

2008 BP Ultimate Rally Report

Old BP Rally returns

from Ross Rannalls

Being four years since the last old BP, and with the hype generated by not only the Director, crews gathered at the event start Pakenham with great expectations and enthusiasm coupled with equal levels of trepidation as to what lay in store.

In the pre-event environment of nervous excitement, there was some consternation expressed about the apparently seeded start order. It was balloted within grades supplied on entries, so as to avoid faster drivers battling in dust, which appeared most likely at time of determination of start order; hence the traditional BP random ballot start order was dispensed with. Of course it rained in the week prior and dust was replaced by fog and slime.

The event start was on a grassed area adjacent to BP Lakeside Pakenham and the cosy Ted's Gills and Grills fish and chip shop, which served well for Book In, even though Nick and Glad claimed that The Grayn at the other end of Pakenham would have provided more salubrious surroundings. It did not stop Nick tucking into Ted's fish and chips though. *(I'm embarrassed to admit that that was my second visit in a day to Ted's as my day job is just across the highway and we frequently partake of the best chips for miles around for our lunch—Ed).*

Of the 49 entries, Ian Swan and Bruce Dunn withdrew, but their navigators Matt de Vaus and Rob Wilson were so keen to compete, that they cobbled together an entry with car graciously loaned by David McAdam. Ian must have had serious work commitments. Graham Pate/Paul Franklin were also a late withdrawal. Russell Opie did the start control, getting competitors into the phone sealing drill.

The Assembly Stage gave navigators the opportunity to plot the first division on a straightforward drive to BP Stratford where John Seymour from nearby Maffra operated the control overseeing his sons as trainees.

Division One

The first section was a Touring warm up which largely followed the rail line through Munro and Fernbank, where Rob Bride was on the passage, to Roger Baker on the control below Lindenow South. Despite the quiet zones through these hamlets, one local resident got upset and called the police out. 18 cleaned, and some navigators were obviously rusty and in need of the warm up.

A transport followed north across the Mitchell River to Glen McAliece, who kindly offered to set up and do a control while in the area preparing for his East Gippsland Stages the next weekend. He was assisted by the withdrawn Graham Pate.

From Wuk Wuk, a 57 km competitive ensued via Bullumwaal, where some Bairnsdale locals lead by Ross McPherson did the passage.

Bullumwaal was a challenging control to reach in 1963 over Mt Baldhead from Omeo and in 1968, (when the supplied map was a brand new 1:250,000 map), from the north east after negotiating

the maze of roads between here and Bruthen, very much in reverse to this year

Generally, following the signposts was enough to keep out of trouble. Unfortunately many failed to see the rally entry marker on a grid, and tried to go via the farmhouse that we promised to avoid to get to the ford over the Nicholson River where John Douch was snapping bow waves. Andrew Roberts did the PR run for the first few sections, and set up this one and did the control about 8 km from home at Sarsfield. Five crews cleaned.



Winners Rawson/Brown making a splash

PIC JOHN DOUCH

Next was the longest section of the event, a 98 km fang up Nicholson Creek Road, Engineers Rd, Baldhead Rd, across Grassy Ridge and Mt Delusion Rd to Cassilis Gap, where Bruce Hall and Barry Collins were perched high on the Divide in the snow gums. While Engineers Rd may never have been used previously in a BP, Baldhead Rd was used in 1963 as part of a long haul from Omeo to Bullumwaal on what was described as "logging roads" at the time.

Five crews cleaned a section that contained the odd slippery corner and encroaching fog. Seven crews managed to exceed late time at this early stage. Unfortunately in mountain forest country, it can take a while to figure out where you are, if you have strayed from the right(eous) path.

The transport into the Omeo fuel and service break crossed an icy bridge, which gave a few drivers heart flutters.

Omeo has a deep BP tradition. Five BPs went over the top, stopping for fuel in Omeo each time. Byron Symons at the service station remembers as a kid when the burn marks on the ceiling of the workshop arose during one BP on an inevitable cool May evening when the locals threw too many snow gum stumps on the fire, nearly burning down the workshop. It used to be BP but, Byron, a keen Holden racing supporter, changed over to Mobil in 1992.

