

# Toughest ever BP Rally



PICTURE: ON THE COVER is the Torana GTR of Bill Strown: with Geoff Boyd on the back. They finished 12th in the tough event. - Orange Photography pics.

The 16th, and final BP Rally provided a fitting climax to a unique tradition; an event which provides more "happenings" and stories than all other rallies put together. The event, which supposedly could be won with "a good navigator in a hired taxi cab" (but never was) has proved over its history to be the magnet for all rally competitors. THE event to win. The last of the "old-fashioned" rallies - where it is a major achievement just to finish and where competitors say proudly "I have competed in the Beep".

To finish off an era, director Mike Osborne, his associates Frank Kilfoyle, Ian Home, and John Pryce and the veritable army of assistants and helpers, presented a perfectly balanced package, a fine blend of divisions and sections testing both driving and navigating skills - without resorting to tricks or gimmicks, and where "local knowledge" played little or no part. Lacking only three things to be 100% complete - namely, snow, rain and NSW entrants (all somewhat beyond the control of the organisers) the last BP will, nonetheless, be remembered as one of the finest of a fine series of events.

Winners Andy Chapman/Laurie Comerford, in the Surrey Motors Datsun 1600 were consistently highly placed

throughout the event, combining accurate navigation with rapid error free driving to drop 128 points overall. Second place went to the Mollison Motors Torana XU1 crewed by Mat Phillip/Roger Bonhomme only 13 points behind the winners on 141 followed by the Gil Davis/Peter Haas works Datsun 180B, a further 3 points in arrears on 144 points.

Twenty one points separated 3rd from the 4th placed Holden Dealer's Team - Kingswood crewed by Colin Bond/Warwick Smith with the ULR Sales Range Rover of Richard Creed/Tony Wunderlich 5th down 179 points and the Renault Australia entered Peugeot 504 of Bob Watson/Jeff Beaumont following in 6th place down 200 points.

First and second outright took out the Class B and C prizes respectively while Class A was won by the Honda Civic of Lawrence Graham/Ian Inglis finishing a very distant equal 30th outright on 1009 points. This gives some idea of the demanding nature of the event, most of the Class A cars (under 1300cc) struggling to finish.

**THE ENTRY**

A near capacity field of 59 cars faced the starter at Benalla after rallying from the various assembly points. Amongst the Adelaide starters crews who have placed well in previous BPs and who are expected to figure prominently again were Stewart McLeod/Adrian Mortimer in the SAD-City State Torana XU1, the privately entered ex-works R.L.Z. Gordini of Tom Barr-Smith/Rob Hunt, the well tried Kimberley of John Taylor/Graham West and the works Datsun 180B of Chris Murray/Jack Lock.

Fancied Hobart starters were Lyn Gigney/Ross Kelly (VW)

with a 1972, notably a 1972 VW mounted and the phenomenally worn, (over 300,000 mile) ex-taxi Holden of Rod Barwick/Don Reid.

The Queensland contingent formed a small but select band led by Mazda RX3 mounted Hank Kabel/Cedric Reinhardt backed up by Joseph Deamicis/Bob Dancer, (also Mazda mounted) with Bryan Evans/John Suominen (Datsun 240Z) and Allan Lawson/Murray Coote (Datsun 1200) completing the "banana bunch".

Leading the Melbourne based onslaught were current State Champions Gil Davis/Peter Haas in the works Datsun 180B, the surprise Holden Dealer Team entry of a 308 V8 Kingswood crewed by ARC Champion Colin Bond and Warwick Smith, the eventual winners Chapman/Comerford, last years winning car the Renault entered 504 Peugeot of Bob Watson/Jeff Beaumont and the Mat Phillip/Roger Bonhomme Torana XU1. Other favoured Datsun entries were the Autosport entered 180B of John Armitage and Robin Sharpley, the Bruce Wilson/Mike Mitchell 180B and the Surrey Motors entered 180B of Barrie Edmonds/Rex Muldoon.

