



Rae Fidock

Interview Transcript 5 February 2017

Oral History Project
Reliving the past: Stories from our communities

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Interviewee: Rae Fidock
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Minore Speedway

In this interview Mrs Rae Fidock talks about her experiences building and running the Minore Speedway with her husband at their family farm “The Retreat”, near Dubbo. Mrs Fidock also talks about her memories of seeing Queen Elizabeth II when she visited Dubbo in February 1954, and again in February 1992.

This recording created on the 5th February 2017 is part of Macquarie Regional Library's oral history project 'Reliving the past: stories from our communities.' Each recording contributes to the developing story of life in the Dubbo area.

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[0:00:32] Interviewer (I): Thank you for your time today, Rae. For the benefit of our recording, could you please state your full name?

Subject (S): Hello. My name is Rae Alison Fidock, and my maiden name was Rae Alison Fox-Ashwin, and I live at 8L Dungary Road, Dubbo, New South Wales.

[0:00:50] (I): Where were you born at, and who were your parents?

(S): I was born at Narrandera, New South Wales, in January, 1944. My parents were Kent Fox-Ashwin and Dorothy May Fox-Ashwin (nee Ford). My father was doing his training there in the Air Force at Narrandera.

[0:01:08] (I): And where did you go to school at?

(S): I was schooled at the - home schooled at the Fox-Ashwin family property 'Millridge' near Tottenham in New South Wales as a child. I started school when I was six. The lessons used to come in the mail from the Black Friars Correspondence School, in Sydney, and Mum would supervise my lessons, and then post them back. I went to school in Tottenham for 6th Class, as they had finally got a bus run near our property, which was 22 miles from Tottenham. We still had to drive 6 miles to catch the bus, and Mum had to learn to drive to get me there. There was my brother Ron, and cousins David and Judy as well. Then I went to boarding school in Orange at the Presbyterian Ladies College for three years to get my Intermediate Certificate. There was no high school at Tottenham at that time. The year just after I left school I did a correspondence course in typing and book keeping. This helped me to get my first job.

[0:02:10] (I): And where was your first job?

(S): I worked as an office girl at Bertram's Garage in Tottenham. I worked for Mr Bill and Mrs Bessie Bertram. They had a Holden car dealership, a Chamberlain

tractor dealership, a BP fuel depot, and a real estate business. I was a bit of a girl Friday, really. I used to work in the office, type up all the accounts for the garage and BP Fuel depot, and post them out each month. Also I used to serve petrol, prepare and shine up the new Holden cars ready for delivery, serve in the spare parts section if I knew the parts the customer wanted. I also used to drive the customers' cars up and down to the Tottenham Bowling Club, so customers could leave their cars for servicing, while they played bowls for the day. Sometimes I helped out at clearing sales, doing the pencilling, which is taking records of people who buy things at auction sales, using a large number card, purchased prior to the sale. Mr Bertram was also an auctioneer. When I had been there only 6 months, Mr and Mrs Bertram paid me adult wages, because they said I was earning them. 11 pounds 2 shillings a week. That was quite a lot of money, then! I used to consider myself very privileged. Mrs Bertram used to let me drive the business Holden car to the bank, to the railway station to collect parcels, even drive the car home for lunch on hot days. I used to collect the cash from the bank, and make up the employees' pay packets. We had 6 people on staff - 2 mechanics, a spare parts manager, my uncle Noel Ford, who delivered the fuel BP out to the farms, and a young chap who worked in the real estate agent, and me. I had only just turned 17, and I was very, very honoured by their trust in me (laughs).

[0:04:14] (I): It sounds like you had lots of varied duties in that position.

(S): Oh, I certainly did, and I loved it, I really loved it. I boarded with my grandmother in Tottenham, and used to walk to work every day. It was just up the hill, and round the corner. It all worked out very well.

[0:04:30] (I): That's great. So where did you meet your future husband, Ross Fidock?

