

Minis DownUnder 2021, in 2022.

That's a wrap!



A big thankyou to all who supported, entered, volunteered and attended Minis DownUnder 2022 and celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Mini in Australia. Some of you will have read most of this in our Club's magazine but following is my final report and wrap-up of Minis DownUnder.

Having attended many International Mini Meets in the UK, and the 50th anniversary celebration in Australia, Michael and Lynne Benton were inspired to put together an event plan for a 60th anniversary celebration of the Mini in Australia to the Mini Club of NSW Committee back in January 2020. The Committee supported the plan with alacrity. Of course, none of us knew we were heading for a global Pandemic.

The Mini Car Club of NSW has a proud history of celebrating the history of the Mini in Australia: significant events have been held over the past 30 years including Minifest '91 in 1991, Minis Down Under in 2001, Minis DownUnder in 2006, Oz50 in 2011 and now – "Minis DownUnder 2021" also hosted by the Mini Car Club of NSW: a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Mini's manufacture in Sydney and the release of the Australian built Morris 850 in March 1961.

Minis DownUnder 2021 was envisioned to be a Show and Shine for ALL types of minis, Classic and New, to be held in a large indoor area near the centre of Sydney with a capacity to accommodate 100+ Minis undercover plus areas for trade stands. Easy access for regional and interstate participants and spectators and adjacent parking for trailers and visitors would be required. We wanted good quality food and amenities with close-by accommodation and public transport. The budget would need to permit the Club to recoup most of the costs. After researching and visiting a number of venues around Sydney the preferred location for Minis DownUnder2021 was the Grand Pavilion, Level 1, at Rosehill Gardens Precinct. It has 3300sqm of premium indoor space and met all our criteria. All Mini car clubs of Australia and NZ were contacted and invited to participate plus a large number of social media posts were made to promote the event amongst the Mini enthusiast community. A promotional article was included in the UK Mini World magazine and Minis DownUnder was added to their event calendar.

Entrants were slow to register until we got close to the first event date and then a few weeks out we were full with 155 entrants and 8 sponsors agreeing to support our event. We started with a date for the event of 2nd May 2021; then the pandemic hit we moved to 1 August; we moved to 21st November and finally 6 March 2022 ... not even the 60th year anymore! But we figured if the Olympics could move then so can the mighty Mini. We sensed a faltering of interest, even in ourselves, caused by lockdowns and Covid itself. We decided to plough on.

But the week before 6 March 2022 heralded some of the worst flooding the east coast of Australia has seen. Our registered entrants were reporting serious local flooding and Covid outbreaks. We were nervous and coping with streams of phone calls and emails but, we were also encouraged by late interest in participating.

On the day we were slightly down on numbers but managed 140+ Minis and derivatives on show, trade stands representing Canterbury MINI Garage, Shannon's, Mini and Moke World, Mini Works Australia, E-Valence and SU Midel.

Mini Car Clubs and Mini owners from all over NSW, Qld, Vic, SA and Tas had entered to display their Minis and MINIs in the Grand Pavilion with more parked outside in the "Mini Only Parking" areas. There were certainly some significant Minis on display including a very early 1961 Morris 850 with only 5152 miles since new, 2 x immaculate Monacos, the Broadspeed driven by Brian Foley/Laurie Stewart, (at Bathurst 1967 it was recorded at 127.84 MPH down Conrod Straight). The Cooper S driven by Paddy Hopkirk/Brian Foley at Bathurst 1967, the 1971 Cooper S Class winner at Bathurst in 1974, 25 x Cooper S in a line with a good line up of Clubmans, Vans, Utes and many modified Minis of various heritage.

Spectator admission was open to the general public from 10am to 4pm for a minimal cost with about 1000 people in attendance over the day.

At 2:30pm the Raffles and a Silent Auction were drawn, and we were excited Will Hagon was there to announce the lucky winners and enhance proceedings with some of his Mini adventures. Approximately \$2500 raised from them which will be donated to "Canteen", the charity supporting 12-25-year-olds who are fighting cancer.

We were inspired and delighted by the tenacity of our Mini community in Australia. Valiant little "bricks" had indeed fought their way through the weather to the show from QLD, SA, Vic, Tasmania and NSW. Dave Wallis towed his immaculate Monaco over 1300km from Adelaide and Jono Morris brought the Broadspeed and Paddy Mini also from Adelaide. One entrant drove his Morris 850 from Launceston, Matt Reid had his workshop in Brisbane flooded and after a quick clean-up he headed south with his Van to display in Minis DownUnder, leaving his crew to continue the clean-up. Heart warmingly we had some veteran Mini race drivers Don Holland, Lakis Manticas and others who shared their stories and enjoyed the Mini ambiance. Our merchandise, with its standout MDU2021 logo, sold well and helped to create an event atmosphere

Rosehill Gardens was an excellent venue with superb support for our event. We have received numerous positive comments and most importantly for us reports from people who enjoyed themselves enormously and caught up with old friends: we couldn't ask for anything more.

The Mini Car Club of NSW hosts Mini drives every month and no doubt will be celebrating the 70th anniversary but for now we need a breather.

Kind Regards,

Michael & Lynne Benton
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