The real touch of glamour, provided by the event's first and only all-girl crew of Glynne Roberts and Jean Reid also chose Datsun for the journey.

Amongst the more unusual vehicles entered, the two attracting the most attention were the ULR Sales Range Rover (V8, 4 wheel drive and multi-feet of ground clearance) of Richard Creed/Tony Wunderlich and the diminutive (and very comfortable) Citroen GS of Dean Rainsford/Bruce Norton.

Amongst the various makes the most popular choice was Datsun with 15 entries followed by Holden 12 (9 Toranas) Renault 7, Chrysler 6 (mainly Galants) and Ford, Peugeot, Mazda and VW all with 3 followers.

Thus a wide and varied assortment of vehicles, covering the main stream of Australian motoring faced, with varying degrees of nervousness and prospect of being pounded for 1800 odd miles over a period of 64 hours.

**DIVISION 1 - THE MOUNTAINS**

The facing page gave only the bald facts - running time 8 hrs 19 mins, distance 320 miles, division end Bright. Omitted were some of the more difficult and arduous conditions - three climbs to over 5,000 ft; the narrow rocky, rutted, drop down Valencia Creek past what is now the well known Mother Hardy's, and the flat chat "Alpine" run from the Hotham Heights Triangle to Harrierville.

The opening section to the start proper, at Moorngay, was uneventful, except for the presence of the "speed trap" - a quick introduction for interstate entrants to one of the niceties of trialling in Victoria.



Section 2 opened hostilities in a fast run around Mt Maria and down the Blue Range to a junction north of Edge Creek. Numerous trees were across the road held up leading competitors and swayed the back runners to fly close up on the field. The Victorian crew of John Lor/Bruce Taylor (Cortina) showed a remarkable facility to hold an axe - while Victorians and South Australians stood back and watched in admiration. Fastest were Davis/Haas (Datsun) and Watson/Beaumont (Peugeot) were followed by Barr-Smith/Hunt (Renault) while the Bond/Smith Kingswood decided to derange the front end on a stump, stopping 32 in the process.

Secretary General Dr Thomson, sent the competitor off into the fog over the summit of Mt Skene (5,155 ft), into the valley to Licola (a 679 ft) then up the long over Mt Arbuckle (5,622) through the McFarlane S to the control location of Moroka River.

The long drag started to the crews and despite the of navigational content points losses were high. Holdens of Bond/Smith



RALLYING in Sunraysia country always gives the navigators plenty of work opening gates South Australian Norm Vincent (left) rushes to the chore as Tony O'Grady in the Torana sits and waits. The crew finished 32nd in the event. (Barry Edmunds). In a shiny red Kingswood V8 Colin Bond and Warwick Brown (lower left) roll off the ramp at Chatswood Shopping Centre to start the event - they finished fourth. (Orange Photography). Winners were privateers Andy Chapman and Laurie Comerford (right) who drove a Datsun 1600 with Surrey Motors backing. They lost 128 points in the four day event. (Chris Brown). Renault team leader Bob Watson and Jeff Beaumont (below) brought their Peugeot 504 home in sixth place - flapping headlight rim indicates signs of contact with scenery. (Chris Brown).

LARGE crowd gathered at Melbourne's Chatswood Shopping Centre to send BP competitors on their way. Cars in foreground are the John and Bruce Taylor Cortina from Tasmania, which finished 17th, and the M Williams/Barry Fletcher Torana from Victoria which finished 42nd. (Barry Edmunds).





THE BP Rally of South East Australia has always had strong support from all states except NSW where drivers don't like navigation, sand or mud. Among the 58 cars that started the last BP were Bryan Evans and John Suominen from Queensland in a Datsun 240Z that is seen (left) negotiating a flooded section of road with assistance from a 'friend'. They finished 21st. (Orange Photography). Better equipped to cope with mud and sand was the Range Rover of Richard Creed and Tony Wunderlich (right). Car still got bogged when it broke through crust of dry salt lake - but finished creditable 5th outright in the event (Chris Brown).

