still is, the world governing body of four-wheeled motorsport. Roxburgh also served for many years as President of CAMS which is the body delegated to represent the FIA in Australia.

The next season was heralded with much fanfare and enthusiasm when in November, 1968 the club ran its first State Title event at the new circuit. With admission being one dollar, the 7000 spectators that trooped to the circuit were greeted by the worst weather conditions the track had seen since it was reopened. Despite this, the meeting broke even, this causing a collective sigh of relief among senior PIARC officials. as the club had little financial surplus to carry any heavy losses.

Once again the New Year's meeting was a combined motorcycle/car meeting and again racing car enthusiasts marvelled at the close dicing for the lead that was found in most

bike races. The highlight undoubtedly being the motorcycle dices between Ron Toombs and Ken Carruthers who was destined to become World Champion in 1969.

From Personal Recall – Public Service

“In line with our promotion along the lines of “a place for the family”, the club in the 1960s developed a team of marshals known as the “Jolly Green Giants”. The first senior of this team was Ern Lunt, a policeman with an enthusiasm for the club and the Island circuit. Most of the Duncan clan progressed to running race meetings after years of service as “Jolly Green Giants”. Their uniform was a standard BP (British Petroleum) green battle jacket and slacks, and a peaked green cap - all resplendent with PIARC badges. Their role was to guide spectators to parking spaces, to control pedestrian gates across the track, and to maintain order in the race paddock. While everyone else gave no such assistance or had old men in white coats, the Island was well known for its friendly face.

The gate and the ticket boxes were run by wives and girlfriends of the officials on the theory that girls presented a friendlier face than the rest of us. Most of the team are still present at club activities, but work on the gate is a thing of the past for most.”

The 1969 Australia Day meeting saw Phillip Island turn on shocking weather for Saturday's practice. However, that didn't mean there was no action. Undoubtedly the best show in practice was put on by Holden driver Phillip Morris (surely a good name to have for sponsorship). Morris locked his brakes entering Siberia and slithered off the track collecting about 50 feet of fencing, 2 posts, and a gate before coming to rest half submerged in the dam. Fortunately, Morris didn't suffer any physical injuries although his pride was severely dented. Especially since the feat had come only two laps after Morris had the dubious honour of being the only driver to spin his car eight times on the one lap. Thankfully, race day dawned bright and sunny and once again a financial loss was averted. While breaking even was better than sustaining a loss, PIARC officials were concerned as a surplus was desperately needed to complete ongoing capital works projects at the circuit.

Easter brought with it the prospect of two meetings being held on the same day in Victoria, with car races occurring at both the Phillip Island circuit and the Albury circuit of Hume Weir. Both race organisers were keen to capitalise on the population increase during the holiday period in the area of their respective venues. Like the New Year's Day meetings, PIARC and the Hartwell Motorcycle Club jointly held races at “The Island” circuit. However, the difference being that car races were held on the Sunday, with motorcycle races following on the Monday.

The speed with which cars were developing during this period was nothing short of astronomical and with this rapid development came a subsequent rapid increase in the lap speeds that the cars were achieving. Due to these speed increases safety measures were fast becoming inadequate and PIARC along with many other circuit owners around the country, were forced to sit up and critically examine their tracks. It should be explained however, that circuit owners hadn't ignored safety considerations, rather everyone had been caught unaware by the rapid technological developments that were occurring. To this end CAMS had set up a special committee to look into the safety of Australian circuits.

From Personal Recall – Camping Control

To keep the property, secure during nights of camping at the track in the sixties, club officials used to patrol regularly until the gates were locked at about 1 am. We would do this in whatever official cars had been supplied for the particular meeting. This did not always work out well, particularly on one meeting when we had Valiant V8 Chargers fitted with flashing lights and sirens. The mixture between flashing lights, the rumble of the V8 motor, Henk Duncan laughing his head off and the occasional siren caused more noise and disturbance than any camper ever could.

In September, 1969 it was PIARC's turn for a routine track inspection and the CAMS Track Safety Committee stated that several major changes were needed at the circuit that had been designed 17 years earlier. These changes included:

- 1) lining the main straight with 1600 feet of steel guardrail
- 2) removal of all brake marker signs (as they were of solid construction)
- 3) the rebuilding of the entrances to main drains, and
- 4) the painting of 6 miles of white line to define the edge of the circuit.

The committee also stated that pit crews would only be permitted to signal from behind the pit counter and would not be allowed on the pit apron. This was a pivotal time for Australian motorsport in terms of its move from a sport that accepted danger and any consequences as part of the activity to a sport that was starting to practice risk management. Ex-president of PIARC, John Pryce, was Chairman of the Track Safety Committee and was sympathetic to the club's situation, but was also serious about upgrading track safety. With John, the club was able to engage in harmonious negotiations regarding priorities and scheduling which at least made the requisites possible.

The lull between the 68/69 season and the 69/70 season also saw the retirement of PIARC committee members Vern Curtin and Winston Maguire. Both having been members of the original Phillip Island group that proposed the idea of the circuit in the 1950's. Maguire, of course held the honour of being PIARC Foundation President.

The four meeting 1969/70 season held at "The Island" was boosted by the Secret Service Sedan Series'- a four race series with a round to be held at each of the four meetings. This series, backed primarily by Hoyts Theatre Group, was held to promote the new James Bond film "On Her Majesty's Secret Service", which starred Australian actor George Lazenby. The prize money for this series totalled \$25000 which was exceptional in those days.

From Personal Recall – Night Security.

While camping was still permitted at the track for officials and competitors, the controlling officials patience was sorely tried almost every Race Meeting.

One night, while checking the East Gate which had been locked sometime earlier, we had the entire double gates fall flat on the ground on being shaken. Someone had unbolted all the hinges, presumably to gain entrance to the track after it had been locked up. The culprit was found when the officials checked all the cars in the paddock. Only one car still had a warm bonnet and was obviously the last car driven at the track. The names of Mollison and Withers figured strongly amongst those suspected.

The third meeting of the season, held on January 25, was also boosted by the inclusion of Round One of the Australian Sports Car Championship. It was the first time since the circuit had reopened that car enthusiasts were treated to a National Title meeting. An interesting aspect of this was that greater emphasis was placed on practice since the terms of a National Title gave equal prize money for practice times on the Saturday and the results of the race on the Sunday. Indeed, this meeting was extremely successful with everything running smoothly. The big V8 sports cars were the fastest cars running in Australia at that time and Phillip Island revelled in having cars fast enough to test the track to its full potential. The event was known as the "Endeavour Cup" and stayed with the circuit for many years.

With a well-attended Easter meeting wrapping up the 1969/70 season, 1970 saw a resurgence for Victorian motor racing with most circuits playing host to fairly large crowds. Throughout this period PIARC finished the track improvements which included the rebuilding of Siberia corner (with a concrete pad merged into bitumen) and all looked in readiness for what PIARC hoped would be their most successful season ever.

From Personal Recall – The End of Camping at the Track.

Permission to camp on the hillside at the rear of the main straight spectator area extended until about 1970, when Len Lukey approached the club after one race meeting, complaining about bushes being cut down. He produced cut branches of a tree to prove his point. As a result, he banned further camping on the property at race meetings. This was a great blow to the club and the enthusiasts who had enjoyed the privilege - subsequent investigation had us puzzled because we could not find any plant resembling the branches shown to us - we were then convinced that someone had brought branches in for a fire, and that they had not come from any plant at the track itself. The end result was the same - no camping at the circuit.