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Stuart Lister was on hand to advise later crews as to their cut and run options, if late time was accruing. McKinnon/Ellis, Tidd/Birrell, Ward/Stranger, Clark/Gadsby, Shepherd/Shepherd and Hall/Hall, were finding it tough on inexperienced navigators, or on those that had not fully absorbed and understood the pre-event Navigator's Guide, having exceeded late time into Omeo. Bruce Shepherd reckoned that young Tim was doing fine on the maps; it was just the Peugeot 403's 40hp at the back wheels which was hampering forward progress. Ninnes/Bellew missed all controls up till Omeo. Keith Winter/Paul Maurer gave it away here with front end damage in the Volvo. Rob and Pam Knight opted to avoid more in the mountains, and cut to Myrtleford due to missing two gears with selector problems.

After the break it was a short transport climb out Connleys Rd above the lights of Omeo to Digger Kent and Cal Stapleton. The time was wound back a few minutes on the Knocker Track section, when it was learnt that cattle camp on the ridges at night, hence the gates could be left open on the superb road along the valley to Bingo Munjie. A bit too superb for George Davidson Jnr, who brought a halt to the much anticipated event of George Snr, when he shoved the Stanza into a bank. This gave George Snr the excuse to look up his old flame Billie in Omeo though. Hartmann/Smith retired here with gearbox problems after working very hard to get a new car ready in time for the event.

The time was wound back a little too much as no-one cleaned, but Rawson/Brown dropped 1, Officers 2, Gibson/Cole 4 and then a heap on 5. The rest must have been on lookout for the local copper on the 10 km bitumen stretch down the Omeo Valley.

The Knocker Track was notoriously used in 1963, when it was a steep narrow, wet and foggy track. It has improved a little, but had to be climbed this time, to where Peter Fraser was doing duties, again high up in the snow gums at the foot of Mt Wills.

Graeme Hoinville tells the story, when sweeping the Knocker Track section in 1963 in an Austin Freeway, he came across the abandoned Morris Major of Ken Tubman after hitting a tree and holing the radiator. They towed the car out of the section, having to cut the fan belt and crank up the Major, minus cooling, to get up the hill out of the 9 Mile Ck. When they got into Omeo, they discovered that Ken had headed off in a borrowed Ford 100 tow truck up the Omeo Hwy to the other end of the Knocker Tk. A phone call to the Blue Duck Inn at Anglers Rest, just missed them. Ken got quite a shock, when he could not find the car where they thought they left it. Having convinced themselves that they had gone too far and missed the car, they tried to turn the truck around and promptly broke the steering. Weren't they surprised to find the Major in Omeo when they finally trudged back into town, the Rally having moved on.

What was meant to be an amble down the Omeo Highway to Granite Flat, with a maximum speed limit, was turned by fog into the slowest section of the event. The experienced and capable

David Hodge stuffed it into a bank. Two did not want to stop and talk to Ralph Price at the Lightning Creek Via, while ten crews WDeD, and so avoided the deep water crossing, where anyone in less than water tight Datsuns got a wet arse, maps, phones, cameras and whatever else was not 20 cm off the floor. Alan Hall performed recovery, all caught on film by the intrepid camera crew of Steve Richards and Ian Crook. His daughter Jenny Cole with Greg Gibson, spent 50 minutes too long chatting with dad here, while Greg tried to restart the BMW.

Fernie/Floyd 10, Officers and Upton/Laidlay 11, Philip/Bainbridge 16 and Ahearne/Garth were quickest of those that went through the water. David West and friends from Albury greeted the wet and sodden at Granite Flat, just south of Mitta Mitta.