Harrierville to Bright were a drivers delight. Set at average speeds varying from 44 to 48 mph over good gravel roads the faster drivers really let their hair down - although some paid the penalty for their over-exuberance. The Watson/Beaumont Peugeot kissed a bank somewhat passionately and from that point on preferred right hand to left hand corners, and Allan Hallifax/Bill Grainger (Datsun) visited the shrubbery on the run to Harrierville.

Best performances for the three sections were posted by Bond/Smith (4, 0, 1) Barr-Smith/Hunt (5, 1, 2) and Davis/Haas (7, 0, 2). The Hallifax/Grainger Datsun was the only car to clean section 6 but met a sticky end on section 7 to put paid to their BP. Apart from the front end problems on section 2, Colin Bond found the Kingswood to be entirely suitable for rallying. The positions at the end of Division I were - 1. Gil Davis/Peter Haas (Datsun) 16; 2. Bob Watson/Jeff Beaumont (Peugeot) 17; 3. Andy Chapman/Laurie Comerford (Datsun) 28; 4. Tom Barr-Smith/Rob Hunt (Renault) and Mat Phillip/Roger Bonhomme (Torana) 33; 6. Chris Murray/Jack Lock (Datsun) 36.

**DIVISION II - PLANTATIONS**

Re-starting from Bright, Division II presented a marked contrast to the first Division. The roads changed from the mountain gravel to the narrow dirt/mud/gravel tracks of the NE Victorian Plantations. Section 9 skirted the eastern edge of the Porepunkah Plantation, via Havilah to Happy Valley - the narrow slippery dirt roads through the bush meant that nobody achieved the set 47.5 mph average. Nearest were Bond/Smith down 5, followed by Davis/Haas, Watson/Beaumont and Helmut Goetz/Mike Prendergast (Datsun) all on 8, with no less than 11 cars down 9 including the Torana of Malcolm Williams/Barry Fletcher and the Armitage/Sharpley Datsun.

The next competitive section was a typical BP type Plantation Bush - starting on the southern edge of the Ovens Plantation, the section finished at the opposite side just south of Barwidgee, and presented the first real test for the navigators. The existence of plantation maps eased the burden somewhat and it became a matter of following the rather tortuous route instead of a

POURING the power on to avoid getting bogged Tasmanians Raymond Lon and John Brock (below) negotiate a sandy track in their Datsun 180B en route to 16th place. (Orange Photography).

**STOP**

ip/Bonhomme both ed. Watson/Beaumont ed 2. Davis/Haas .6, od/Mortimer (XU1) 7, and nan/Comerford 9 while st of the field tailed away 100. tion 5 "Turton's Twist" the competitors their first of rough roads. Set at the verage of 28 mph the run the Valencia Creek Road, the now infamous Mother 's (a skiers survival hut for who are curious), across



hunting expedition - the directors relying on competitors becoming confused enough in the maze of bends and junctions to drop valuable points.

No less than 12 crews remained un-confused to clean the section, including the little Citroen GS of Rainsford/Norton and the Tasmanian crews Trevor Garrett/Terry Bracken (Galant), Pooley/Tyson (VW) and Ray Long/John Brock (Datsun).

Section 12 led the field

through the southern reaches of the Stanley Plantation and now the navigators started work in earnest, as they attempted to find the correct route - usually mapped as a track of somewhat doubtful quality. A manned 'via' hidden away in the bush claimed many victims and the losses mounted while competitors searched for the road into the control at Bruarong.






Bond/Smith showed it could

be done, while Barr-Smith/Hunt just missed to drop 1. Next best were Creed/Wunderlich (Range Rover) down 2, with Pooley/Tyson and Phillip/Bonhomme together on 4 just ahead of Goetz/Prendergast, Bruce Shepherd/David Hodge (Renault) and Ros Turner/Ian Pearson (Galant) all down 5. The Murray/Lock Datsun decided to deposit its diff on the road during this

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SUNRAYSA sand in BP bogged many cars, here the Mazda Capella of Joseph Deamicis and Col Thatcher from Queensland is being pushed out as a fellow competitor waits to get by. The Mazda crew placed 28th in the event. (Orange Photography).




