

Bruce Gowans



Bruce with the HRCCT Patron, and the Celica Sports Sedan Restoration project.

Bruce Gowans is often referred to as one of the most successful drivers - who raced purely as a hobby – to come out of Tasmania. Known as ‘Motorsport’s Gentleman Driver’, Gowans started racing in 1967 when he bought a old Triumph Hilman built by Lex and David Sternberg and raced it from pole in his first outing.

Six months later, Alan Ling – who was later to become Gowans’ business partner – approached him about driving a Lotus 23 (the first Lotus 23 to arrive in Australia and now owned by Wayne Clarke); which happened to be the ex-Pete Geoghegan/Greg Cusack car. Over the next three years, Gowans and the Lotus won the Tasmanian Sports Car Championship and a successful partnership was formed. At the same time, Gowans and Ling went into business together opening a Toyota Dealership in Devonport. This was always the priority for Gowans, with racing as a much loved hobby.

In 1970 Gowans and Ling purchased the ex-Glyn Scott Lotus 23B FVA, the last Lotus 23B to arrive in Australia, and raced this for the next three years across Australia. They held lap records for the under 1600cc category at Adelaide, Calder, Philip Island, Baskerville and Symmons Plains. In what Gowans describes as a racing career highlight, he also ran third in a heat of the Australian Sports Car Championships at Symmons Plains behind John Harvey’s McLaren M6 Repco and Phil Moore’s Elfin 360 Repco V8.

The Lotus was sold in 1973 and Gowans took a few years away from racing, returning in 1977 in a John McCormack built Celica Repco V8 Sports Sedan. This car ran successfully in the ‘78 Sports Sedan Series coming third behind Alan Grice and Jim Richards. That same year, Gowans drove the Roadways Gown/Hindaugh A9X Torana on two occasions; once in a touring car round at Calder achieving seventh place and also co-driving with Garth Wigston in the Rothmans 500 at Oran Park, where they finished second. Unfortunately, the politics of motorsport prevented Gowans from fulfilling his racing dream of driving at Bathurst that year as had been planned.

Gowans continued to race the Celica Sports Sedan successfully until he sold it in 1981. Interestingly, Gowans purchased the car again in October 2008 as a restoration project.

Known as a quick, smooth driver, Gowans enjoyed success in a sport he loved that was simply a weekend hobby for him. Bruce Gowans is still involved in motorsport today through his son Adam’s participation and success in Aussie Racing Cars.