(S): Well, I first met Ross Fidock the night I made my debut at the Scottish Ball in Tottenham in April 1960, but didn't start dating him from about 6 months later. He asked me for several dances on the night of the ball, though, and we were married in Tottenham on 26th May 1962.

[0:04:56] (I): When did you first come to Dubbo?

(S): The first time I remember was for the Queen's visit in 1954.

[0:05:04] (I): How old were you?

(S): 10 years old.

[0:05:08] (I): And how did you get to Dubbo?

(S): My Dad drove us to Dubbo in the family car, which was a green 1948 model Chevrolet. My grandmother Thelma Fox-Ashwin came with us. She was a widow by then. Da Fox-Ashwin, my grandfather, died in May 1950, and Nanna had never learnt to drive. Nanna had been invited to join a group of Country Women's Association members from the area to welcome the Queen. She was a foundation member of the CWA in Tottenham.

[0:05:40] (I): Where were you situated when you seen the Queen in Dubbo?

(S): Well, when we got there, Dad went and found out where the CWA ladies were sitting along the walkway in Victoria Park, where the Queen was going to walk to the War Memorial. Nanna had a seat in the very front row. We were standing behind her, where she was sitting. Just as the Queen was starting to come along, Nanna beckoned for me to come and sit on her knee. Several of the other ladies had their grandchildren, too.

[0:06:10] (I): How did you feel when you seen the Queen?

(S): Oh, I was just so excited! I could have reached out and touched the Queen. I had always loved the Royal family, and kept scrapbooks of them ever since I was about five.

[0:06:24] (I): Could you hear her speech on the dais from where you were sitting?

(S): Yes, I could hear her speaking. The loud speakers in those days weren't as clear as they are today, of course, but I could still hear her, yes.

[0:06:36] (I): Did you see Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip when they visited Dubbo on Friday, 21st February 1992?

(S): Yes, I saw them then, too.

[0:06:45] (I): Where did you see them at?

(S): Well, I did a large country mail run for Australia Post at that time, and my route took me right to the edge of the Airport. I left early that day to make sure I could call in at the Airport and catch a glimpse of the Queen and Prince Philip there. There was a large crowd, and it was difficult to see very well. But I managed to squeeze through to the second or third row, and take several photos. The official party greeting the Queen and Prince Philip that day were Gerry Peacocke, Michael Cobb and his wife, and Dubbo Mayor Mr Tony McGrane.

[0:07:21] (I): That would have been a wonderful experience as well.

(S): It was, yes (laughs). Yes, I wouldn't have missed that for the world.

[0:07:29] (I): And I can see in this photo that you took, that you could see Prince Philip saying goodbye to the Mayor, Tony McGrane, and shaking his hand.



Prince Phillip shaking hands with the Mayor of Dubbo, Tony McGrane.

(S): Yes, yes, that's right. I'm amazed how, how good they've come up now you've copied them. I can see them much better than in the original.

[0:07:44] (I): So when did you move to live in Dubbo? Or near Dubbo? (both laugh)

(S): Well, after we were married in May 1962, Ross and I farmed the Fidock property 'Wilga Plains,' near Tullamore in New South Wales. We live there for 18 months, and the property there was owned by his parents, Allan and Rosalie Fidock. Then we moved to 'The Retreat' near Dubbo in late 1963, and Ross's parents and their children moved back to 'Wilga Plains.' 'The Retreat' was a 1,500 acre property, with a big old weatherboard house, built on the banks of the Lagoon Creek, which ran through the property. It was situated 9 miles west of Dubbo on the Minore Road, just past the Minore Railway Siding and wheat silos. 'The Retreat' had originally been bought by the Fidock family in Ross's name because they couldn't hold any more property in their name, and it was bought when we were engaged in the early '60s, from an elderly gentleman called Mr Bill Paine, so that Ross's parents could live there, and send their four youngest children to school in Dubbo. In 1964 Ross's young brothers Lawrence and Bruce Fidock boarded with us, and went to school in Dubbo on the school bus.

