



The Reg Lunn/Peter Haas Holden HR heads for second place over Tantaraboo Mountain, near Kilmore. They missed a win by only one point. BOB FORSYTH

HOLDENS 1-2 IN "DERRICK"

Story by ROGER BONHOMME

THE seemingly invincible Holden dealers' rally team swept to an exciting one-two victory in the first of the 1968 Victorian Rally Championship Series, the C.C.R.M.I.T., "George Derrick" Trial, run on February 17-18.

Winners were Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe by one point from State champion driver, Reg Lunn, who was navigated by Peter Haas. Third and fourth places were taken out by Max Jackman/Ian Johnson (Bellett) and Klaus Peters/Geoff Sproat (VW1200/1600) respectively. The three Holdens started out favourites following the retirement of the factory VWs and Fords; the latter will be concentrating solely on the National title this year.

The event started from Lancefield on a hot, dusty, Saturday evening. The 21 starters moved generally north through the Pyalong area to the Heathcote-Puckapunyal forest. Things got

tough for crews right from the start with a tricky route check on the second control. Eight cars missed it, and all but three cars were late into control two. Thick dust and virtually no wind made driving hazards along the narrow winding tracks through the Pucka scrub.

All crews lost scads of points as they wound north then west towards the first stage end at Bendigo. Eventual winners, Watson/McAuliffe, even managed a wrong direction on control five. Navigation became more and more demanding. Although few un-mapped roads were used, it became very difficult to sort out those reproduced on the Heathcote and Bendigo surveys and those built later by the Forest Commission.

At Bendigo, with nine cars already retired, leaders were Lunn (26), Peters (36), and Jackman (46). Watson was a further point behind on 47 — including the wrong direction.

The event went a little haywire at the start of the second stage. Competitors drove 28 miles to the Laanecoorie Reservoir to find the start official had not been given any route instructions. Three hours later, they turned up with an embarrassed official and the event got off to a belated second stage.

Watson led the pack off deep into the Dunolly scrub on a route chart which deposited crews at a spot called X and left them to their own devices. Most cars headed north then west, across the dismantled Ainswick railway station, in an attempt to pick-up definite landmarks.

As is often the case, a hard to spot gate sign held up half a dozen cars until leading restricted crew Dave

Forster/Jeff Beaumont poked their Cortina through a gap in the trees to lead a bunch of cars to control 10. No-one clean sheeted, but McAuliffe worked hardest to drop only three minutes.

The pattern of the trial, deady accurate navigation plus toey driving continued. North through the Cochrane's Creek area (too many roads but only one mapped route) to Wehla where navigators used a route chart through a thick forest to find themselves confronted with a bitumen road. Left or right? No seconds to lose. Only Tony Roberts/Neville Price (Holden) did everything right to clean sheet. Bruce Wilson/Tony Wunderlich in the Wilkinson Motors Prince GT dropped out.

A loop in the Melville Caves area followed. A pretty tourist area by day, the countryside is a trials driver's nightmare after dark, with huge granite outcrops lurking on every bend. Two minutes down by Watson and Lunn were the best efforts for the loop. Control 15 route charted cars into the middle of a deserted mining town, Kooyoora. Route instructions warned competitors of ghosts — so four drivers exerted themselves that little bit extra to make control on time.

The final control took the tiring crews back to Bendigo via Arnold West and the badly mapped Tarnagulla area. At Bendigo Watson had moved into the lead on 56 points, closely followed by Lunn 63. Peters slipped back to third slot on 75, hounded by Jackman on 76. Leading restricted crews were Forster/Beaumont 89, and McInnes/Swanson 103.

After doing everything wrong in the first stage Roberts/Price came back strongly to lose only nine points in each of the second and third stages to finish eighth. Roberts was fourth fastest in the final stage, following Jackman on five points.

Watson/McAuliffe came within seconds of losing the event on the first control in the third stage when they dropped eight minutes finding Sedgwick. They dropped a further point on the tight final control into Tantaraboo. Fortunately, for them, Lunn/Haas dropped three on the Sedgwick control which kept them in second spot.

RESULTS

1. R. Watson/J. McAuliffe (Holden HR)	65
2. R. Lunn/P. Haas (Holden HR)	66
3. M. Jackman/I. Johnson (Bellett)	81
4. K. Peters/G. Sproat (VW)	85
5. D. Forster/J. Beaumont (Cortina)	92
6} B. Amey/P. Yendle (Peugeot 404)	122
6} R. McInnes/T. Swanson (Cooper)	122

A cloud of fine dust follows the Klaus Peters/Geoff Sproat VW down Tantaraboo as the pair try to improve their fourth place. BOB FORSYTH



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