This was a great shame because one of the more treasured moments at the track was the morning after a race meeting. The circuit was never more perfect than on a sunny morning on the day after a busy race meeting - the sea, the paddocks, the peace all brought a great feeling to each of those privileged to enjoy them.

The first meeting of the 1970/71 season was well attended by both spectators and drivers (over 220 entries were received) and with fine weather the season started off very well.

Once again the two annual January meetings proved to be a success with the combined motorcycle/car (2 + 4) meeting attracting a crowd in excess of 13000 who basked in brilliant sunshine to watch journalist and touring car driver Brian Reed score his second successive victory at "The Island" after his win in the 100-mile Series Production race in October. For top racing driver Maurie Quincey, this meeting saw him end a run of seven straight Island meetings at which he suffered mechanical breakdown.

The crowd were also on hand to witness an incident that could have had very serious consequences. During the running of the Sports Sedan race a very inebriated spectator drove onto the track amongst competitors and completed a couple of laps before leaving the circuit at his point of entry. He had gained access by unwiring a gate through the fence, unknown to the officials who were focused on the track activities. Many track marshals reported that a car was on the track without race numbers, and the driver without a helmet, before they realised that this was an interloper. Needless to say the police and PIARC officials moved quickly to apprehend him and he was subsequently escorted to the Cowes Police Station and charged with driving while intoxicated. The story continues along the line of "after being released from the Station, the driver was apprehended a second time and charged with the same offence again". Subsequent to this incident it became routine to ensure all gates were adequately secured prior to racing commencing.

January 31, 1971 saw PIARC again hosting the first round of the Australian Sports Car Championship and what a race it turned out to be. For almost the whole of the 100-mile race sports car aces Lionel Ayres and John Harvey battled nose-to-tail for the lead with Howie Sangster making the battle for the lead a three-way dice for the earlier part of the race. The eventual honours went to Ayres in which was a thoroughly deserved win after fuel spilling onto his tyres caused him to spin twice in the warm up lap with the resultant damage forcing him to remove a door for the race.

1971 also saw PIARC abandon its Easter meeting in favour of a meeting in May, comprised of a new format. Traditionally being a money loser, the last race of the season in this year would feature "The Autumn Challenge" - a 45-mile race for the fastest 30 racing and sports cars in the country. Unfortunately for PIARC, their innovation was not rewarded and the meeting was plagued by non-starters. The May date clashed with a number of drivers being in Malaysia and Hong Kong for races there. Adding to this problem was a heat of the Australian Touring Car Championship being run at Surfers Paradise. These two reasons combined with the fact that several top local drivers such as Maurie Quincey and Phil Moore were in the midst of rebuilding their cars meant that once again the final meeting proved to be the low point of PIARC's season. This resulted in PIARC executives taking the decision to cancel the fourth meeting from the 1971/72 season, preferring to run three solid meetings only.

From Personal Recall - Dams

"Len Lukey was a water nut and when he first bought the property off the club, he started putting dams everywhere. They weren't always in the best place for our racing purposes.

One dam was only metres off the track in the straight ahead position at Turn 1. Consequently, we had to have guardrail around the outside of the turn. Many cars collected the guard-rail, and one bounced over it and into the water until it was out of sight. The driver floated to the surface but the car stayed there. Jimmy Gowans (Chief Flag marshal at the time) was nominated to hook up the tow chain by diving in dressed in underpants only.

The big dam in the middle of the circuit claimed a race car as well as a plane during another incident. A Torana lost it coming out of Turn 7, dived left and off the track, ran up the dam wall, bounced once on the top of the wall, and dropped nicely into the water. Terry Muldowney was the hero who duck-dived down to find the driver. Meanwhile, the driver

actually kicked out the back window and found his own way to the surface, leaving Terry to worry about where the body was.”

The first meeting of the season was to see a return of endurance racing to “The Island” with the running of the fourth round of the 1971 Manufacturers Championship for touring cars. Promoted simply as the “Phillip Island 500k” and run over a distance of 500km, this meeting brought back memories of the earlier Armstrong’s which had been held at “The Island” some ten years earlier.

To comply with the requirements of pit stops for long distance races. PIARC was forced to carry out extensive work to the pit area and the main straight. A signalling wall was built between the pits and the track. The main straight was widened by the addition of a concrete strip laid down the right hand side. In order to cover the costs associated with this work, PIARC for the first time offered advertising concessions on the guardrail barriers.

Being a major race on the touring car calendar, this meeting was to see the majority of the Bathurst entrants racing at “The Island”, including 1971 winner Allan Moffat and other 'names' such as Roxburgh, Brock, Bond, Chivas, Geoghegan, Carter, and French. Only Brock and Moffat had raced at the circuit since it reopened in 1967, although French, Chivas and Geoghegan had all raced at “The Island” in the late 1950's.

This type of racing was what had made the circuit famous in its first era, but it was also what had caused its' eventual demise. Even in the minds of the most stalwart of Island supporters and officials, there remained nagging doubts regarding the feasibility of running a long distance race on this type of circuit.

What eventuated was a superb meeting and was probably the most important meeting in the new era for “The Island” circuit. However, it wasn't all champagne and roses. When competitors and officials arrived at the circuit on Friday for unofficial practice, most were dismayed at the state of the circuit. Many PIARC members had worked extremely hard during the pre-season break to complete the necessary alterations and the resurfacing was regarded as excellent. Unfortunately, what road builders believed was a quality surface and what race drivers believed was a quality surface differed widely. It was normal for a certain amount of loose material to be present on a new road surface with the traffic being expected to bed in all in. On a racing surface this was a dangerous proposition indeed. There were piles of stones in many spots around the circuit and in particular, around Turns 2 and 3, and up the Back Straight. This resulted in no practice being held on the Friday. Instead, officials, their partners, and early competitors spending the day getting the surface in a race-ready condition. Even the race car trailers of those early competitors were used to help cart the material away. Not all competitors were cooperative, with some of the “names” making themselves very unpopular by insisting on driving around while the work proceeded, spraying the workers with stones every time they drove past.

Once cleaned up, the track surface stood up remarkably well to the pounding it received. With the weather turning on a 'beauty' a large crowd (19000) saw 1969 Bathurst winner Colin Bond lead home team mate Peter Brock to win what was the most exciting race of the 1971 Championship series to date. This meeting proved to everyone that PIARC led by its redoubtable president John Lanyon and backed by a group of totally dedicated committeemen could run a 'big' series race and make a success of it. The

importance of the PIARC volunteers was critical as almost all jobs involved in the running of meetings and the maintenance of the circuit was carried out by volunteers. The Phillip Island motor racing circuit was once again coming of age.

From Personal Recall – Competitor with Flair

In the fifties and sixties most competitors in the early days towed their cars down on trailers, raced, then drove home again. There wasn't a great deal of presentation until perhaps the seventies when the touring cars started to come on strong.

One of the early stylists was Rusty French who raced a number of cars - Ford Pantera Sports car, Porsche, Falcon. Rusty had a penchant for black and his best effort was the meeting where he had lined up below the control tower, his black plane, his black hospitality bus, his black tow car and his black Pantera. All this and his black driving suit as well. It was a class act.

