

# McNamara Park history immortalised in print

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**POTHOLES AND PADDOCKS:** Historian Colin Thompson will launch his latest book *Potholes and Paddocks to the Park – Volume 2: Jan 1950 – Jan 1963* at the Mount Gambier Library tonight with doors opening at 6:40pm for a 7pm start. The story retells the formation of McNamara Park and the history behind the establishment's dedicated past and present members. Picture: MOLLY TAYLOR

THE STORY behind disused Limestone quarry pits and virgin scrub now known as McNamara Park has been outlined in hardcover by historian Colin Thompson.

After three years since his debut novel was launched, Mr Thompson will release his latest book *Potholes and Paddocks to the Park – Volume 2: Jan 1950 – Jan 1963* at the Mount Gambier Library tonight.

The 330-page novel is filled with 15 coloured pages and more than 200 photographs.

The latest book follows Volume 1 took more than 12 years for Mr Thompson to publish.

He said the new book focused on the park's formation.

He said book research was hard work, with most records sourced from The Border Watch archives.

"People were asking when the book was coming out, so I published the first book at 160 pages because it was already big enough," he said.

"It used to take me around three hours to go through one month in the archives.

"I was fortunate that I had help from my friend Laurie Fox's grandson Matthew Fox, who gave me his grandpa's scrapbooks – and Laurie's daughter Susan who let me borrow his photographs."

The park was established after Mount Gambier Motor Cycle and Light Car Club joined forces in a bid to reunite public interest in motor cycle scrambling, which was conducted on Buck's Hill.

"People were starved of entertainment after the war and motorcycle racing was there and exciting," he said.

"There was approval for road racing in 1959 along Crouch Street, Sturt Street, Pick Avenue, Lake Terrace and back up Bay Road.



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**STORY FULL OF HISTORY:** Mount Gambier resident Colin Thompson fell deeply interested with the story behind McNamara Park leading to him recently writing two stories over a 15-year period. Mr Thompson's second book *Potholes and Paddocks to the Park – Volume 2: Jan 1950 – Jan 1963* will be launched tonight. Pictures: MOLLY TAYLOR

"Then the war came and the idea was abandoned after years and years of trying."

Mr Thompson said a club meeting was held and Frank Robertson McNamara and his brother-in-law Colin Raymond McCarthy loaned their 40-acres to the club for the development of a track.

"Laurie, Harry Vause and Maurice von Einem went to the block half expecting to see this pastoral land but it was all scrub," he said.

"It took them an hour and a half to walk from one end to the other."

With the help from the Coombe family, Mr Thompson said around 10 people helped prepare and bituminise the track.

"They used all these rubbish old things including an old Stewart tank donated by Frank," Mr Thompson said.

"The tank busted into life and race, mice, dust and dirt spilled out everywhere.

"You would have to hand crank it over 27 times to pump the oil before starting because it was a radial engine from an aircraft."

The park's first race was held in 1962, but unfortunately the wrong size of gravel was used.

"The track was so rough it tore tires out in no time and anybody who fell on it hurt themselves."

Mr Thompson said the park then fell into limbo.

"Although, somehow by the end of the year the surface was renewed," he said.

"In 1963 on Australia Day the park held its second road race and from then on it has blossomed and the track has been developed."

With the first book well received, Mr Thompson said he hoped the second would receive the same gratitude.

"Now, the history is there in one place for them and many people have thanked me," he said.

Mr Thompson said one of Mr Fox's bikes was on display in the Mount Gambier Library foyer for all interested patrons.

The book will be launched tonight with doors opening at 6:40pm for a 7pm start.

Books signed by Mr Thompson will be available for purchase on the night.