

Kleinig and the 1937 Canberra Speed Trial Tim Shellshear

Bob Pritchett's mention of Kleinig's speed of 117 mph at the 1937 Canberra Speed trials is a good reason to bring out this fabulous photo of Frank Kleinig in the car in May 1937. This is a club photo of great clarity and the faces of the admiring children are most special. The photo is by the Canberra photographer Alex Collingridge, well known in the 20s and 30s. I have reproduced the following article from the May 1937 edition of 'The Referee' to accompany it.

"Fastest Time Ever – Kleinig breaks all Australian Records at Canberra.

With an average speed over the quarter mile of 116.9 mph, F. Kleinig, driving the Miller engined 'Kirby-Deering Special' car at Canberra on Saturday, recorded the fastest time put up in Australia. The previous best was 112 mph by W.B.Thompson (Bugatti) on the same course.

The occasion was the annual series of State record attempts conducted by the NSW Light Car Club on a fine stretch of road just outside the Federal Capital. Ten cars participated – probably the fastest collection ever seen together in action in this part of the world.

Conditions of Saturday afternoon were most unfavourable for high speeds, a cold cross wind blowing strongly throughout the day, and in my opinion, no car registered within five miles an hour of its real speed.

Events timed were quarter and half mile from standing start, and the same distances from a flying start, the run in allowed for the flying events being about one and a half miles.

Absolute fastest time of the day in all four events was clocked by W.A.McIntyre's 'Kirby-Deering' car, driven as usual by Frank Kleinig, with 7.7secs (116.9 mph) for the quarter mile and 15.6 sec (115.3 mph) for the half mile. From a standing start the quarter mile was covered in 16.6 sec, while the half was in 26.76 sec. All these times are new state records.

The appearance of this car was unexpected. For on the previous Monday it had crashed at high speed at Penrith Speedway, and was considerably damaged.

Kleinig, who was lucky to escape injury, worked night and day on the car, and just managed to get it ready in time. Special streamlining was also carried out, and discs built onto all four wheels.

A fine performance was that of Jack. Jones (Alfa Romeo) who made second fastest time of the day with 102.2 mph average over the quarter mile. This car has been used as a 'hack' for many years; it has been crashed badly, and was also completely burnt about four years ago; and when it was originally purchased, the factory claimed a top speed of 95 mph !!. Which speaks well for the skill of mechanic Bill Balgarnie, who rebuilt the car after its burning, and who was mainly responsible for its performance at Canberra.

Another excellent effort was that of W. Bullen, driving the old Alvis raced by the late Phil Garlick many years ago. Of 1922 vintage, this car had a long and varied career. Now tuned by Billy Conaulty, it is showing its speed of the old Maroubra Speedway days. And its 101.1 mph at Canberra on Saturday was most creditable.

J Saywell (Railton) was very fast in all four events, and averaged over 101 mph. So also did McIntyre's big Hudson

Special, while the Railton's standing quarter time of 17.9 sec was a new class record.

Flying Quarter Mile

W.A.McIntyre, driver F.Kleining (1494 Miller) 7.7 sec (116.9 mph). J.Jones (1752 Alfa Romeo) 8.8 sec (102.2 mph). B.Clark. Driver W.Bullen (1505 Alvis) 8.9 sec (101.1 mph). J.Saywell (4168 Railton) 9 sec (100 mph). W.A.McIntyre (4168 Hudson) 9.1 sec (98.9 mph). J.Snow (5247 Buick) 9.3 sec (96.7 mph). J.Fagan (4170 Hudson) 9.4 sec (95.7 mph). L. Burrows (4170 Hudson) 9.5 sec (94.7 mph). J.Weeks (3621 Ford) 9.6 sec. J.Snow (5247 Buick) 9.3 sec (96.7 mph). J.Fagan (4170 Hudson) 9.4 sec (95.7 mph). L. Burrows (4170 Hudson) 9.5 sec (94.7 mph). J.Weeks (3621 Ford) 9.6 sec .7 mph)

Accelerated Quarter Mile

Kleinig 16.6 sec, Saywell 17.9, McIntyre 18.3, Burrows 18.3, Snow 18.4, Weeks 18.6, Fagan 18.8, Bullen 19.5.