On the property Ross and I grew wheat, and ran sheep, and pigs at 'The Retreat,' and then we had two children. You, Helen, were born in 1965, and Allan born in 1968.

[0:09:21] (I): Why did you and Ross decide to build a speedway?

(S): Well, after about 1970, we'd had several years of droughts, and a very late frost had sadly diminished our income off our 1,500 acre farm, and we thought that another business - we were thinking about another business we could start up to help with our income. Ross had always been an incredible driver. Lightning fast reflexes and natural ability, which he developed when he was growing up chasing kangaroos on the family property 'Wilga Plains' at Tullamore. Also on neighbouring properties at Tullamore, his Uncle Harold's property at Nyngan, and then on my Dad's property 'Millridge' at Tottenham.

We did a lot of research into the possibility of a speedway complex. We visited Liverpool Speedway two or three times, looking for advice on how to start a speedway at Minore. Mike Raymond, who was the promoter of Liverpool

Speedway, was very helpful. Also the owner of the complex, and former Mayor of Liverpool, Frank Oliveri, was very helpful. The Liverpool Speedway opened in May 1967.

The nights at speedway at Liverpool's quarter mile clay and dolomite surface track under lights were magic.

We also went to Canberra Speedway, and enjoyed the spectacle of fast motor bikes on Speedway there. It was very exciting watching these fast speedway bikes in full slide on a good dirt circuit, under night lights.

We went to meetings at Morris Park here on the Obley Road out of Dubbo. This was a short circuit track in those days, not speedway, and they raced bikes, and a couple of classes of small cars, including the TQs.

We had been travelling to the Bathurst Mount Panorama car races for several years. After we got married, we used to go on our Thunderbird 650 motorbike. It was great, as we could move around all the good vantage spots throughout the day. You couldn't do that in a car!

The speedway cars which interested us the most were the Production Sedans. Normal street cars with the safety modifications required to race. They had a good substantial roll cage, and the fuel tank was removed, and a small external tank was mounted on the outside. They had to be fitted with racing harness, and drivers had to wear overalls, if they didn't have a proper driving suit. These cars belonged to the A.S.C.F. - the Australian Saloon Car Federation. We liked their rules and regulations, and decided this was the way to go for our track.

After all this looking around, we said well, there's still no speedway track in the whole area, and we decided that was the way to go.

It took us probably about six months to measure up the track, and start to build the track to the same measurements as Liverpool Speedway. Then we had to apply for a license to run the track.

We decided on the best place for it on the property, and when we measured it up, it only just fitted between the gravely tree-studded rise at the top of the

site, the woolshed, and the Lagoon Creek at the bottom side. The old pig pens had to be cleared away, and these became the Pit area, and then we had to - find room for a loading ramp.

It had to good solid gravelly access. Minore country was famous for bogging when it was wet. It had to be well drained, and separate to our farm entrance. It had have easy access to the dam for watering the track during racing to stop the dust, and a loading ramp for unloading cars off trucks when they were coming to race.

There was a seepage on the eastern side of the proposed area for the track, which we had to dig out with a backhoe, and fill it up with lots of rocks, and then good gravel. There's a photo of Ross and you children that I will show you.



Ross Fidock with his two children, and two other men, filling seepage on the edge of the speedway track, 1972.

[0:13:38] (I): Uh-hm.

(S): And over this time we started looking around for equipment we would need. We bought an old vintage green grader from a property on the river near Tullamore, and then we had to get it home! My brother-in-law Alan Ingram hooked on to the front of it with his truck and a big chain. It was my job to steer

it to Narromine. Ross said, "O.K. now take it home!" and he drove off in our Holden ute.

