



Tom Lane leads in his self-built W125 Mercedes Replica.

STORY BARRY GREEN
PHOTOS ROSS JOHNSON
& ALLAN CARSELDINE

SMILES PER HOUR

GOLDEN ERA AUTO RACING – MOTOR SPORT WHERE FUN FINISHES FIRST

LAKESIDE PARK, KURWONGBAH, on Brisbane's northern outskirts. A horde of classic race cars circulate this historic, 2.4km racing circuit at speed. Jaguar, Ferrari, MG, Porsche and Alfa Romeo all present and correct, sunlight glinting off their highly-polished panels, the rise and fall of sonorous engine notes plotting their course.

It could be a time in Lakeside's chequered history when world champions Jack Brabham, John Surtees, Jim Clark, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart attracted crowds in the tens of thousands, but today the grassy spectator mounds are empty. Today, it's not about the power and the glory, but all about grassroots motor sport enthusiasts and their cars.

Welcome to a monthly drive day that alternates between Lakeside Park and Queensland Raceway. It's conducted by GEAR (Golden Era Auto Racing) Inc., where the onus is on members enjoying

their old racing and sports cars in a "safe, affordable, regulated and social motor sport environment".

One such member is John Goss. Not the dual (1974 and 1985) Bathurst 1000 and 1976 Australian Grand Prix winner, but keen driving buff and former State

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Member for Aspley from 1989 to 2001. He takes up the story ...

"The day is not racing in the traditional form but driving at a speed that feels comfortable to the individual competitor. Some drivers race the clock (using) set timing devices. There are quite a number of senior drivers. (Some are) people who have retired and found that lawn bowls, fishing, etc are not to their liking.

"Cars are classified into four groups: slow tin tops, fast tin tops, slow racing and sports racing cars and fast racing and sports racing cars. Each group has its own time on the track, with each car being released a few seconds apart and in any order.

"I first drove at Lakeside in a Holden back in 1966-67 and have been driving there for a number of years at GEAR meetings. On the 1st of January, I turned 75 and I seem to be driving well, but I always ask other drivers if they have any



Ken Nothdurft at the wheel of his 1955 Holden FJ.



Tom Lane leaves pit lane in his 1952 Ferrari 500 Replica.



Brian Neil negotiates Eastern Loop in his 1971 Lola - Formula Ford.



Doug Angus kicks up the spray in his Elfin Formula Vee.



John Goss crests the hill in his MGC GT.



Peter Wild at speed in his Triumph GT6 MK3.



Lindsay Norris checks tyre pressures on his 1982 Van Diemen.

Get into GEAR

To join GEAR as a driver, you must have a suitable vehicle. All post-war (1945) production sedans and production sports cars built up to 31 December, 1978, are eligible, as are Clubman, open wheeler and sports racing cars up to December 31, 1990 (further criteria may apply).

You cannot simply turn up at a GEAR day, sign up as a member and drive. Vehicle eligibility can take a few weeks to be reviewed and processed by committee.

Once a member, you need a RACERS licence to drive at Queensland Raceway (QR) and Lakeside Park Raceway. The licence, which costs \$65 a year, can be applied for directly from the QR or Lakeside office on the day. Each drive day entry costs \$80, which allows four runs of 15 minutes duration each.

Interested? The club welcomes individuals to come and watch at any of GEAR's scheduled drive days:

- Lakeside Park, Lakeside Rd, Kurwongbah – Thursday June 7, Thursday August 9, Thursday October 11 and Thursday December 6.
- Qld Raceway, Champions Way, Willowbank – Thursday July 5, Wednesday September 12, Thursday November 8. gear.org.au

concerns about my track capability."

John's mount is an MGC GT, modified for racing in the UK. But, it's not just about thoroughbred sports cars. Minis – Cooper and Cooper S – are popular, as are Holdens of various models and modification.

Regardless of vehicle, safety is paramount.

"Each car owner is required to fill out a GEAR scrutineering check sheet," John said.

"Some do their own scrutineering and some, like myself, get their car professionally checked.

"I take my car to MG Automotive before each meeting to have the tyres, brakes, and engine checked for any oil leaks etc.

"(On the day), there is a drivers' briefing about the rules and safety of all participants. Bad behaviour can mean being asked to leave the track immediately and, in some cases, being

given a 'Don't come back!.'

While overtaking is permitted, passing under braking is forbidden, with the leading car that is on the conventional racing line first through the corner.

'Folding chair racing' is a big part of a GEAR day. When not out on track or fettling their cars, drivers drop by one another's garage or frequent the Pitstop Café for a natter.

Talk to any of them and it's evident that the strict on-track controls in no way diminish the driving satisfaction and fun factor.

"Love it," one said.

"You can come out here (Lakeside) and get to drive in the wheel tracks of past greats.

"It's as affordable as motor sport gets and you can go as fast – or not so fast – as you deem fit. Everyone usually goes home with their car intact and a big grin from ear-to-ear." ■