The New Year saw PIARC again combining with the Hartwell Motorcycle Club to run a very successful 2x4 meeting. With an incredible 22 events run over the weekend (17 on the Sunday) and all being started on time the meeting was a credit to organisers and officials.

Following on from this success it was hoped that the 1972 Australia Day meeting would also be a financial success. However, the additional cost of running an Australian Title Event (again Round 1 Australian Sports Car Championship) always made this an uphill battle. Unfortunately, a poor crowd turned up to view what was generally considered poor racing. However, the meeting will go down in the history books for one very important reason.

Since October, 1970 there had been among many the realisation that the magic 100mph average lap speed could be achieved at "The Island". Indeed, several drivers believed they had the capacity to achieve this.

Officials had been waiting a long time for it to happen, even to the extent of using the possibility of it being broken in pre-meeting hypes. Finally, on January 30, 1972 John Harvey in the Bob Jane-owned McLaren had the honour of achieving the magic ton.

Unfortunately, the 1971/72 season ended on a sour note with the cancellation of the final meeting which was to have been held on March 5. This cancellation however gave PIARC the opportunity to get the circuit in tiptop condition for the next season. Projects at the circuit included extensive track surface work, corner edging, reorganisation of the paddock area and additional re-forestation of the camping area.

Since being reopened the circuit had played host to 19 open meetings over a period of five seasons and was now firmly entrenched as an excellent motor sport venue in the minds of racing enthusiasts everywhere.

From Personal Recall – Planes on the Airfield

“The airfield that ran down from the dam wall to the cliff tops was used extensively during the 60s and 70s. Drivers and others would fly down each day for a bit of an adventure along with company executives and others with access to suitable light planes, this being before the days of helicopters for routine use.

At times there were enough planes landing for the club to have a ticket collector based on the airfield. The record was something like 16 or 17 planes lined up below the control tower.

Most pilots handled the conditions fine but occasionally we had a problem. The main difficulty appeared to be that normal conditions there had you landing into the wind but downhill, or uphill but with the wind behind. It was not uncommon for a plane to get caught up in fences at the extremes of the track and the inspectors would be there next morning for their routine check of what went wrong. The worst incident we had was the plane that tried landing uphill but with a strong wind behind. Running too fast on the ground, the pilot tried to take off again and clear the dam wall. He did this but stalled the plane, and flipped it into the dam, upside-down. The Mazda executives on board were all OK but very wet and cold.”

The first meeting of the sixth season (October, 1972) featured Round 4 of the Manufacturers Championship (again the “500k”) supported by Formula Vee and sports car races. Once again Formula Vees were able to provide full fields and interestingly enough, even today this most lowly of open wheeler classes is still able to provide more competitors, and in many cases better racing than its bigger brothers in the Australian open wheeler family. Similarly, the drawing power in 1972 of production cars was guaranteed and hence a good crowd travelled to the circuit to see the 1972 Endurance race.

With the circuit in extremely good 'shape', and a pleasantly surprising absence of loose stones on the racing surface, Allan Moffat scored a decisive win in a race of unusually low attrition. Normally in races of this type attrition rates were close to 50%. However, on this day, officials were amazed when 26 out of the 29 starters made it to the finish line after 500km of hard racing. This meeting received extremely good press reviews and PIARC received many letters of compliment.

The November meeting was next and with it came the very clear message to both PIARC and motor racing in general that the national open wheeler category does not have anywhere near the drawing power of 'tourers'. This has always been a constant in Australian motorsport for many years and looks unlikely to change.

As had been the case in previous seasons the early January meeting was a success with the Australia Day meeting once again a failure. The following off-season break saw working bees concentrate on the continual drainage problem under which “The Island” circuit laboured.

From Personal Recall – Club Track Vehicles

In line with the make-do attitude of the club, particularly in the early days, we used a variety of reject vehicles to do work at the track. One that stood out was a 1950s Dodge utility painted up in green and yellow. It used to be the tow car for John Lanyon until it was put out to pasture at the track. I seem to think the Dodge ended up hidden in the grass behind Dave Cook's garage in Cowes. Another vehicle we used for a while was a Standard Vanguard with the roof cut off - again painted up in club colours.

A third vehicle which never actually got to be used at all was a large ex-council grader which we rescued from a paddock on the Island. It was driven back to the track by Henk Duncan who almost wiped out the Nelson Fiat as he maneuvered it through the North gate and parked it on the dam wall. It never moved again. Good idea but.

The 1973/74 season again saw four meetings run. This time the first two meetings were further apart with a meeting held in October and the second being in November and featuring both a Gold Star round and the usual 500km race. This meeting was a huge success financially, although severe track damage meant that officials had a large job ahead of them to get the racing surface into a suitable condition for the combined meeting in January. Again a meeting was held on Australia Day although this time it was relatively low key, with the dropping of the usual Australian Sports Car Championship Round. This would in fact be run in October and be used to open the 1974/75 racing season for PIARC

Practice for the 1974 October meeting was plagued by continuous rainfall and caused many competitors to start from the back of the grid as few had wet weather tyres. Sunday arrived with more rain, but at least the cool conditions provided the catalyst for the racing surface to stand up to the harsh pounding of heavy racing machinery. Officials were pleased to note that the concrete patching which had been laid at Motorcraft corner had solved a long standing wear problem. Indeed, from this point on many of the repairs to the racing surface were with concrete and by the time of its eventual closure many of the corners were reinforced with concrete. Commonly on race weekends officials would examine the track surface on a Saturday afternoon after practice and where a weak spot was occurring, a rapidly excavated hole would be filled with concrete in time for Sunday's racing. In future years many of these concrete 'plugs' would pop up due to ground pressure. Southern Loop (Turn 2), Repco (Turn 4), Siberia (Turn 6) and MG (Turn 10) were all repaired extensively with concrete. Usually this was the racing line only and for up to 100 metres long. A local family, the Stoppas, became quite expert at blending concrete patches into the general contours of the track surface to such a degree that drivers could not tell when they moved from one surface to another. Many Saturday nights saw father Bert Stoppa sitting on the club trailer full of sand and a concrete mixer, drinking the club beer and yelling enthusiastic instructions to members working under floodlights. The members also used some very rough techniques to carry out their repairs in emergencies. In the old unused part of track at Turn 4, you can still see the axe marks where old bitumen was chopped out before being replaced with concrete.

From Personal Recall – Concrete Track Repairs

"This make-shift system also worked on larger jobs. One year, between two consecutive weekends of racing, we had extensive repairs to do. The holes we dug with the help of Mike Dixon from Cowes took seventeen large concrete mixer trucks to fill. The re-

enforcement for these repairs was found at the Cowes' tip. The track was held together with bedsteads, farm fences, and any other metal pieces we could scrounge " .

November brought with it the promise of a good meeting as once again PIARC would be running a meeting which hosted both a round of the Australian Formula One Gold Star Championship and the usual "500K" endurance race. Unfortunately, it was a problem plagued meeting with the dramas starting in practice on Saturday. Along with the timing machine breaking down, the track surface also suffered damage during the practice sessions and Saturday night saw officials undertaking emergency repair work on the track in an effort to get it ready for the next day. However, race day also saw the track suffer extensive damage which was unfortunately highlighted in the TV coverage of the meeting with the cameras showing viewers all around Australia 'close up shots of the rapidly deteriorating surface. This brought back sad memories of the 1962 Armstrong race. Finally, to add to the woes of officials, a light plane carrying Mazda executives plunged out of control into the dam (no-one was seriously injured). Although this wasn't PIARC's fault, it certainly didn't give them much to cheer about.

