

WARWICK NATIONALS PREVIEW MEET - EASTER 2010

The Queensland Chapter recently undertook a successful two day run to Warwick, venue for the Australian Pontiac Nationals in 2011. The purpose of the trip was two-fold : to give local members a look at the town and its facilities; and to give the town a look at the club and its cars.

Warwick now holds an Easter Fair in its centrally-located park on Easter Saturday from 9am to 3pm. This acts as a magnet for locals, to bring them into the central business district, on what would otherwise be a slow trading day. This year's fair contained 50 stalls with a wide variety of merchandise, as well as usual Easter attractions. This same location, Leslie Park, is the regular site for local car shows, featuring a large capacity and picturesque landscaping. This will be the site for the major show of the Pontiac Nationals on Easter Saturday in 2011.



For 2010, we were invited to assemble a sample display, promoting the much larger event planned for 2011. 14 Pontiacs were displayed, including a 1926 Pontiac from local Warwick Vintage & Veteran Car Club member Ted Richmond. We were well received by the community, many of whom are now eagerly awaiting next Easter.

Our journey started on Good Friday, meeting at Amberley Caravan Park on the outskirts of Ipswich. Departing at 10am, we drove half an hour to Aratula for a morning tea stop. Here, we met a couple of Gold Coast members who had come across via Beaudesert. After the Aratula stop, next was a 45 minute leg through Cunningham's Gap and across the plains to Warwick. We stopped just short of Warwick at the Caltex roadhouse for lunch, meeting up with Stuart and Suzie Cooper from Toowoomba.



After lunch, it was planned to do one of the local tourist drives, a 72km loop to Killarney and back. Most of the group were content to check into accommodation and relax, with only five cars taking up the option. Of these, three extended their journey another 20km to Queen Mary Falls, which were flowing quite nicely after good rain recently.

At Warwick, we all camped at the Jackie Howe Motel on Victoria Street, which looked pretty impressive with Pontiacs occupying most of the parking spots. This run also gave members an opportunity to try out a motel for next Easter. Once we were all back in town, I rang Ted Richmond of the local Vintage & Veteran Car Club, organising to bring a crowd to his barn to view his collection. At 4.30pm, we piled into four Pontiacs and headed across town.



Like many country towns, Warwick has streets that alternate between wide and narrow. The narrow ones are basically access to the rear of properties, when they used to be large size blocks. Ted's street was one of the narrow 'lanes', which made it interesting parking four wide track Pontiacs. The effort was well worth it, Ted having a collection of six interesting vehicles in his 'barn', including his 1926 Pontiac, Studebaker of similar vintage, Whippet utility, Morris and Mini Moke. We had a great time hearing Ted's stories about each one, and time flew by. Ted had his 85th birthday two days before, and is still very active. He tells us of taking the 1926 Pontiac around the local Morgan Park motor racing circuit, and how he would have gone faster except for the guy in front! When he got home, some of the wooden wheel spokes were loose! We invited Ted to bring his Pontiac along for our display on Saturday.



Returning to the Jackie Howe, it was time for dinner. We were limited in that it was Good Friday, with all pubs and clubs closed. However, there was a choice of nine fast food chains and four other restaurants open to serve the 12,000 strong population.

At around 8pm, we took five Pontiacs down the main street for a photo shoot outside some of the landmark buildings in town. With just about everything shut down, we had the street to ourselves.

Saturday dawned fine, as it had been on Good Friday, and we departed in convoy at 8.30am for the short run to Leslie Park. On the way, we passed the Rodeo Heritage Centre (the proposed Nationals registration venue) and did a lap of Queens Park beside the Condamine River. This will be the assembly point for the street parade. Ironically, we turned up at Leslie Park at the same time as Ted and his 1926 Pontiac. We parked at the adjacent aquatic centre bus stop to wait for instructions, then made our way into the park. Although most cars could fit in the front gate, the full size Pontiacs were better suited to using another gate. In 2011, with over 100 cars to admit, it is likely we will use a number of gates around the park.



It didn't take long for the crowd to work out we had arrived, with a large group of people around our cars for most of the morning. This only tapered off after lunch. Rob Robertson also arrived from Brisbane, and we added his 1991 Firebird to the display. Most of the local shops were open to 12 noon, our members also taking the opportunity to visit some of these. There was so much activity in the park that time flew. Just before noon, we departed the park on foot to visit the RSL for lunch. This was only two blocks south and one block east. As part of this visit, we were able to view inside their Kings Theatre, which we have booked for the night functions in Easter 2011.



After lunch we returned to find Ted still happily answering queries on his 1926 Pontiac. Ted had taken his wife and guests home for lunch, but had come back again for the afternoon. It was getting close to 2pm by now, and our group started to disperse for the trip back to Brisbane. We then lined up Ted's car with Ken's and Grahame's late model Pontiacs for some promotional shots, before winding up the display at 2.30pm. For 2011, the show will run from 9am to 3pm, which might sound like a lot of time, but with many more cars, the Easter Fair and the adjacent CBD, it will not seem like six hours.



Leslie Park is a great venue, with many shade trees, as well as kid's play areas and all amenities. The park is fully lit at night, and is now likely to be the venue for our welcome BBQ on Good Friday. The preview meet was a great success, and with 12 months to go, we are anticipating great things for the first Queensland-hosted Pontiac Nationals. Entries are opening with this edition of Torque, and we already have strong interest from our 100 local members, and many other local Pontiac owners. We will try to squeeze in as many as possible, but it is best to enter early to avoid disappointment. A major three day Easter equestrian event has also commenced in the area, which is expected to impact motel space. Entrants should make motel bookings soon, for the 3 nights of 22-24 April. Further updates will appear in future Torque issues, the other major reference being the webpage of www.qldpontiac.com/nationals.html