I have never forgotten that trip. Alan Ingram had grown up in Dubbo, and didn't have much experience in towing vehicles. It was terrifying coming up to the bridges and causeways on the road. He never seemed to ease off the speed at all! I just lined the poor old dinosaur up with the middle of the track, shut my eyes and hoped for the best! Thank goodness there was virtually no traffic on the road that day, and I am still here! (both laugh)

When we got back to Narromine, Ross was there in the ute. He had found a back way to get back to Minore with the grader, so he and Allan took it from there, and I took the ute home. And we built the quarter mile track, shaped as a 'D', which was 50 feet wide, and it had a straight of about 100 yards. And the bulk of this work was done with the old grader.

We bought a large number of ammunition boxes which we used for crowd seating in the early days. We placed them under the shade of the trees along the ridge in the spectator area on the south side of the track. We also had railway sleepers for seating.

We had to build toilet blocks with cement floors, a control tower, and organise a kiosk building.

We also had to build a safety fence. Luckily the railway had renewed the section of the line along from Minore Siding, and we were able to buy the old sleepers. We made the safety fence from these sleepers, firmly bolted on to railway sleeper posts dug very deep in the ground. We pushed a lot of dirt up at the back of the fence too, to give it more strength.

[0:15:50] (I): It sounded like there was a lot of work involved in that process.

(S): Yes, My word. Big job (laughs).

[0:15:57] (I): So when did the speedway open?

(S): The Western Speedway opened on the 30th April in 1972. A meeting was held of interested drivers some time prior to the opening of the Speedway, and

the Minore Speedway Club was formed, to help run the speedway meetings. Steve Cross was elected the first President of the Club, and I was the first Secretary, and Ian McPherson from Narromine was the first Treasurer.

We held the opening meeting of the Western Speedway at Minore on the 30th April, 1972. It was often called the Minore Speedway, but the track was registered as the Western Speedway. The racing that day started at 12 noon, and there was \$200 in prize money on offer. About 30 cars from Gunnedah, Parkes, Forbes, Wellington, Narromine and Dubbo took part in the 20 event program. There was plenty of thrills in front of the crowd, and in one race Johnny Web rolled over twice at 50 miles an hour, and luckily walked away without a scratch! (laughs)

The Western Speedway Programme for the 30th April 1972 recorded that Ralph Mann was the Chief Steward, Ted Holsgrove and Garry Taylor were the Flag Marshalls, Steve Cross, Pat Tinson and Toby Daniels were the Pit Gate Marshalls, Ross Allen was the Commentator, and Richard Kirby was the Time Keeper. Kirkby's Jewellers had a big lovely jewellery store in Dubbo at the time.

We were joined by several drivers from Gunnedah at the opening meeting. They were in the process of opening a speedway there too. Barry and Gail Holden were the promoters or owners. Barry Holden, Barry Lawritzen and several other drivers often came to our meetings.

It was a massive job organising everything, and making sure the day ran smoothly. Things like someone to run the kiosk, people to man the entrance gate and collect the money, working out a program for the day's racing, what kind of cars would we get for the opening meeting, how would we divide them into various classes which would give everyone a fair go.

We ran a couple of practice days leading up to the opening, to iron out some of the problems. For example, flagmen had to be found and learn the meaning of the different coloured flags. Flag marshalls who knew the race rules, and who could deal out appropriate penalties when required, and keep the drivers in line.

And Ross Fidock had to learn the tricks of watering the track and keeping the dust down, without making the track slippery and dangerous. Then he had to learn how to water and grade the track after each meeting using the old green grader, roll it, mostly using our neighbour Vince Bloink's truck, which I think had bogey wheels on the back, and get it all prepared for the next meeting. Ross usually drove the water truck. He had the best knowledge of where to put the most water on the track in between races, having built the track from scratch. As the promoter and owner of the speedway, and also the licence holder, he had many responsibilities.

We decided to use the flag colour system of the Production Sedans at Liverpool Speedway. CAMS and some other racing organisations, had a different flag colour system.¹ I made the flags on the sewing machine, and Ross attached them to the flag sticks. They were quite big. The checkered one was the hardest. I had to cut black and white squares and sew them all together.