Once again the New Year meeting saw PIARC combining with the Hartwell MCC to run a successful meeting. It was then left to the Australia Day meeting to round off the season. Traditionally being a money losing meeting PIARC planned to introduce to competitors and spectators an innovative concept. All practice sessions and races would be held on the Sunday thus substantially reducing the running costs of the meeting. For their innovativeness and willingness to gamble PIARC was rewarded with an Australia Day meeting that actually made a profit (albeit a small one).

February saw the circuit being used for an attempt on the 24-hour record. To achieve this, it was calculated that the Colin Bond owned L34 Torana (although Bond wasn't driving) would have to average more than 111.58 km/h. Unfortunately, the attempt was in trouble early with a seized clutch cable. This was soon followed by a loose rocker gear, alternator trouble, gearbox replacement, and finally a piston collapse.

The off-season break saw PIARC once again injecting a large amount of money and effort into resurfacing a large portion of the track in an effort to produce a racing surface that would last for more than one season. The reasons for the continual disintegration of the track surface were fairly complex. The property on which the circuit was situated had very poor drainage due mainly to the extremely porous soil that was underfoot. This meant that when it rained surface runoff was poor and large quantities of water would seep under the edges of the track thus weakening the foundations on which the track was built. The track up until this time was built in the same way as country roads were. Reducing size stones were laid on top of each other as a foundation, then the surface was rolled then sprayed with a tar solution which bound it all together. Small stones or gravel was then spread over the surface and rolled in with continuous traffic. This wasn't ideal for a race track but, as explained elsewhere, the hot mix type equipment was not available on Phillip Island when the track was first built.

Also compounding the problem was the nearby trout farm which Lukey had built on the property. Lukey had built a garden and museum complex behind the spectator area utilising water pumped from the dam, which would flow through the gardens, in the trout farm, then down the spectator area, across the circuit and into the dam. This irrigation plan never worked and caused considerable flooding across the circuit at Turn 1 on wet days.

The next season came and went with practised precision and included the usual four meetings. However, PIARC's ten-year lease on the circuit had expired and racing was occurring on a year-to-year basis, subject to the continual verbal agreement of Lukey. Unfortunately, Lukey was suffering ill health and PIARC's tenuous hold on the circuit hung in the balance. Even with the offer of some forty thousand dollars from Rothmans if the company could have a three-year written agreement with PIARC, Lukey stuck to his verbal arrangement and the club had to bypass the deal.

Despite the noose hanging over its neck PIARC still ran its customary two November meetings in 1977. The first of which featured the final Gold Star round suffered a substantial financial loss. A week later "The Island" circuit hosted its usual "500K" touring car race. This meeting once again made a large profit highlighting the drawing power of touring cars compared with open wheelers.

Although it made a large profit the meeting was far from successful with PIARC and the circuit receiving a large amount of adverse publicity. The controversy started when the race was awarded to Peter Jansen. However, after Jansen had received the trophy and thanked his sponsors (all on live national television), PIARC officials announced that due to a mistake on the lap charts (the electronic timing system had malfunctioned thus requiring the use of manual lap charts) the actual winner was Allan Grice. Coming on top of a race surface that was abnormally abrasive, PIARC was widely criticised in the public press. Although relatively unreported at the time PIARC officials were relieved and appreciative of the stoic manner in which Grice accepted the incident.

From Personal Recall – More about Peter Jansen.

"Peter Jansen was a stand-out competitor who was into personal presentation. Peter would send down a double-decker London bus as a hospitality centre, then drive down in his Rolls-Royce for a bit of a show. Peter raced touring cars quite successfully but was better known for his "playboy" image tinged with a large amount of eccentricity. Peter had a major problem abiding by the rules that the rest of the competitors worked to and at race meetings he was impossible.

At one meeting we kept track of his misdemeanours - the list totalled seventeen notes by the end of Sunday. They included driving up to the Control Tower instead of walking, having dogs in the paddock, borrowing the ladder and not returning it, having his pit crew run-in the car on the Friday when everyone else had to be a licensed race driver on the track, lighting a BBQ open fire in the paddock, alcohol in the paddock during racing, not paying his entry fee, etc. etc. For the next meeting, we sent him a list of seventeen conditions under which we would accept his entry. Knowing Peter, he probably framed it and pinned it on the back of his toilet door, alongside the photo of "Himself" sitting on the can."

For the eleventh consecutive year, January brought with it a combined motorcar/cycle meeting run in conjunction with the Hartwell Motorcycle Club. For the eleventh year straight the meeting was a successful one. Few spectators realised that they were witnessing the end of an era, for the 1978 New Year's Day meeting would be the last combined meeting of its kind in this era at "The Island" circuit.

1978 saw the Australia Day meeting reported by the press and media as the last major meeting that would ever be held at "The Island". PIARC was, as always, still hoping to continue racing at "The Island". This was despite the fact that one person died and thirteen others injured when a Scorpion Clubman Sports car crashed into the spectator fence against which spectators were leaning. The incident was precipitated by the sudden move sideways of the clubman sports car as it was being overtaken. As the cars raced down the main straight and cleared the pits complex they were suddenly hit by a strong easterly wind (unusual at the circuit) causing the Scorpion to cannon into the. Contrary to press reports at the time, the one fatality occurred through a heart attack, not due to any direct contact with the car involved.

Phillip Island had been allocated the 1978 Australian Grand Prix, but in the circumstances the club found itself in, February saw PIARC handing the prestigious title event back to CAMS for re-allocation to another venue... Originally scheduled to be held later in the year PIARC wasn't able to guarantee the meeting would take place due to the uncertainty surrounding the circuit's future.

A month later PIARC in conjunction with the Vintage Sports Car Club (Australia) ran an extremely successful Golden Jubilee meeting to celebrate the running of the first Australian Grand Prix exactly 50 years previously at Phillip Island. With the idea originating from VSCC member Bob King, this meeting was two years in the planning and proved to be the biggest historic racing car meeting ever seen in Australia. With the assistance of police and local authorities, public roads were blocked off so that once again the original 1928 Grand Prix street circuit could be used on the Saturday by actual cars that had raced in the original Grand Prix. This was followed on the Sunday by a circuit based meeting. This highly successful meeting, jointly organised by PIARC and the VSCC, proved profitable and enabled PIARC to pay all outstanding debts relating to the circuit, even after assisting the VSCC with some of their debts from the Meeting.

At the same time, PIARC and four other Victorian clubs worked with CAMS to create the Victorian State Race Series, catering for the amateur racers in the sport, those who were missing out on being invited to the big events. The following month PIARC applied for and was granted permission to run one of these Meetings at Winton Raceway near Benalla in central Victoria. This was the first time PIARC hadn't used its own circuit for this type of meeting. Officials, however, were still hopeful of running meetings at "The Island" and applied to CAMS for several dates on the 1979 motor sport calendar. Following on from their Winton effort, PIARC with the co-operation of Calder Park management ran their traditional 500km endurance race at the Keilor site, and a year later joined with Calder to present the 1980 Australian Grand Prix at Calder.

