

Classic car racing
CHRIS HUNKIN



Captain Ted's Racing Team Hunkin – Chris, Ted & Rob

Classic car racing in NZ is alive and well. I have been involved for the last six years and driving for four of them. I share two cars with my Dad and my brother. When we started racing with the Alfa Romeo Trofeo series, it comprised of about eight race meetings a year across the North Island tracks: Pukekohe, Taupo and Manfeild. At each race meeting we would typically get between three and five races. There were about twenty Alfa Romeos of the 70's and 80's entered in the series and they were split into three classes: Standard, Trofeo and Veloce. The standard class was for unmodified front wheel drive Alfas and consisted of mostly Suds and Sprints. The Trofeo class allowed slightly modified front wheel drive Alfas and the Veloce class was mostly rear wheel drive 105 series GTV's. The series has evolved now to grids of 30+ cars including the GTA class, which is effectively an open class.

It all started when, after years of following and watching F1, my Dad made the suggestion that my brother and I give it a go instead of just watching it. So my brother joined the Alfa Romeo car club and the Trofeo racing series. Why Alfas? One of my brother's friends raced Alfas and they were cheap! The first Alfa cost \$200, a 1500 single carb

Sud. It had no WOF, lots of rust and plenty of oil leaks. We soon realised we would not be taking this car anywhere near the track or the road for that matter. So our first Alfa also became the first Alfa we sent to the scrap yard after we removed a few parts. This was replaced by a road-worthy 1987 Alfa Romeo 33 with a twin carb 1500 engine.

Team Hunkin was ready to go racing! My brother was the driver, Dad and I the support crew. We raced for a season in the Standard class of the Trofeo Series. Throughout this first season some minor performance upgrades were carried out: new race brake pads and vented discs and a set of sports road tyres, as well as a few safety items: roll cage, race seat and harness (though not compulsory in the standard class they did give Mum some peace of mind). This was about the extent of changes allowed within the rules. Both Dad and I also got to drive at the club's training days, taking part in single and dual car sprints. We were all soon hooked.

At the end of the first season we decided to get a bit more serious and build up the car to the Veloce class, which had been opened up to front wheel drive cars and allowed race tyres, lower, stiffer suspension and some serious engine modification. We needed a twin carb 1700 engine as the starting place for the new race engine. In the end we found a 1989 Alfa 33 with twin carb 1700 complete with a blown head gasket for much less than a used engine by itself. After several long months sourcing and machining parts, I was invited to assemble our engine under the supervision of Lynn Rogers, master engine builder and owner of Lynn Rogers Automotive in Howick. The remainder of the season went well for my brother with no mechanical problems or panel damage, so the donor car and old 1500 engine sat in the garage collecting dust.

After two seasons with my brother doing the driving, Dad and I decided there was no reason we should not be racing as well. Over winter we stripped down the old 1500 from my brother's car, giving it a good look over, reassembled it and put the rest of the spare parts car back together. Now all three of us could race regularly, Rob in his race car, Dad and I sharing the spare parts car. Both cars proved to be very reliable (for Alfas anyway!) and at the end of the season, we made plans to make the spare parts car a dedicated race car as well. This presented its own set of problems as we only had the means of towing one car so the second car would have to remain road legal. In the end we decided to rebuild an unmodified 1700 and move into the Trofeo class (for slightly modified cars). The second car was later named the

Hornet after receiving a yellow and black paint job, required after a slight altercation with a muddy bank at Taupo raceway.

It was about this time that I joined the Tracer Leisuretime Series so that I could get a full compliment of races at each race meeting, leaving Dad to compete in the Trofeo series. The Tracer Leisuretime Series used to be called the British Racing Classics but now has a wide variety of European cars and even the odd Datsun. This is a handicap race series; a staggered start based on lap times - the goal being that every car should reach the finish line at the same time after completing six or eight laps. What starts out as a quiet race, chasing another car 10 seconds down the track, can turn into thirty cars, two or three wide, bumper to bumper across the line. The beauty of this is that I have just as good a chance of winning in my little Alfa as the Rover 3500 or Porsche 924!

This has worked well as we now all get plenty of track time and can compete for our various class honours. Both cars and drivers have had some success; Rob won the Veloce class in 2004/05, Dad came third in the Alfa Handicap series last season and I came second in the Tracer saloons in 2004/05. With both series the main aim is to promote fun, affordable racing in NZ; there is no prize money only the bragging rights for the next season and the occasional spot of TV coverage. With the continuing developments at Taupo and the soon to be built Hampton Downs track south of Meremere, the future is looking good for Classic car racing in NZ.

If you would like to see if motor racing is for you, why don't you join the Alfa Club and take to the track in a controlled environment at a Driver Training Day? The Alfa Romeo Car Club runs driver training days at two race meetings a year one at Taupo and one at Manfield . These training days allow members of the club to experience their own car's potential safely and pick up a few good driving tips, which work just as well on the road as they do on the track. Having raced in the series, and knowing the track, I have been involved as an instructor for the last few events and these have provide some awesome experiences. The Alfa Romeo 147 GTA demonstrator brought down by one of the Hawkes Bay dealers was great fun, but the traction control was working overtime. My favourite drive would have to be the two laps I got in a Ferrari 550 Maranello showing the owner the racing lines around Taupo's old circuit. I was so nervous. I took it easy leaving it in third gear round the whole track. The sound and pull of the 480bhp V12 charging to almost 8000rpm put a smile on my face for weeks! I'm

hoping to get my wife, Paula, into the Hornet at the next driver training just so she'll be more understanding when I've got cars and parts cluttering up the garage! Why don't you join in too?



Chris putting the 'Hornet' through its paces