We found that Mr Albert Palm had a PA system he hired out. Albert was great! He used to bring his P.A. out, and he would help with lap scoring, or any way he could. His daughter Kerry used to come and help out too. And she often helped me with the lap scoring up in the tower.

We inquired about a commentator for the opening meeting, and someone suggested Ross Allen, a school teacher from Merrygoen. He was just magic at behind the microphone, and really brought the scene on meeting days to life. He already had a keen interest and knowledge of speedway racing. I think his father used to race, possibly at Newcastle.

[0:20:27] (I): Do you have any details about the numbers of cars and club members for the Speedway's first year of operation?

(S): Yes, I did a little bit of research, and I discovered that the Western Speedway opened with only 13 racing cars on the 30th April 1972. We had six Production sedans, and seven Super modifieds. Super modifieds had up to

¹ Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS).

100% power increase over the normal production sedans. Then, as we look into it a little bit further, we discovered that by December 1972 Minore Speedway Club had 73 Production Sedans, and 55 Super modifieds racing. And also the Minore Speedway Club which raced at the Western Speedway had only 30 members when the speedway opened on the 30th April 1972, and by December 1972 it had 230 members. I know it grew on in the next year to well over 250 members and over 100 racing machines. So it was a very, (laughs), a very quick increase. The fellows were really keen, and raring to go!

[0:21:38] (I): That's a lot of cars, and a lot of drivers.

(S): Yes, and a lot of - problems when you come to make up programs for all those cars to race together fairly too (laughs).

[0:21:51] (I): So what was your role in the running of the Western Speedway at Minore?

(S): Well, I had many roles really. As I said, I was the first Secretary of the Minore Speedway Club, and I had to send out the agendas, and nomination forms for each meeting. And then I had to do up the prize money cheques from the previous meetings, and they were written out by me, and also sent out in these letters. As Secretary, I wrote up the minutes of the committee meetings, and helped organise the programmes for the next meeting. Drawing up the programs was done by a special committee which I was a member of. Committee Meetings were mostly held at the Westside Hotel.

Ernie Coffee, who was a barman at the Westside Hotel, was one of the drivers. Ernie was known as, "the fastest barman in the West!" The song *Ernie (The fastest milkman in the West)* was very popular at that time. Ernie drove car number 77 which was sponsored by the Westside Hotel. Ernie and his car were very popular.

Mr Joe Kek senior and junior were the licensees of the Westside. They used to put on free sandwiches and platter food for us after the meetings. Also a band for music. It was a great night out. The Westside was really the race drivers'

hotel. Sometimes Trevor Kelly who used to drive a Mercedes Benz for Vince Bloink Tractor Wreckers, used to sing several songs.

Vince Bloink took over from Steve Cross as President in about 1972.

[0:23:22] (I): Was that about in July, I think you mentioned before?

(S): Yes, about July 1972, as best I can remember.

Then later on, Ron Short took over as Club President, and Lloyd Oldfield as Vice President. Ron and Lloyd are listed in these positions in the Dubbo Dispatch newspaper in August, 1974.

It was one of my jobs to organise the trophies to present to the winners of each event at the meetings. These had to be chosen and engraved with sponsors' names on them. We were very lucky, there were some very nice racing car trophies available at the time. The Dubbo Swiss Watch Centre was very good, and always had a good range. And also several shops which came and went in Dubbo over the years. We had some really wonderful sponsors at the Speedway, who stayed with us over many years. We couldn't pay a lot of prize money, but the lovely trophies and donated prize money really helped us make the Speedway what it was.

Some of our good sponsors I have been trying to think of were Mr Limon at the Dubbo Swiss Watch Centre, Kirkby's Jewellers, Bloomfield Auto Wreckers, Mal Furney Earth Moving, Sid Bruce Radiator Repairs, the Westside Hotel, Vince MacDonald, and Russell Brain's Mobil Depot, who we were very grateful for, used to supply us with the use of fire extinguishers for the day which were mandatory. And Orbell's Drinks were another good sponsor. We used to buy our drinks off them for the Speedway kiosk as well, and that's just a few that, that have sort of, sort of come to mind.