On the 27 October, 1978 PIARC virtually lost all hope of ever running major meetings on a regular basis at "The Island" circuit again. On this day Len Lukey passed away after what was widely reported to be a brief battle with cancer. In fact, according to his wife Helen, Len Lukey had been ill for up to ten years before his death but had hidden the fact even from close family members including herself. Helen Lukey had in earlier years been witness to Len collapsing at a race meeting but it was explained away by her husband. Although Lukey's illness became known in his final months his death was traumatic for many members of PIARC as no man had done more to bring racing back to the circuit after it was forced to close in 1962.

Following contact from the Lukey Estate administrators, PIARC became aware that it wouldn't be able to use "The Island" circuit, at least until it was sold and then it would have to have the owners very sympathetic to motorsport. As the asking price was \$1.2 million, PIARC management, in a realistic assessment of the situation decided not to try to buy the circuit themselves. There was no way that PIARC could meet the repayments on the large scale loan which would not only have to include buying the circuit, but would also have to include sufficient funds to bring the circuit up to 1979 standards. CAMS contact between the themselves and the club had previously indicated that for racing to occur there again major work would have to be done with regard to spectator protection, aside from other general requirements.

Due to the efforts of the Lukey family, 1980 also saw the opening of the "Len Lukey Memorial Museum and Gardens". The museum and gardens had been built some years earlier and stocked with a wide range of "items of interest", but never opened to the public. Today this museum and the surrounding gardens which overlook the track proves to be a continual drawcard with tourists at "The Island". Redeveloped in later years the museum and associated facilities has bought the Phillip Island Circuit into line with contemporary sports facility management around the world by having a value added attraction providing an income not dependent on racing.

The late 1970's and early 1980's saw the circuit used intermittently for a variety of club sprint days and classic car meeting (the most well-known of which was annually organised by Bob Shannon). As detailed later, PIARC had no official status at the circuit any longer and circuit related activity could only occur with the permission of the Lukey Estate. Ultimately it was the continual degradation of the circuit and in particular the condition of the racing surface (by now extremely potholed and bumpy) that bought an end to circuit activity in 1982.

From Personal Recall – PIARC away from the track.

Such was the standing of PIARC at this time that, although without a circuit, the club hosted a Dinner for Alan Jones in recognition of his Formula 1 World Championship. With assistance from CAMS and the Holden Dealer Team, PIARC held this function in the Great Hall of the Victorian ART Gallery, and gained recognition from many of the sport's greats and from the Victorian Government for this grand affair.

CHAPTER 4 – THIRD ERA “SHOW ME THE MONEY”.

An Overview.

In the early 1950's a local farmer became one of the many people to sign up as a PIARC Foundation member. On an irregular basis, this farmer attended race meetings throughout the 1950's and 60's. Occasionally his son would attend with them. Little was it realised then that the young boy who attended race meetings and was pre-destined to work on his family's farm would thirty years later be General Manager of Phillip Island Motor Sport (PIMS) and the prime mover in the resurrection of the circuit. Fergus Cameron and PIMS ultimately controlled one of the premier sporting facilities in the country and one which was widely acclaimed as on par with the best international circuits in the world.

Being publicly known because of the annual Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix and the annual round of the World Superbike Championship, the Phillip Island circuit was now run on modern sport facility management principles. One of the historical problems with motorsport venues in Australia has been their reliance on “big event” meetings to sustain and develop them. These meetings have not only been required to cover the increasing costs of running the actual event but have also been required to provide extra income for the ongoing maintenance and further capital development of the property. Certainly in the previous two eras' this was the operating method of the Phillip Island circuit and at the time it was the contemporary thinking.

Experience has revealed the inherent high financial gamble that this strategy imposed. If a high profile meeting is successful, then the rewards can be spectacular. If, however, the meeting is poorly attended due to rain or scheduling, or mismanaged then the financial fall out can be equally spectacular with few Australian circuits being sufficiently viable to support such losses. This, in part, explains the proliferation of street races in Australia backed by State or Territory Governments. Without such Government support, modern sporting facilities now operate on a multi-use philosophy whereby the facility should strive to attract as many users as is possible, on as many days as is possible. This strategy is evident in recently completed sporting facilities such as the Docklands Stadium in Melbourne's west and the Vodafone Arena at Melbourne Tennis Park, which although built to support the Australian Tennis Open (having a retractable roof) has also been designed with users such as concerts, cycling and indoor ball sports in mind.

Closed motorsport circuits now cost considerable money to maintain and by their nature are situated on large tracts of land. To utilise the associated infrastructure and assets on an irregular basis and especially to base that usage around a selected number of dedicated weekends threatens the short term capital maintenance and long term financial viability of the facility. The only comparable size sporting facilities in terms of land are golf courses and no golf course could ever survive on weekend only usage. While the expenditure on golf courses may be slightly higher than race circuits (and that could be argued if one takes into account resurfacing), both are similar in that they require ongoing maintenance regardless of whether they are being utilised or not.

In the year 2000, the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit saw 270 days of usage including racing, testing, corporate days, driver instruction and vehicle and associated product

launches. The associated Visitor Centre is operational all year round and is seen as a playing a key role in giving the large television audience who view the international meetings an opportunity to visit the circuit at their leisure. Testimony to the increasing development of the facility is that despite limited marketing 20% of the visitors to the museum are international visitors. Like many sporting facilities around the world PIMS have recognised the inherent need and added income that a value added attraction can provide. Cameron openly admits that “Phillip Island does not see itself in competition with Australian circuits, but rather sees international motor race circuits, especially those that host motorbikes, as its prime benchmarks of standard”.

The Third Era in Detail.

By 1983, the circuit had become an almost derelict racing facility that was a circuit in name only and had returned to its pre 56 usage – farming. The track was in appalling condition with the surface potholed, broken up and not fit for any usage. The associated spectator facilities were dated and added to the bleak setting. A stranger not knowing its history and former usage would have viewed the land as prime grazing land and seen the remnants of the track as a liability rather than as an asset. The land was legally owned by the Lukey estate, whose administrator had formally written to PIARC advising them that they would be considered trespassers and that no racing activity of any sort was to occur on the property. This shocked PIARC who had considerable infrastructure at the circuit over which they felt they had, if not outright proprietary rights, certainly a moral claim. When the circuit briefly hosted the occasional historic meeting sponsored by Shannon’s, PIARC, although assisting with the organisation, was not allowed to be mentioned in programs and were given no acknowledgement.

The reasons behind the hostility between the administrator of the Lukey Estate and PIARC were complex, however it appeared that PIARC was a victim of motor racing politics within Victoria. The Lukey Estate had been approached by some members of the Light Car Club of Australia who were vigorously trying to gain State Government support to inject funds into the property and be the body that returned and controlled racing at the proposed rejuvenated circuit. Influential figures within the Light Car Club had a close relationship with the then Premier of Victoria, Sir Rupert Hamer. In fact, Hamer had been invited to the opening of the museum as part of a campaign to gain his support of for the circuit. These plans were ultimately thwarted by a change in Premier in mid-1981 from Hamer to Lindsay Thompson and the change of State Government less than 10 months later. These negotiations were being held without the knowledge of PIARC who therefore were not informed of the changes in the sale price of the property and subsequently were unable to actively negotiate at a price many believe the then financial club could have afforded.

