

# "BLUE RIBBON" GIFT TO WATSON

Story by ROGER BONHOMME

**M**ENTION "Scrubby Creek Road" to Harry Firth or any of his Holden Dealer Team crews and you're likely to get a very nasty reply. For it was on this tortuous strip of Murrundindi Forestry track that the hopes of the HDT taking off the second heat of the national rally series, the VSCC "Blue Ribbon", came to grief.

Tony Roberts/Mike Osborne (Torana GTR) were 20 points ahead of their nearest rivals, Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe (Gordini) when, for some mysterious reason, they left the road in a big way. Team mates Colin Bond/Brian Hope (Monaro 350 plus) were one of the crews to help the hapless Tony regain the road. When Harry's third crew, Barry Ferguson/Dave Johnson (Torana GTR) got into the act by appearing on the scene very quickly, poor Fergie was faced with either driving into the rear of Bond's big Monaro or taking to the scenery — so he took to the scrub.

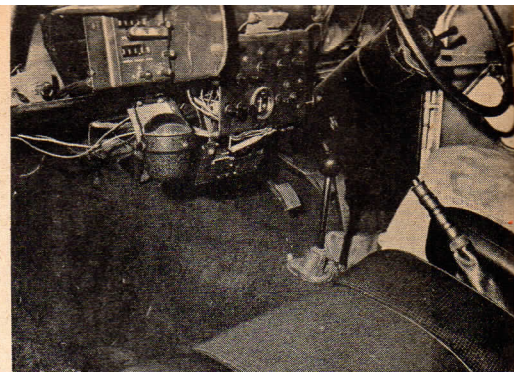
The result of this tragic comedy was one bent Torana in third place instead of first, one very bent Torana retired and one Monaro retired. The fourth HDT car, John Keran/Peter Meyer (Monaro 350), had bogged badly earlier in the Blue Ribbon and to cap off a thoroughly disappointing event for the General, the team's service car had a slight prang on the way home! The rally, directed by Bob, Beau and Bain Simpson, drew 36 entries and started in drizzling rain from Eastland's shopping centre on April 25. The first competitive section, McMahons Creek-Noojee, saw two retirements —

Davis/Long (Cortina) and Lake/Mitchell (Colt) — both with fuel system problems. A half hour run up to the Triangle saw Roberts clean and Keran and Watson on one apiece. Keran was enjoying his drive in the bulky Monaro, while Watson was having trouble making the Gordini rev hard enough, a fault which was later cleared up.

Muddy Mt. Selma road caused a few problems with two slightly ambiguous instructions in the route chart. Keran, Bond and Mal McPherson/Robin Sharpley (Gordini) were three of the crews who went wrong here, but only Keran was unable to extricate himself from the mire. The new road from Licola to Jamieson via Mt. Skene was next, with thick fog making things hard for all. Roberts saw best with a three point loss, followed by Bruce Collier/Peter Haas (Gordini) and Colin Wilson/Tony Wunderlich (Gordini) on four points. From frozen Mt. Skene (where the directors allegedly lost their car temporarily because of the thick, icy fog!) crews poured down the mountain range into sleepy Jamieson. Peter Robertson's Cortina was suffering intermittent light failure through a loose fuse box, but saw enough to admire the style of Bond as he literally through the Monaro down the mountain to drop eight points with Watson. Roberts, ever quick, dropped five.

Bond was really in form and on the last control of the first stage, across to Eildon, he passed the Gordinis of Wilson and Collier to drop two. Roberts cleaned (of course) and McPherson dropped one. At Snobs Creek, Roberts/Osborne were way out in front on 12 followed by Watson/McAuliffe 27, Collier/Haas 33, Wilson/Wunderlich 33, Robertson/Bonhomme 36, Bond/Hope 36, McPherson/Sharpley 36. Along the rugged Snobs Creek Road in the second stage, Bond punctured one of his king-sized winter-treads; McPherson, Robertson, Graham Alexander/Geoff Sproat (Torana 161), Watson and Roberts all clean sheeted. Roberts was the only driver to clean the next two controls across to Stockman's Reward, but buckled a wheel and a guard in the process.

McPherson and Watson dropped five each round an extremely slippery and steep loop using Frenchman's Spur and Big River Roads and then it was across



The impressive interior of the Ferguson/Johnson Torana shows the high standard of Firth preparation. ROGER BONHOMME

to Merle Junction, the Triangle and McMahons Creek via Noojee for the stage's final control into Buxton. Roberts kept up the pressure with three points down, but Watson was working hard with new found power to drop five. At Buxton, Roberts was leading on 22, Watson 42, Robertson 60, McPherson 62 and Collier 68.

The last stage headed straight into the Murrundindi Forest with a tricky run north to McDonald Break. Robertson, Roberts, and Watson each dropped three. Then came the loop along Scrubby Creek and Black Range Roads when the lead passed to a surprised Watson. Alexander came through to clean sheet the run to Ginter Break, hotly pursued by Watson on one. At the finish near Mt. Slide, Watson was a clear winner on 50 points, while crews and the directors discussed the application of the small late running time on later cars.

Robertson pipped Roberts by one point for second place (these two crews tied in the first round of the National series), while McPherson/Sharpley and Wilson/Wunderlich tied for fourth place on 82. Richard Creed/Bill Philip (Colt) came through very well to take off the restricted class on 124 points.

## PROVISIONAL RESULTS

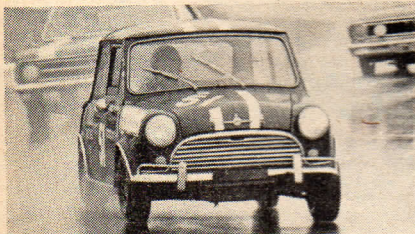
1. Renault (Australia): R. Watson/J. McAuliffe (Gordini) 50 pts.
2. Huntingdale Auto Club: P. Robertson/R. Bonhomme (Cortina) 72 pts.
3. Holden Dealer Team: A. Roberts/M. Osborne (Torana) 73 pts.
4. Colin Wilson: C. Wilson/A. Wunderlich (Gordini) 82 pts.
4. Renault (Australia): M. McPherson/R. Sharpley (Gordini) 82 pts.
6. Renault (Australia): B. Collier/P. Haas (Gordini) 88 pts.

## Australian Rally Championship After Two Rounds (Escort Eureka, Blue Ribbon)

1. Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe (Renault) 18
2. Peter Robertson/Roger Bonhomme (Ford) 8½
3. Mal McPherson/Robin Sharpley (Renault) 6½
3. Tony Roberts/Mike Osborne (Holden) 6½
5. Rex Lunn/John Hall (Toyota) 6
6. Colin Wilson/Tony Wunderlich (Renault) 2½

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# THOMAS/STONE TAKE "TIGER"

Story by TERRY WALKER

**D**UST, DUST, DUST, was the story of the West Australian Car Club's 1970 Tiger Trial, won by the Murray Thomas/Brian Stone VW1600 on March 21.

With the postponement of the Safari into July, the Tiger became the first Championship event of the year, and what a good event it was! Dust aside, it was well laid out and very, very difficult. Mostly a driver's event, the

tyro directors, Neville McWaters and Bob Beames, included a navigation division that caught all the experts napping.

For most of the event, the competitors were dropping the odd point or