Yes, many, many Dubbo businesses were very generous with their sponsorship at the Speedway. Either with money or trophies. I think the drivers used to like the trophies. Mostly they could take the trophies and get their names engraved on them after the meetings.

We had a printed program for each meeting. I would type up the programs on a special stencil paper, and we would print them on an old gestetner printing machine. Messy ink would get all over your fingers.

As Club Secretary, I would be very busy in the Pits prior to the start of racing, checking all the drivers paperwork was in order for the day.

During the meetings, I would be lap scoring up in the control tower. And Ross and I would also take photos during the speedway meetings, because we had to write up articles to go in the Daily Liberal. I also in the early years, I wrote up a news column called the "Carby Capers," which was printed in the Dubbo Dispatch News Pictorial.

I also assisted Ross in preparation of the track and site for each meeting - cleaning and emptying the toilets, very often. I helped Ross roll the track down after it was graded after each meeting. Ross was the only one who knew how to work the grader. We used Vince Bloink's bogey wheel truck and drove around and around the track, and this did a very good job of rolling the track.

I was also Vice President of the Minore Western Speedway Social Club, which was formed in early 1974, and described by Club President, Maureen Oldfield, as a "club run by the ladies, for the ladies", the wives and girlfriends of the men who drive the speedway cars. Some of the women raced cars as well, either in the ladies race, and a few drove in the races with the men.

Norma Webb was one lady that I remember very distinctly. The Western Speedway hosted the First Australian Ladies Speedway Championship on the 27th October 1974. It was run over 40 laps of the track.

[0:27:07] (I): That sounds like a very long race for the ladies.

(S): There was some very good drivers there and it was a very spectacular event, actually.

[0:27:18] (I): What can you tell me about this aeroplane with 'Western Speedway Dubbo' painted on the side of it, that is parked on the speedway track in front of the safety fence, in this photograph?



Auster aeroplane in front of safety fence.

(S): Well, Ross and I bought this 1944 Mark 5 Auster aeroplane in 1968. Our son Allan was only a baby. Ross had always wanted to learn to fly, and had just finished getting his pilot's licence. We loved to visit our families at Tullamore and Tottenham, and it was a quick and easy way to do this. Each of our parents put in airstrips on the property, and it was only a very short trip, perhaps 30 minutes or so, and we were there.

Ross and his friend Don Hignet from Trangie decided to enter in an air race in July 1973. The race went from Sydney Bankstown Airport, to Coffs Harbour and back to Dubbo. They were one of the oldest planes in the race. Ross decided to get the plane repainted white. It was originally blue and yellow. He got the 'Western Speedway Dubbo' sign written on it, and used it as advertising for the Speedway.

[0:28:29] (I): This photograph shows very well the railway sleepers that used to make up the original fence, and also the tower. I can see that there are also some lights there.

(S): Yes. This was obviously prior to the starting of lighting on the track, yes.

[0:28:44] (I): So when was the safety fence re-enforced with cement, and the lights installed for night racing?

(S): Well, the four inch coating on the fence we did probably coming up to the start of night racing under lights. The first night under lights took place on Saturday night, the 17th November, 1973. The lights were 1,500 watt quartz iodine lights, and they were run by a large generator which was powered by an International tractor.

The lighting wasn't perfect, and we thought a small white wall would be easier for the drivers to see. Also the cars were becoming heavier, and more modern and faster machines, and we worried about the strength of the old sleepers.

Ross, myself and one man helped us, making up the boxing and poured the cement for that fence ourselves. We had a very large cement mixer on the back of the truck, and the chute from the cement mixer used to funnel the cement directly down into the boxing. Then the man who was helping us, used to ram the cement down, and make sure it was tightly packed.

[0:29:55] (I): That would have been a very big cementing job.