An investment group established by Fergus Cameron purchased the land in 1984 for a reputed \$800,000. Placetac Pty/Ltd was established as an investment vehicle and composed of people primarily not interested in the re-introduction of motorsport. Fergus Cameron was one investor whose thinking was beginning to turn to motorsport

“it was in Melbourne and constantly hearing people talk about the circuit and identifying the property with the circuit that made me realise the history and legacy of what we had”

At the same time a number of motorsport people from both PIARC and the motorcycling fraternity had approached various shareholders in Placetac Pty/Ltd, particularly Cameron

and Peter Henderson, to convince them of the history behind the circuit and its potential to once again be a viable motorsport venue. Cameron, in particular, had extensive talks with the Hartwell Motorcycle Club with the aim of developing motorcycling activity at "The Island". A joint venture called HARTRON was initiated. Soon after this Wes Brown initiated a meeting between Bob Barnard (of Adelaide GP fame), Cameron and Brown who started to look seriously at the circuit's potential viability to host motorcycling. The ultimate result of these negotiations was the awarding of the lease by Placetac Pty/Ltd to a company called BARFIELD. Barnard had 50% shareholding in BARFIELD and Cameron was another substantial shareholder. Barnard had successfully won the provisional rights to the 1989 Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, subject to the circuit being successfully homologated.

The period before the Grand Prix saw the most extensive renovations and development work to the circuit since its inception. New pits were built, the original tower moved approximately 100m south, access tunnels were laid along with the complete rebuilding of the circuit's surface. Subtle changes were made to the circuit shape to enhance safety and extensive earthworks completed. Three weeks before the 1989 GP, Cameron sold his stake in BARFIELD. The 1989 meeting was run using a combination of motorcycle and car officials (many of whom had worked on the Adelaide F1 GP with Barnard and his Event Manager, Bill Crouch). The organisation of the event set high standards and immediately met and in many cases surpassed the presentation of most of the rounds of the World Motorcycle Grand Prix Championship.

A second Motorcycle Grand Prix was held in 1990 using the same organisation. Although the crowd was not as large as the 1989 event, it carried on the same high standards and confirmed a place for the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix on the international calendar. Having stated that, the 1990 event was to be the last Motorcycle Grand Prix to be conducted at Phillip Island for some years, the event moving to Sydney's Eastern Creek circuit because of political activity in Victoria.

In 1991 BARFIELD was declared insolvent and the lease reverted back to the original owners of the property Placetac Pty/Ltd. The lease was soon awarded to the circuit's present manager, PIMS. (Phillip Island Motorsport) of which Fergus Cameron was the Managing Director.

From this point, racing and related activities continued very successfully at "The Island" with PIARC assisting PIMS at most of the public car racing events, with a variety of motorsport officials working for PIMS on the various motorcycle races, and with many other clubs and organisations being involved in non-race activities there. While not without controversy from local protestors over the proposed development, the Phillip Island community now recognised the substantial business the busy circuit was to create. Apart from the International race meetings, from 1990 until 2004, events at the circuit remained stable under PIMS, with the V8 Supercars being the major event. Other events of note were 2 Litre Super-touring races, then the Procar series for a couple of years, the regular Victorian State Circuit Race Championships, one round run by PIARC and one by the Mini Club, and the Castrol Classic historic race meeting run by the Victorian Historian Racing Register, and "Island Magic", a regular major state event to cap off the year. From the club angle, club "sprints" were the other major activity at the circuit, PIARC running four or five such events there, each attracting up to two hundred competitors over two days.

Throughout its entire history there has been a relatively small number of fatalities at the circuit. The most publicised of these was during this period and involved the untimely death of Greg Hansford at "The Island". While the circuit was completely exonerated by the State Coroner, Hansford's death was the catalyst for all circuit owners and operators to examine Occupational Health and Safety issues. According to Cameron, one of the proudest achievements of PIMS has been the ongoing development of safety procedures to the very highest level, particularly regarding non- race day safety when vehicles are still moving at near race speed around the circuit.

Placetac Pty/Ltd easily become the longest running owner of the circuit property and full credit must be given to them for the circuit's high level of usage and infrastructure that existed. While Placetac Pty/Ltd owned the property, PIMS recognised the heritage of the foundation clubs, viewing both PIARC and the Hartwell Motorcycle Club as being "home" clubs at the circuit. In December 2000, Placetac Pty/Ltd received a planning permit for the development of a 150 room hotel. The circuit appeared to have a long and successful history ahead of it and fifty years after its inception the circuit layout was still regarded as one of the best in the world for drivers and spectators alike. It remained a credit to the years of volunteer efforts (in particular the enormous amount of energy and investment contributed by PIARC in its earlier eras), to the property improvements done by Len Lukey, the track works carried out by Barfield, and the event and property management established by Placetac that had seen its continual progression to the magnificent facility it was in 2004.

On 24 February, 2003, the following press release was issued by Placetac Pty.Ltd, as a start to the sixth era of Motor Racing at Phillip Island.

24 February 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SALE OF THE PHILLIP ISLAND GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT

Placetac Pty Ltd, the current owners of the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit have reached an agreement to sell the venue to Linfox Property Group Pty Ltd for an undisclosed figure. The sale is subject to the resolution of some formalities.

Placetac Pty Ltd have been the owners of the Circuit for the past twenty years and the proposed sale includes the Venue, Visitor Centre, approved Hotel Site and surrounding farmland.

The existing business and operation of the venue will be unaffected by the sale.

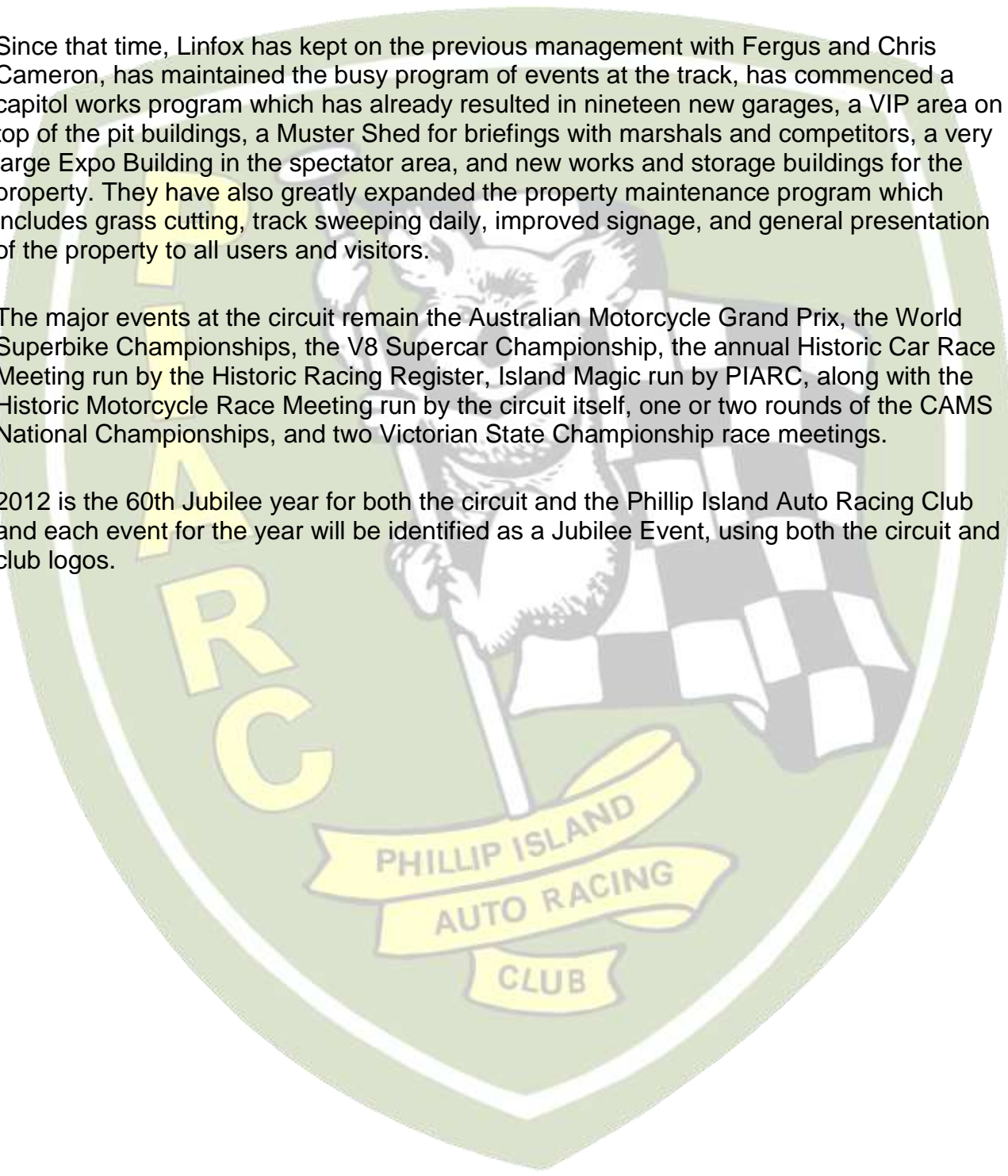
For further information, contact the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit on Ph. 03 5952 2710.