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The Garret/Bracken Galant blasted through to drop 5 ahead of Chapman/Comerford, Barr-Smith/Hunt and Wilson/Mitchell all down 11. Phillip/Bonhomme continued their good run to drop 12, followed by Goetz/Prendergast followed by McPherson/Geoff Thomas (Renault) both 13.

Following the horrors of the sand stretches many cars lost bulk points at the Ouyen Impound; hardest hit being the Renault 12s of Barr-Smith/Hunt and David Jones/Fritz Suendermann both of whom require; major exhaust repairs.

Progressive placings at the end of Division IV had Chapman/Comerford leading on 98 followed by Davis/Haas 108, Phillip/Bonhomme 115, Barr-Smith/Hunt 118 (including 20 at the Impound for exhaust repairs) and then a long gap to Wilson/Mitchell on 147 and Bond/Smith 153.

### DIVISION V - CALM BEFORE THE STORM

The run from Ouyen to Charlton proved to be a relatively simple and straight forward series of sections traversing part of the area covered earlier in Division IV. The open, flat country meant that navigation was limited to accurate plotting and trying to maintain concentration on some of the longer sections. The division average of 45 mph really told the story.

Three cars shared the honours for the Division all down 2; Phillip/Bonhomme making a late bid for victory, Creed/Wunderlich trying to wipe out the ignominy of their bogging in division IV, and the Bond/Smith Kingswood whose 2 point loss was 1 early and 1 late. Barr-Smith/Hunt followed closely down 3 while Chapman/Comerford were next on 5. Edmonds/Muldoon and Gigney/Kelly shared sixth place, down 8 while the winch-bound Peugeot of Watson/Beaumont hung on grimly for seventh losing 9. Armitage/Sharpley made a reappearance amongst the leaders down eleven with the much worked ex-marathon Hunter of David Jones/Ron Jay next on 14.

At the cold bleak Charlton Impound (where the food ran out) the positions were Chapman/Comerford holding their lead down 103, Phillip/Bonhomme moving into second slot on 117, Barr-Smith/Hunt upholding the honour of interstate crews on 121 while Davis/Haas slipped a couple of slots to 124. Wilson/Mitchell dropped to 6th place on 165, while Bond/Smith closed the gap a little to finish on 155 in fifth slot.

Thus the stage was set for the ultimate BP division - the last of the last.

### DIVISION VI - THE WESTERN FORESTS

Division VI opened quietly with a plotting exercise in the grid roads around Yeungroon - most crews cleaned.

Section 45 - a short (15 mile) run through Berrimal to Bromley Park started to separate the field - eventual Class A winners Lawrence Graham/Ian Inglis (Honda Civic) charged through in fine style and nominated the wrong time to be 2 early. The best the rest could do was 2 late shared by Bond/Smith and Phillip/Bonhomme from 5 cars bunched together on 3.

Section 46 again provided a breather with most crews clean - however, amongst the later runners the toll of missed passage controls was mounting as the sicker cars were nursed along in determined bids to finish. The partly route charted section through the northern reaches of the St Arnaud Forest presented no problems to the leading six cars, who all cleaned - closely followed by Creed/Wunderlich and Edmonds/Muldoon (now in their favourite area) both down 1. Taylor/West and Bryan Evans/John Suominen (Datsun 240Z) shared the next position on 3.

Continuing the run through the forest to Stuart Mill, section 48 again had a bunch of cars locked together without loss. The Taylor/West Kimberley joined their leaders in a late bid for the spoils.

Section 49 saw the field head east then swing north to Emu with the leaders still inseparably stuck together. This section saw the last hope of the interstate entries drop out when the Barr-Smith/Hunt Renault broke a rear stub axle while in second place and within striking distance of outright honours. Just behind the lead east some of the late runners were making their presence felt - the "beast" Monaro of Ken Cusack/Ian Baldock shared a 2 point 1 with Strownix/Boyd now revelling in their own backyard.