In 1968 a section commencing at Cravensville went via Mitta Mitta in order to enter Tawonga from the East over Trappers Gap. A new but old track along the powerlines, for any event let alone the BP, was found to get to Tawonga from the east this time. It was probably reflective of sections of the Omeo Highway back in the 60s when Donald Thomson warned crews "This is the most mountainous and remote area of Victoria. The narrow roads are mostly good, but one track is rough and steep... if you go down a wrong road, do not return as quickly as you went in, as someone else may be en route to the same dead end. MANNERS?, COMMONSENSE and DETERMINATION - TAKE NO SILLY CHANCES". Enough to make you want to stay home by the fire.

The first 25 km followed a narrow and rocky power transmission line service track until the Trappers Gap Road. Some spoilt competitors complained that this road was rough, after Mick Carey and I spent an afternoon removing each rock and stick off the road surface, then for the fuel reduction burn at course check time to unleash more rocks and logs back on to the road. Fortunately the fire did not burn the curtains across the track, which so puzzled a number of competitors. I could only conclude that they were meant to keep cattle from straying onto the Omeo Highway. Watson/McAuliffe and Snell/McGrath were obviously thrown by it and got lost for a while, while Chris Hall and Noel Peers wandered off on the Dorchap Range Track of no return. Fortunately the recovery crew made the long trip to retrieve them in time to be seen at the finish on Sunday. Maurice Blackwood/Simon Crane, all the way from Sydney on this Red Centre Gold Coast test run planted it, wall of death style into a bank 2 km before the end of the section at Mountain Creek where Ron and Jan Harper were camped.

Officers 1, Devenish/Wylie 2, Douglas/Gigney 3 and Fernie/Floyd 4, revelled in the scrubby, bony and still foggy conditions.

The 85 km transport through Myrtleford was welcome respite, but a struggle for tiring crews, before a 29 km touring section from Liz Partington and Maria Brodtman at Whorouly through Bobinawarrah, where the establishment date of the local hall was also requested in the 1963 BP Rally, to Terry Naish and Barb

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Adams at their front gate at Laceby. Alan Upton arrived with a winch holding the rear end up. The appropriate bolt was quickly fetched from Terry's Datsun collection. 18 crews cleaned but some of the top crews managed to confuse themselves on this one. Mike Batten/Dave McKenzie retired their Datsun 1600 here with lack of oil pressure.

From Laceby it was a short run into the Wangaratta division break via the Glenrowan BP complex.

Division and outright results after Control 11 were:

Officer/Officer	.23
Rawson/Brown	.33
Fernie/Floyd	.35
Upton/Laidlay	.36
Harper/Gallacher	.37
Cuthbert/Smalley	.46
Baker/McAdam	.46

Division Two

The dawn drizzle cleared for the 10.00 am restart, and the short drive out to Killawarra Forest for the first drop off route chart of the event. A similar drop off route chart, but in the reverse direction was used for the 1966 BP, and 1972 required crews to find their way to the North East gate exit to this interesting little forest. Event leaders Dinta and Kate Officer retired in here with a broken axle, so were relegated to service crew for the remaining Lovell Springs team car. Drivers enjoyed the tight conditions. Nine crews cleaned the 18 km section, and losses were light as the differences between the alternate routes were little to find Gary Gourlay on the western gate into the forest. The youngest crew in the event, McKinnon/Ellis were struggling with the navigation, but kept smiling, despite missing Ben and Millie Verschuur's passage on the route chart. A camera at the first decision point following the end of the route chart caught a range of choices.

28 crews cleaned the 66 km touring section to another helpful local, Rob Upstill, west of Katamatite, but 11 crews missed noting the letter box at the straightforward Via 1. A few missed Bruce Chisholm's passage on the Broken Ck at Boosey, while all managed to negotiate the two big bearded blokes; Olly and Mongrel on the passage, and the now tricky ford at Katamatite, since some authority tried to place a barrier across the approach to the crossing.