In 2006, Placetac Pty Ltd, the owners of the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit reached an agreement to sell the venue to Linfox Property Group Pty Ltd for an undisclosed figure. One of the first tasks Linfox took on was the construction of many gravel traps at the request of the FIM – the International Motorcycle Federation. These traps are designed to slow down motorcycles and cars that have left the circuit, particularly on corners, and ultimately stop them before they come in contact with the barriers.

Since that time, Linfox has kept on the previous management with Fergus and Chris Cameron, has maintained the busy program of events at the track, has commenced a capitol works program which has already resulted in nineteen new garages, a VIP area on top of the pit buildings, a Muster Shed for briefings with marshals and competitors, a very large Expo Building in the spectator area, and new works and storage buildings for the property. They have also greatly expanded the property maintenance program which includes grass cutting, track sweeping daily, improved signage, and general presentation of the property to all users and visitors.

The major events at the circuit remain the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, the World Superbike Championships, the V8 Supercar Championship, the annual Historic Car Race Meeting run by the Historic Racing Register, Island Magic run by PIARC, along with the Historic Motorcycle Race Meeting run by the circuit itself, one or two rounds of the CAMS National Championships, and two Victorian State Championship race meetings.

2012 is the 60th Jubilee year for both the circuit and the Phillip Island Auto Racing Club and each event for the year will be identified as a Jubilee Event, using both the circuit and club logos.



APPENDIX

The Phillip Island Auto Racing Club Ltd. – a summarised history of the Club & the Circuit

1952

Bernard Denham and Winston Maguire meet in a coffee lounge at Cowes to discuss the promotion of tourism on Phillip Island via the development of a race circuit.

1952

PIARC holds first formal meeting in Melbourne.

1952

PIARC buys the property at Phillip Island and starts planning - \$12500

1956

PIARC membership peaks at just over 3000.

1959

January, 1959 saw PIARC review its membership arrangements. The imposition of the levy two years earlier had caused a significant and lasting rift within the membership, with many original foundation members who did not pay the levy unable to access club facilities or feel a sense of identity with the success of the facility. PIARC proposed a reunification meeting at which original members would have their membership reinstated and members who did pay the levy would have their membership extended by two years.[55] Also the complexity of the levy system resulted in PIARC being unclear at this stage exactly how many members it did have, as circulars were still being sent to everyone.

1960

1960 saw the resignation from the committee of muffler giant Len Lukey. While ultimately he would purchase "The Island" circuit in the late 60's, 1960 saw Lukey have a conflict of interest that led to his resignation. Lukey was an entrepreneur with constant plans and vision which in many ways contributed to the very successful development of his business. Lukey also had a motorsport business and had planned a race meeting to be held at Phillip island with the highlight being the attendance of Jack Brabham. However, Lukey as a PIARC committee member felt aggrieved at the rental charge the PIARC committee wanted to apply for the meeting, so he subsequently resigned and ran the meeting in Albury. Unfortunately, with a relatively small crowd attending and the costs of relocating the meeting, expenses were high and the whole venture not only cost Lukey a considerable sum of money but also cost PIARC a committee member.

1962

Extensive track damage at the 1962 “Armstrong 500”. Club cannot afford repairs.

1964

Len Lukey buys the property from the club - \$40,000 - and agreed that PIARC should be responsible for all the race facilities & track, and conduct public events on four weekends each year.

1965

PIARC transforms into a Melbourne based car club, based at the Prince George theatre in Brighton.

1967

September – first public race meeting on re-opened track.

1967 to 1978

PIARC ran public motor races at the circuit and continued to develop and maintain the track using volunteer labour in the main.

After Len Lukey died in 1978 PIARC, lost use of the circuit because PIARC had been using the property under a verbal agreement for the last few years at Len’s insistence, and were not able to come to an agreement with the administrators of Lukey’s estate. Due to the Golden Jubilee meeting in 1978, PIARC was financial, had a solid membership, yet no “home facility”.

1978

At this stage there were tongue-in-cheek suggestions that instead of PIARC standing for Phillip Island Auto Racing Club it really stood for People Interested in Automobile Racing Club. Indeed, the next year would see PIARC vote on whether to retain the 'Phillip Island' part of their title as it no longer seemed applicable. Members decided that since the name played a large and valued role in the history of Australian motorsport then it should be retained.

Soon after leaving Phillip Island, PIARC Secretary of the Meeting, Peter Nelson, had discussions with Calder as there was an established date granted to Calder in the 1978 motorsport calendar, and PIARC had the events to run. An agreement was struck between Calder & PIARC, with Calder to provide the venue and promote the meeting, and PIARC to run the events on the track. PIARC was keen to run its traditional 500km touring car race. However, the standard 500km field was considered unsafe for Calder due to its tight short circuit. PIARC took the inventive strategy of conducting two race meetings

within one. A 250km race was held on the Saturday night (up to 2 litres) and was supported by the 1978 Formula Vee Nationals and a Sports Car Championship race. The larger capacity cars raced over 250km on the Sunday. While the meeting had relatively few incidents the overall spectator size was disastrous.

However, for PIARC that 1978 meeting was a turning point and was a key plank in the club's overall future and its ability to continue to run motorsport events. While the crowd size had been poor, the Calder management had been impressed with the organisational running of the race meeting and wanted PIARC to get more involved. The key issue that needed to be overcome for a long term relationship to be established between PIARC and Calder was their respective race organisation styles. PIARC at the time had a significant amount of credibility within the motorsport administration and a significant number of PIARC officials held senior motor racing positions around the country. From the very beginning, key senior people within PIARC including Russell Lanyon, John Lanyon, Max Morling and Peter Nelson had kept emphasising that events should be run with a professional attitude whether people were paid or not. Due to this historical culture and the now prominently placed officials within the motorsport administration, PIARC members were serious about organising race meetings by the rules, but with a flair towards entertainment for the spectators. This took discipline and dedication but paid off in a well-deserved reputation. According to one of the key players during this period, PIARC President Peter Nelson:

“our style was to aggressively control a race meeting up to the level we wanted, while their (Calder's) style was more to push the go button then cruise along, letting the race meeting just happen.”