The run from Emu through Burkes Flat to McIntyres saw multiple check points exacting their toll. Bond/Smith dropped 1 to be the lowest scorer for the section.

The following section - to Melville Caves showed the results of some earlier mapping, perhaps, when the Jonas/Suendermann Renault showed the field the way and then dropped points by nominating an incorrect time to be 3 early. Roberts/Adcock

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cleaned the section. Bond/Smith continued their flying run home to be next best on 2, with Davis/Haas, Creed/Wunderlich and Watson/Beaumont down 5. The two leaders in Chapman/Comerford and Phillip/Bonhomme stumbled a little to drop 12 and 11 respectively but both recovered in the remaining sections to hold their positions.

Section 52 maintained the pressure on the tired navigators with a short route chart through the scrub, gates and rocks, then two 'via' points to the control south of Inglewood. To add to the problems a bog hole at a creek crossing just after 'via' II claimed a number of cars, the worst hit being the Roberts/Adcock Datsun. Chapman/Comerford joined Bond/Smith on 3 to be the leaders for the section with Davis/Haas and the 404 Peugeot of Robert Waterhouse/Brian Amey sharing second best down 4, from a group of three cars sharing 5.

Planned as the penultimate section the run to Neilborough South via the speed trap at Bridgewater turned out to be the last. The final section through the Whipstick Scrub being deleted when an error was discovered in the route instructions. The leading cars all cleaned, except for Bond/Smith who dropped a couple while plotting ahead. Close behind the leaders dropping 1 was a group of 4 cars including the Trevor Elze/Peter Pickering VW, Wilson/Mitchell, Pooley/Tyson and Hutchinson/Brazier.

With the deletion of the final section the last BP was over, the final division being taken out by Bond/Smith down 10 from Watson/Beaumont 16, Creed/Wunderlich 19, Davis/Haas 20, Phillip/Bonhomme 24, Chapman/Comerford 25 and Taylor/West 37.

Provisional results for the top 10 are: - 1st Chapman/Comerford (Vic) Datsun 1600, 128; 2nd

Phillip/Bonhomme (Vic) Torana XU1, 141; 3rd Davis/Haas (Vic) Datsun 180B, 144; 4th Bond/Smith (NSW/Vic) Kingswood, 155; 5th Creed/Wunderlich (Vic) Range Rover, 179; 6th Watson/Beaumont (Vic) Peugeot 504, 200; 7th Wilson/Mitchell (Vic) Datsun 180B, 271; 8th Edmonds/Muldoon (Vic) Datsun 180B, 318; 9th Gigney/Kelly (Tas) VW, 353; 10th Taylor/West (SA) Kimberley, 354.

The most outstanding impression of the 16th BP is the fanatical desire of the competitors to finish, 52 out of 59 paraded at Chadstone. Malcolm McCallum/John Bradford (Escort) arrived at the finish with a blown motor and no back window, Max McGinley/Giunio Leoncini finished in a 4 cylinder Colt equipped with only 3 pistons. Hartley Ruskin/Peter Burley (16TS) rejoined the event after a bad roll early in the piece: added Tony Pennell/Colin Abbey (XU1), Arthur Treloar/Jerry Browne (Renault 12) battled or after breaking a drive shaft while the small Class A cars of Philip George/Ian Swan and Roger McKinnon/Robert Water pressed on to the finish in the hope of collecting a place in the decimated class.

Amongst the crews the appearance honours were won by the all-girl (and I mean All-girl) crew of Glynne Rober and Jean Reid who put up a fir effort to finish in 43rd spot (71 in Class) in their first major trial, and who always looked picture much to the delight of spectators, officials and other crews.

Finally a vote of thanks must be given to the Director Mike Osborne and his crew, the Light Car Club of Australia as BP as organisers and sponsors plus all those officials, score marshals and even the speed trap pilots who made the 16 BP a memorable experience worthy of the title - the LAST BP - Bruce Norton.