15 crews cleaned and seven were 1 minute late on the short 9 km competitive, that took in the pretty little slippery and rocky ford at Dunbulbalane, which was used in the 1962 BP and again in 1968 as the very first control after a Shepparton Trial stage start. Geoff Sefton was on the passage, and Peter Parry and Rob

Willet the control. Rawson/Brown stopped in the water again, but had now figured out that it might have something to do with the plastic electric fan. Wallis/Nicholas were also detained here. Riseborough/Kilsby made use of the very helpful local National Tractor Pull Champion to fix their loose wheels, and then had to move swiftly to Swan Hill to keep within late time.

Another long and easy touring section followed through Numurkah and Picola to the Barmah Forest for another drop off route chart, which left crews to find the most direct way south out of the forest to Picola West. Baker/McAdam and Coutts-Smith/Snooks clean,

Ashton/Nixon 1, Ninnes/Bellew 2, and Rawson/Brown 3 were the best.

Then it was transport into Barmah, the only Victorian town north of the Murray River, before crossing into NSW to the Bama Forest for another drop off route chart. Due to a misunderstanding in relation to new NSW Police event permit requirements, at a



Ted Perkins / Gerry Bashford at Nicholson River

PICTURE BY JOHN DOUTCH

late stage, sections in NSW did not incur penalties for lateness. This did not seem to bother competitors much, as it saved navigators from embarrassment, and drivers could enjoy some really fun forest driving. Russell Day found time to take some photos at his passage. Geoff and Roger Byron took time out from set up duties to do a control, as they did not have to keep moving ahead, with the overnight rest break coming up. Ken and Lee Harper's Escort gearbox cried enough, while Ken was just starting to warm up.

After a service break at Moama BP, it was off to Perricoota for a 62 km drop off sort of route chart, where crews had to follow a sequence of signposts, but did not know the distances between them. Kim Harper and Dave Gallacher went out in sympathy with Dad, when they clobbered a tree hard. We understand that the steering arm was a problem before the off. Tom and Adam Kaitler were also doing a control on the end of set up duties.

A short drive through Barham, then it was back into the river forests, from Colin Pomroy, on his way home from holidays up north, on a touring section alongside Little Murray River, an anabranch off the big one, up to Murrabit, where the forest was exited along a particularly potholed bit of road onto the NSW plains, finishing with a narrow lane which would have been sticky if wet, into Russell Opie, the last set up official on duty at Mellool.

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Into Division end and welcome sleep, Division Two stars after Control 24 were:

Baker/McAdam	.....0
Knight/Knight	.....3
Gibson/Cole	.....5
Upton/Laidlay	.....12
Rawson/Brown	.....12

Outright positions were:

Rawson/Brown	.....45
Baker/McAdam	.....46
Upton/Laidlay	.....48
Wilson/Bonhomme	.....62
Fernie/Floyd	.....65

With five crews from 8th between 101 and 103

Division Three

Cuthbert/Smalley did not restart due to not enough gears, and were able to sleep in while everyone was up for a 6.30 am start, in time to witness sunrise in the rear view mirrors as they headed west into instant Mallee sand for two long touring sections.

It must have been too early a rise for the older crews of Wilson/Bonhomme and Watson/McAuliffe who had out of character points losses, while 26 cleaned on the 83 km through Waitchie country which included fast and narrow lanes, many crests, a salt lake, detour round the edge of a newly sown paddock and a narrow scrubby lane over many sand dunes into control at Piangil West, where service crews waited.

Not far into the next 69 km touring, Coutts-Smith/Snooks opted for the original road across a salt pan, rather than the long cut and became bogged, and burnt out the Volvo clutch during extrication proceedings. Via 2 was located at the junction of the 35° parallel of latitude and 143° meridian of longitude. Everyone detected the realignment and found the passage at Koimbo from the correct direction. 30 cleaned the run into Moss Tank along beautiful wide sweeping sandy roads.