Calder management soon recognised this and within two race meetings PIARC had an invitation from Calder to take over the running of their race meetings, under their control. This was to be an arrangement that would last over a decade.

1979

Also in the late 1970's following its loss of Phillip Island, PIARC in conjunction with four other car clubs in Melbourne created a State Race Series due to a lack of events for the average club-racers at the time. As part of the support for the State Series circuit owners would provide circuits at low rental as long as clubs did not promote the events to the public. PIARC, in addition to running events at Calder also ran one of these State Series races each year at Winton, before returning to The Island.

1980

Within two years of running meetings at Calder, PIARC Assisted Calder with the running of the 1980 Australian Grand Prix with international Formula One drivers - in two short years PIARC had gone from a club on the brink of disaster to running international meetings which took ultimately took many PIARC officials onto the Australian Grand Prix at Adelaide in 1985 and subsequently to Albert Park in 1996.

Peter Nelson was Secretary of the Meeting there with Geoff Bull as his Deputy, and Ken Smith and Henk Duncan were Clerks of the Course.

1982

Early 1982 saw the retirement of John Lanyon, who as President had led PIARC in both the low and high times throughout his record 21 years as President. The incoming President Henk Duncan had these words to say of John Lanyon - "Winston Maguire and John Pryce were the first two presidents and due to their work and leadership we saw the creation of PIARC and the circuit at Phillip Island. In 1961, John Lanyon took over to create the club as we know it now, with John's task starting off with having to rebuild the circuit. To do this he played the major role in building the club into the active, close knit band of members that we have today." John Lanyon had also tasted success in another area of motorsport during his presidency, having been Team Manager of the highly successful Ansett Elfin Formula 5000 team which dominated the Formula 5000 open wheeler era.

1984

Ownership of the circuit changed from the Lukey Estate to Placetac Pty.Ltd. and the circuit was used for grazing for a few years before returning to motorsport.

1985

The South Australian Government was awarded the rights to the Australian Grand prix as a round of the Formula 1 World Championship, and PIARC race officials were asked to take a leading role in the organization and conduct of that race meeting, and the subsequent rounds in Adelaide. Again, Peter Nelson was Secretary of the Meeting there with Geoff Bull as his Deputy, and Ken Smith and Henk Duncan were Clerks of the Course of the support events while Tim Schenken was to become the F1 Clerk of the Course. Other leading PIARC members involved in the first event in Adelaide were Peter & Anne Davis, Skip Taylor, Tony van den Dungen, Jose van den Dungen, Erik Rubens, Ken Johnston.

1989

April - Bob Barnard ran the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix at Phillip Island and

PIARC came to an agreement with Barnard to organise future car racing events at the track, for as long as Bob held the lease.

1990

PIARC officially remained at Calder, working both the race circuit and the Thunder dome NASCAR oval until 1990 when Bob Jane decided he would move away from CAMS and the established motor sport organisation. PIARC, was put in a difficult position and in reality had no choice but to discontinue its work at Calder. The PIARC stance was that CAMS was an organisation representing the sport as such, and that loyalty to that organisation and it's standards was critical to the continued well-being of the sport. Through luck in being in the right place, and also because of a developed skill in working

at this level of the sport internationally, PIARC officials were now in dominant positions at the Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix, the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, the World Superbike Championships, NASCAR oval track racing, as well as the national V8 Supercar races.

1990 ONWARDS

PIARC focused on working with PIMS at race meetings, or running their own events at the track, at running various speed events at Phillip Island and other circuits, at being a major part of the Australian F1 Grand Prix at Adelaide then at Albert Park, at assisting other circuits (such as Hidden valley in Darwin, the Adelaide Parklands circuit in South Australia, and at Sepang for the Malaysian Grand Prix) run their events by training their officials or guiding their organisations and by working on many and various CAMS committees, panels, and Commissions as a general contribution to the conduct of motorsport in Australia.

1991

Barnard loses lease at Phillip Island and owners of the property (Placetac P/L) set up "Phillip Island Motor Sports" (PIMS) to manage the property and run car events with assistance from PIARC and other organisations.

1996

The Australian F1 Grand prix move d to Albert Park and the team of senior officials, many from PIARC, moved with the event and are still active in their roles there.

2001

Over that period, PIARC has had a number of homes in the City of Melbourne, culminating in an ongoing arrangement in 2001 with PIARC and the Royal Victorian Aero Club sharing the RVAC facilities at the Moorabbin Airport.

2002

The year 2002 was the Golden Jubilee year for both the circuit and for PIARC with a consistent 600 members, PIARC has maintained a solid position in the sport, and a number of celebrations during this year again focused eyes on the club's history and achievements, and on the next fifty years of potential.

Members of the PIARC Board of Management during this 2002 Jubilee Year have been:

President	Peter Nelson
Vice President	Warren Reid
Vice President	Stuart Greig

Treasurer/Secretary Graeme Taylor

Minute Secretary Mario Napoleone

CAMS Delegate Darren Smith

Group 5 Representative Matt Balcombe

Board Members Ken Smith

Geoff Bull

Brian Williams

Dave Cook

Henk Duncan

Cameron van den Dungen

Richard McLean

Ross Earl

David Bellenger

2006

Placetac Pty Ltd, the 2006 owners of the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit reached an agreement to sell the venue to Linfox Property Group Pty Ltd for an undisclosed figure.

The club remains as strong as ever, and the race official role for many has expanded and the club has now been strongly represented in CAMS teams working at international race meetings in Indonesia, Malaysia, Bahrain, Singapore, and Korea. In each case it has been a training and guidance role and in most cases we have started as the senior officials then retracted to mentor roles over a year or two. It is now a source of satisfaction to us that officials from any of these circuits could now come to Phillip Island and work at our race meetings with no complications because the organization structure is now the same at all these circuits.

2012

2012 is the Diamond Jubilee of both club and circuit.

After 16 years in the chair, President Peter Nelson stepped back and his replacement was Matt Balcombe, one of the next generation to take on this role with full support from the committee, who were as follows for the Jubilee year.

President Matt Balcombe

Vice President Geoff Bull

Secretary Peter Nelson

Treasurer Graeme Taylor

CAMS Delegate Matt Balcombe

Board Members Warren Reid

Brian Williams

Ross Earl

David Bellenger

Jean Bellenger

Mark Scorah

Andy Dobbyn

2015

After 16 years in the chair, President Peter Nelson stepped back and his replacement was Matt Balcombe, one of the next generation to take on this role with full support from the committee, who were as follows for the Jubilee year. After two years, Matt also stepped aside and Geoff Bull assumed the role of President.

President Geoff Bull

Vice President Mark Scorah

Secretary Peter Nelson

Treasurer Graeme Taylor

Club Captain Michael Johnston



CAMS Delegate

Nick Scarcella

Board Members

Warren Reid

Brian Williams

Ross Earl

David Bellenger

Jean Bellenger

Mark Scorah

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