

# NARROW WIN FOR HARROWFIELD

Story by "THE CARDINAL"

**GARRY Harrowfield and Geoff Boyd staved off a valiant challenge from Bob Bird/Warwick Smith to win the "Brass Monkey Trial" on April 24 and take the lead in the 1976 Victorian Rally Championship. Dusty conditions prevailed throughout this second heat of the VRC, which traversed the twisty forests from Daylesford to Heathcote.**

Harrowfield/Boyd, in their Gardon Motors Renault 12 Gordini, finished a mere four points ahead of Bird/Smith (Lancer), who lost 118 points for the event. John Dixon/Ian Richards took out third in the Datsun 120Y, on 134. Now fitted with a 1600cc motor, this ex-Bill Evans car is showing enormous potential in Dixon's hands.

The Grade 3 crew of Graham Portman/Ross Runnalls must be considered the hottest property in the "up and coming" market, as their fourth place followed an equal third in the previous round. Their Datsun 1600 lost 147 points during the event, and this included 30 for a missed "via". Runnalls is leading the navigators score in the Clubman Championship sitting beside Bob Phillips, so he would seem set for a successful year. Helmut Goetz/Frank Kilfoyle in their Gemini took out fifth on 152 points, only five ahead of John Coleman/Bertie Peasley in the hastily prepared John Blair Motors Galant 1500.

The start was in Daylesford, only a few miles from the refreshing air of the spa at Hepburn Springs. There were very few crew changes from the "George Derrick," although David Jones in the Chadstone Chrysler Galant had Peter Haas to navigate, while Matt Philip/Mike Mitchell fronted with a Colt Fastback for a nostalgic event.

Lack of wind, tall forests and dry powdery roads made conditions very difficult from the word "go". The dust was to remain a problem throughout the event, with the first car on the road having a definite advantage. After the first batch of competitive sections almost circumnavigating Daylesford, crews headed towards Newstead. Sinclair/Braiser were out when they inverted their Escort on the second competitive.

Despite the dust, Harrowfield/Boyd led on 10 points, with Waterhouse/Patterson 11. Dixon/Richards, Horsefield/O'Donnell and Irish/Ellis were all down 12. The next section, through the Muckelford Forest, was to be costly for many crews. It had eight vias in 27 km to put the pressure on the navigators.

Less than half the field found a via near Castlemaine and this was where Portman/Runnalls went wrong. Dixon was quickest down 11, while Harrowfield and Goetz dropped 12.

Then it was off towards Bendigo and the Axedale Forest for more dust and tight navigation. Bird was making up time from a poor starting position, and was now only nine behind Harrowfield, who was down 40 in all with Dixon between them on 44. Pearson/Shmidt retired the Lancia with a blown motor and Waterhouse (the previous round's winner), ran off the road on a transport and retired.

A long route chart, followed by some diabolical navigation, led crews to Argyle. Seven vias and a control all within two square km was a nightmare in the dust. Ian Swan/Graham Vaux, Portman and

Philip were all down 5, but still quickest, with Bird and Coleman both on six.

Into Heathcote for a halfway break and Harrowfield had kept the R12 Gordini ahead on points to have lost 56. Dixon, in the 120Y, was still four behind on 60, but Bird in the Lancer had the bit between his teeth and was now only one point behind Dixon. Goetz was next best on 68, Philip 72, and Coleman sixth on 77.

The second stage left from north of Costerfield and took crews around Redcastle and off to Whroo. Coleman lost time exploring some new roads, while Philip left a wheel on a stump. Into Whroo and Bird was ahead of Dixon on points to be only four minutes behind Harrowfield, while Goetz had the Gemini operating and was equal with Dixon, nine behind the leader.

Dixon and Harrowfield both hit a tree across the road during a section around Whroo. Dixon damaged his front end slightly, but Harrowfield/Boyd showed that they liked the area and applied the pressure. Bird (when not exploring) and David Dyball/Noel Kelly were the quickest on the Whroo sections. They lost 10 points in the area to Harrowfield's 13.

Four competitors remained as a bedraggled field left Whroo for Costerfield again and the finish of the event. Portman was into his stride by

this time to be fastest on three of these four sections, only to drop a minute to Brown/Brown on the other.

Majors Line was to be the site for the finish only just before dawn. Skilful driving and concentrated navigation gave the event to Gary Harrowfield/Geoff Boyd, with Bob Bird/Warwick Smith a bare four minutes behind and Dixon/Richards 16 minutes further back in third.

Stuart Lister had provided a very challenging event for the Renault Car Club (Dandenong) in their first attempt at a round of the VRC but most crews found the event very enjoyable despite the need for continuous concentration and the dust.

## RESULTS

1. Gardon Motors: G. Harrowfield/G. Boyd (Renault R12 Gordini) ..... 114
2. R. Bird/W. Smith (Lancer) ..... 118
3. Datsun P/L.: J. Dixon/I. Richards (Datsun 120Y) ..... 134
4. G. Portman/R. Runnalls (Datsun 1600) ..... 147
5. H. Goetz/F. Kilfoyle (Gemini) ..... 152
6. John Blair Mtrs.: J. Coleman/B. Peasley (Galant) ..... 157
7. G. Horsefield/G. O'Donnell (Datsun 240Z) ..... 161
8. Chadstone Chrysler: D. Jones/P. Haas (Galant) ..... 189
9. Brad Boyden Datsun: I. Swan/G. Vaux (Datsun 1600) ..... 190
10. A. Pearce/I. Baldock (Datsun 1600) ..... 195

## PROGRESS POINTSCORE

Drivers		Navigators	
G. Harrowfield	15	G. Boyd	15
B. Bird	9 1/2	W. Smith	9 1/2
R. Waterhouse	9	P. Paterson	9
G. Portman	6 1/2	R. Runnalls	6 1/2
J. Dixon	4	I. Richards	4
I. Swan	2	G. Vaux	2
H. Goetz	2	F. Kilfoyle	2
A. Pearce	1	I. Baldock	1
J. Coleman	1	B. Peasley	1