(S): That was a massive cementing job, yes (laughs). Broke all our backs, I think.

[0:30:02] (I): So what type of cars were raced at the Minore Speedway? And when did they start racing the Fender Benders?

(S): Well, I am not sure when the Fender Benders started up. I just can't quite remember that. I know we used to have a Demolition Derby when I was there. Cars would drive around, and try to take all the other cars on the track out! Spear them into the fence. Roll them over. Whatever! And the last one going was the winner!

We had all kinds of cars racing out there. The most popular would have been the FB and FC Holdens, at the time. Mostly sedans, but some utes, and even station wagons, with Merv Hargraves from Narromine, and Glen Carolan from Dubbo, used to race these wagons very successfully. These Holdens, along with Ford Zephyrs, Falcons, etcetera were the easiest and cheapest cars to get hold of, to convert to racing machines.

Gary Roberts raced a big blue Ford Customline ute for several years. People used to love seeing him coming around the Speedway corners in full slide, with dirt going everywhere! Perfectly controlled. He was a master behind the wheel. Then Henry Jones and several others started racing Holden Toranas. These went very well on the track. I think Henry Jones came with his new Torana at the beginning of 1973 racing season. He took the number 1 after winning the Western Speedway Championship at the end of 1972.

George Cole and Rocket Rod Johnston used to race Minis. They used to go like the clappers, the little Minis. So compact and front wheel drive. They were almost unbeatable. And then soon other Minis used to come along too.

Vince Bloink Tractor Wreckers even raced a Mercedes Benz, which Trevor Kelly used to drive. Trevor was a big guy with a heavy foot, and he used to give it heaps!

Milton Spencer also used to race a Peugeot car for Vince. And he rolled the poor thing several times!

Bruce Johnson raced his home built racing machine for several years. So all in all, there was many different kinds of cars.

[0:32:14] (I): So this photograph of a Torana and a ute, with Torana No. 1 and Ute 31 would have been Henry Jones and Gary Roberts in about 1973?



Henry Jones No 1 Torana, and Gary Roberts No. 31 ute, ca. 1973.

(S): That's right, I would say, yes. They were both excellent drivers, and had a lot of – a lot of spats between each other, (laughs), over the course of the meetings. Yes.

[0:32:33] So how long did the Minore Speedway run for?

(S): Well, I think it was about twenty years. In later years the Club was called the Dubbo City Speedway Club, and the Speedway was called Dubbo City Speedway.

My association - - -. I am just going to say here, Ross and I applied to change the name of it to Dubbo City Speedway, I think it was after we were granted permission to hold the First Australian Ladies Title in October 1974, and that was a great success, and we thought well we've sort of really become of age here, so I think we might decide to go for an upgrade, and applied to call it Dubbo City Speedway.

My association with the Minore Speedway ended after seven and a half years, when Ross Fidock and I separated in January 1980.

Ross continued to run the Speedway with the assistance of the Club until the late 1980s, when he put the property on the market. I understand there was about three years during this time when the Speedway was closed. By popular demand, I think they got it going again, and it restarted, I believe, on Saturday 27th November 1982.

Later, the property was sold to Dennis Lodge, and Dennis Lodge and Grant Gilholme, who were both drivers with a long association with the Speedway, were the promoters of it for a few more years in the early 1990s.

The property 'The Retreat' was again re-sold, and the Speedway dismantled by the new owners. And that was the end of the Minore Western Speedway, or the Dubbo City Speedway, after about 20 years, I think.

After this, Morris Park made some major changes, and put in a speedway track, and now it is home to the Dubbo City Speedway Club.

[0:34:27] Thank you, Rae, for talking with me today about the Western Speedway at Minore.

(S): Oh, it's been a pleasure, Helen (laughs). I've really enjoyed it, and looking back into the scrapbooks and the old paper clippings and things I've got here, has been a real trip down memory lane for me again.

[0:34:45] (I): That's great.

