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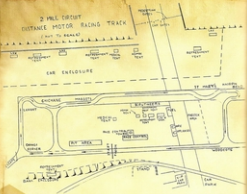


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The Lost Circ

IT WAS REALLY QUITE SIMPLE - millions race. Follow the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit and look for a circle the size of land in Singapore. All right, we first therefore look for an airfield, particularly an ex-military airfield. The reason why Silverstone was chosen as the venue for the 1948 British Grand Prix is that it was the closest airfield close to the geographic centre of England. It was the destinations - Jochen and Steve

150,000 people turned up, mostly by train and coach. For a small island, Singapore had an abundance of military airfields, some closed however. Two of these were Tengah and Seletar and Changi, but these were operational and controlled by the military forces in the 1950s. The first entrance to the Feroze Khan Club of Singapore found support in its President, Air Commodore Geoffrey Nicholas Bruce Field

Geoff Worley, CL, CBE (honorary, "TCN" was also acceptable to him). From the perspective, just to some extent, walked some grandstands, particularly by the central area, get some support in paper and oil it a race circuit for a weekend. With the support and assistance from the Singapore Motor Club, they pulled it off in June of 1957 with a 2.85km long circuit at the Changi airfield.

The start of one of the numerous events in progress. The photo shows a line of 100 cc. 200 cc. and 300 cc. motorcycles. The 100 cc. and 200 cc. are in the lead. The 300 cc. are in the rear. The race is being held at the Changi Race Track. The race is being held at the Changi Race Track. The race is being held at the Changi Race Track.



The start. 100 cc. motorcycle FIRST.

hit of Changi

Singapore's eastern tip might be the site of the Nation's next race track, but it wouldn't be the first as **Eli Solomon** discovers

Paul Gilber-Pedersen, racing enthusiast, recalled his time as a POW in Changi. "While still in the Changi village I was fortunate (limited to finding material of use) to see the POW area. I dreamed of creating a racing circuit using some of these available roads, but never guessed that after the Japanese had built an airfield with one

show in this area, I would in 1957 drive my Bentley to race on these same roads." The Changi Circuit Race of 1957 was the first circuit race held in Singapore. The spectators had little idea of what to expect. It was a long time before some were privileged to enter in their own cars. "Crazy", said my friend, and we

remembered because the little Japanese "bentons" got up a track trip, in the rain, with every engine, but every opinion divided of the day when they would race a car and would not have to join in the "bentons" way." The way, of course, following on the fortunate news of motor racing in post-War "The 11 Series, 11."

Captain C.S. "Doc" Young started the sport of car racing in this country but was beaten by Charles Lang's much heavier truck.



Lin Yang built his special British six cylinder car. This was the most successful of the sport and still still operates in various throughout the world and only this, originally a 1000cc. Lin and only this, originally a 1000cc. Lin and only this, originally a 1000cc. Lin and only this, originally a 1000cc. Lin and only this, originally a 1000cc.

could not have been very different in Singapore then.

Grassroots motor racing happens now when you have more cars, but when you have small cars and cheap parts. That's how Singapore came to have around 80 Malayan-built racing specials, two row built locally, often combined together with a different chassis and an appropriate engine (1000, Ford V8, 1600 cc Jaguar) were being produced and had an attractive bodywork. You also used the local motor clubs and organisations meeting in a pub, swapping ideas and tips. When you have a time, you work up to the big events, you do not start with a Grand Prix and then say that the track is going to be Chinese World or Shanghai has found out the hard way.

In 1957, only remnants of the continuous hegemony still remained in Southeast Asia and it was, by then, a low case. The only Grand Prix in this part of the world was in Malaya and it had now been four years since a circuit race had been held in Malaya (the last John Grand Prix was held in 1953). Granted there were very regular hill climbs and sports in Dutch-ruled Malaya and Singapore but would the

Singapore Motor Club and the Straits Motor Club (which up there had never been a circuit race of any kind on the island).

Every Grand Prix needs a main event. The main event on the programme for C-Group was race for Formula Libre racing car and sports car, run over 100 laps. Considering the lack of any sort of proper circuit in Singapore then, there was still a phobias of sports and racing car available, not that were used for the sports and hill climbs, plus a number that had been entered in the first year was John Grand Prix. Naturally, there were more private races such as Aston Martin and Cooper Bristol combined up images of privateer capable of intense speed. There were also some capable of cutting through the low air wall and only amongst C-Group as it was (though included a phenomenon found V12 Formula Super Special, an Aston Martin DB5, and a Cooper Bristol from Lin Yang (his Aston Martin - "British Successor") which is an earlier 1000cc British one track like a 1000cc 1000 cc and probably was not entered, even though its supercharged 1000cc motor (mechanical engine could hardly have been

opened a window. When we fell through, we saw across the way on a hillside of mountains, a house, a terrace and a garden. It was not included.

The spectators couldn't have seen a line. They were just glad there was an event race conducted on the island, even if grandstands were placed at 100 per foot and parking at 10 per vehicle (motorcycles had a discount). It was not been a long time (Chang in 1957).

The seventh race and history was made. Chin Lee Chuan in his custom-colored Avon Martin (1957) won the motor race in a time of 19 minutes 51.1 seconds, an average of 50mph. Chin was not to win the Motor Grand Prix the following year, in the same car, the only time a Singaporean has won the crown (John Wong won the Sporting Car race in 1979 while Tony Rault came close in 1977 but got a very strong, too loose 1989 International race - the second time as they raised the rankings up to the Naval District in Miami). Lin Hong Han, the driver of Singapore motorcycles from the 1930s until the 1960s, owned by Lin Seng and second, a further 40 records in seven of Chin, the 100 engine on the island. Million hand Bernard Arnold, no doubt enjoying the look of his Cooper-Bristol, was a further 14 records behind with Chin.

Eng Quee stands in the locally-built Rover inspired Eng Quee hot rod.

Promoters race tracks used to be located in a local community where spectators after the race had to walk, not many of the tracks that are not associated with Formula 1 used to have covered and are still actively in use. A more direct but different issue to contend with. But 15 years of disoperation from any form of proper racing has meant that several generations of enthusiasts have been brought up on transmission flooding, gearbox hammering car park racing, Singapore has never had a professional circuit, and used very recently the very subject was raised.

When you have a local base, you work up to the big ones, very much like the Chang Circuit race of 1957. It took a few more years before Singapore was able to hold its first Grand Prix in 1960, but the groundwork had already been established. Formula 1 is mostly a public relations exercise for the country. It promotes circuit addresses the needs of industry and local participation for things that when a race was held once a year will do for the country. It has always been a question of priorities. Will there be a second circuit for Chang? ☺

ABOUT THE WRITER

El Solomon is a motorsport historian and author of *Sinakes and Devils - A History of the Singapore Grand Prix*. His upcoming two-volume book - *Red Flags and Lost Circuits of Southeast Asia* takes a detailed look at the motor industry and the club and international motor racing events held throughout Singapore and Malaysia. El operates Singapore Rare Books LLP, specialising in Southeast Asian material as well as motoring and motor racing.

Chang circuit race, Jan 1952. 1000cc. international. F1000.

This very hot, winner of the 1952 sports car season when the race of the circuit was essentially transformed into what was known as the 1000cc. international with a driver named John Wright rather than the 1000cc. sports.

Another one of the hot sports cars competing with the top 1000cc. international. This was the 1000cc. sports.

Bill and the team 1950 in action at Chang, before competing in the 1000cc. sports car season with a lot of other as well as the Formula 1000 race held at Chang.

