

Navigating for Ken Cusack in the big Monaro by Ian Baldock

(This was written down by Ian in 2009 for Ken's benefit)

Thursday - start at Chadstone, then to Benalla for the start proper.

Then, initially down alongside Mt Samaria to Mansfield (but we never made it that far because the rear wheel bearing collapsed!!) The rest of the field went on to Gippsland, including Mother Hardy's and up to the morning break at Bright for breakfast.

After we repaired the car (putting the missing rear axle back into the car (with new bearing)), we went back thru Benalla, cut across to Bright where we checked in at the break, inside late running time, but many controls lost.

Friday was from Bright across to Wangaratta, then thru the Warby ranges, and across to Shepparton for a quick lunch.

Then it was north west through Barmah forest and across the Murray into NSW on those big open roads (where I took the photo of your speedo doing 108+ mph, then to end the afternoon off, we did some tight work in the wet and flooded roads around the Murray near Kerang, then a transport to take us into the overnight break in Swan Hill.

Friday Night was Swan Hill impound, where we had the official dinner in town, then back to the motel for our only night's break for the event.

Saturday started with us progressing across towards Underbool, where we ran to west of the highway, then north into the Sunset Country thru the gate when we had to stop behind Waterhouse which was where your light bracket 'got towed off'. The 4WD Recovery Official put the tow hook on the light bar and not the big front tow hook !!! With the light bracket tied to the rear boot grab handles, we progressed onto the sandy tracks till we came upon the queue waiting to get up the hill, but we took the 'shortcut' to their left and got bogged once in the sand (where I winched the tree down on myself). When we finally dug ourselves out, we still caught up to everyone on a later hill in the sand. The big LSD Monaro diff worked a treat – as long as you could keep moving! We eventually got out onto the highway and ran to Ouyen, where we spent a few hours putting the car back in order, and I attempted to plot ahead to see how we could skip the least number of controls to still be in the running.

Late Sat night saw us skip about half the stage to roughly north of Charlton, then via some very slippery roads into Charlton for the stage break (I think in a trotting track or sports oval ?).

Early Sunday morning saw us do the final run to Bendigo, via St Arnaud, then north east across the highway to enter the Whipstick from the north west (earlier around sunrise was where we got stuck up that lane where you stalled and tried to restart the car by pouring the fuel directly into the carby - with illuminating results – 6ft flames burning from around the carby until you put it out via the extinguisher – half going back into the carby !). We then fought our way to the final control in the Whipstick forest, and transported into Bendigo.

Sunday afternoon was the transport to Chadstone, via Heathcote, Kilmore & Deepdene, (where we were held until Chadstone was ready for us).

Finally, several weeks later, was the presentation at the BP building in St Kilda Rd where we got our BP medallions.

In brief, a great event which I'm sure I'll never forget.