(S): I wrote a poem about the speedway in 1972, not long after it opened. Would you like me to read it with you, to share it with you?

[0:34:55] (I): Yes, please do.

(S): OK, it's called *The Bull Ring*

We've opened our Speedway out in the west,

Our drivers here will match the best.

We've Jones, Roberts, Kelly and Webb; Mucko, Morley McCreath,

And the game galah in the iron birdcage who always goes underneath.

There's rolls and spins, and numerous knocks,
And some flat chat bids by the super stocks
Still they keep on picking that fence – you'd think by now they'd have some
sense,
Panels crumple against that wall, and then “The Tow Truck” is on call.

A gasp from the crowd on the hill,
“He's over!” and then all is still.
His chance of survival must be nil,
And then a miracle – out climbs Bill!

The Ambulance driver watches in awe – thinking of all the bits galore,
No, perhaps enough's been said – just wondering if he'll need his bed.

Occasionally a wheel will fly,
Up into the air so high.
When it drops down from the sky,
Poor Fido heaves a heavy sigh.

The piddlers keep a check on the dust,
For safety sake, this is a must.
Hope to heaven the tank don't bust,
The bloomin' thing is riddled with rust.

The girls they go in Indian file,
Round and round the quarter mile.
You wrote it off – well that's your style,
But he'll see red for quite a while!

Poor Garry T. cops much abuse,
From fellows when their tongues let loose.

What a mob to keep in line,
Cool it fellows – you'll get a fine!

Eric waves the green and blue,
And the black one only when it's due.
Vincy Bloink he takes the start,
And then for cover has to dart!

Then Ross on the P.A. closes the day,
He's called the races all the way.
Then away to the Westside to start the night,
To drink and boast, and flirt, and skate.

Line Fido up with that blonde over there,
And get the bastard off the air!

Well, the drivers used to think Ross Fidock talked too long at the Westside Hotel after the meetings. We used to present the trophies there that night which drivers had won at the meeting that day. They wanted to get on with it! Get it all over with, and get on having fun and enjoy their beers (laughs).

This was written by me in 1972, Rae Fidock, and I've got a little footnote here just to explain some of the things there in the poem.

“Mucko” was John Mucklestone - he drove a Ford V8 for Frank Usback Motors. The “game galah in the iron birdcage” was Bruce Johnson. His machine was a home built machine, very square, and resembling a bird cage. ‘Garry T.’ was Garry Taylor, the Chief Steward. ‘Eric the flagman’ was Eric Morris. ‘Ross on the P.A.’ was Ross Allen, a school teacher from Merrygoen. His father had been involved in speedway over on the coast, and Ross Allen was a fantastic commentator. He knew so much about the speedway game. ‘Bill’ McCreath rolled his cars several times during the course of the speedway history. Other

mentioned were Henry Jones, Gary Roberts, Trevor Kelly, Johnny Webb, John Mucklestone, and David Morley.

Just a little thing here the water truck lost a wheel on the opening day as well!

[0:38:32] (I): That would have been a sight to see.

(S): Yes (laughs). A bit hairy! I'm glad Ross was driving and not me! (both laugh)

[0:38:40] Well, thank you very much again, Rae, for your time today.

(S): It's been a pleasure, Helen. We've had a great little chat, and I've really enjoyed - - -. It's been a real trip down memory lane as I said, for me! I've been trying to think of all the drivers and the cars, and bringing things back to memory. I'm going to write up a database if I can, of all the drivers, the cars, and their car numbers, so that I can remember, that used to race out there, and maybe we might put a Facebook page or something on the Internet and see if we can get some feedback from some of the old drivers that are still out there in the community.

[0:39:13] (I): It sounds like a great project. You might get some photos from them as well.

(S): We never know, do we (laughs).

[0:39:19] (I): Thank you again, Rae.

(S): Thank you.

This interview was conducted by Helen Thompson with her mother Rae Fiddock, for Macquarie Regional Library's Oral History Project.