The first competitive section for the day wound along the northern edge of the Annuello Flora and Fauna Reserve, with the ever expanding almond farms to the north. A County Plan excerpt was supplied to assist in finding Cramenton from the South. The instructions stated: "While the correct location of CRAMENTON from Broadbents could be debated, if you find the location as specified and marked on the County map, you will experience success. While this area has no recorded BP history, I felt that Cramenton looked awfully lonely at the end of a road dangling in a great expanse of nothing. I also feel it has definite potential to enter the annals, and may even get up some anals as well." It was also the first designated sand section and saw everyone have a go, but many got briefly bogged, some for longer, usually due to someone else being stuck in front. Thompson/Brocklebank had been regularly topping up a leaking automatic transmission, but the combination



Graham Wallis/ Phil Nicholas

PICTURE BY JOHN DOUTCH

of sand, oil and hot exhaust gave them a fire to deal with as well as debogging activities. A few missed the Information, apparently due to it being hidden by a bogged car. The lengths some competitors will go to to foil the opposition. Rawson/Brown clean, Devenish/Wylie 1, Hall/Hall 2, and Upton/Laidlay, Wilson/Bonhomme 4 handled it best.

The next touring to Kiamal just North of Ouyen, saw only 10 clean and 8 crews WD control rather than risk further points losses after being stuck and exceed late time after being allowed only 40 minutes late time up to Ouyen.

Rob Dyer and Richard Davies started the event at Swan Hill, but bowed out at Ouyen with exhaust damage beyond repair.

Pink Lakes was a leisurely 76 km tour with 13 clean, but a number of the fancied crews dropped their bundles by turning off onto a grotty and getting stuck in sand, rather than just keeping to the good road. Geoff Boyd and Ian Ellis on time out from unexciting start/end of division duties were kept amused with 12 WDs at a passage in the Mamengorook Bush Reserve. Upton/Laidlay lost an hour deep in sand, and WDeD as well. Baker/McAdam slipped back further after their great overnight position with a 38, while Wilson/Bonhomme and Rawson/Brown also had the buckets and spades out in the sand pit.

Clay Lake, the director's favourite, dropped crews off after 5.5 km in the middle of a huge salt bush plain, leaving them 7.0 km, as the crow flies, and 7.4 km by road to reach control. That is not too much variation from a straight line, but most decided to explore the northern extremities of the plain before finding the westerly exit. Seven crews wasted 20-50 minutes, before WDing control North of Tutye where Jenny Pollock had made the long drive from Melbourne. Simon Brown takes credit for being the pied piper leading a convoy of up to six rats astray here. Upton/Laidlay, had many tracks to pick from, after their time in the sand, and were quickest on 4, to Maddock/Kelly and Ahearne/Garth 5, Baker/McAdam 6 (into the event lead!), and the Shepherds 7.

18 cleaned the Touring into Cowangie, where a sign proclaims it as the home of Larry Perkins. Service crews anxiously waited silhouetted on the horizon along with Robert Richards as control official/crowd controller, to be greeted by the elderly pensioners, Maddock/Kelly from Tassy in their yellow Gemini, emerging across

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more salt flats as first car on the road. Mike studiously and chattily went about letting the tyres down for the following sand stage.

After a brief hello to the waiting crowds, it was cross the highway and railway into Cowangie South. Crews were informed that the derelict house on the right 2.5 km after Via 1 was the ancestral home of Eddie Perkins. The kids, including Larry, wore a track with ruts 3 feet deep around the house with their ancient A model Ford paddock car, presumably on the days when mum did not have the washing out. Larry's brother Peter, who was an enormous help with the organisation manned a passage outside the gate of Larry's farm. He was joined on the control by Uncle Lance who partnered father Eddie in winning the 1956 and 1958 Mobilgas Round Australia Trials, the only ones to win twice, and as ever, in Volkswagens. What appeared as Cowangie South Road on the map was a vague track along the edge of vast wheat paddocks through a heap of gates thoughtfully left open and later closed by Peter Perkins. The route then took in the northern boundary of the Big Desert, over a large sand hill where Dave Robertson was ready to provide assistance, just before a gate had to be picked up north out of the Desert. Those that did not spot the gate out of the corner of their eye, and had to try and turn around in sand, included Maddock/Kelly who lost their lead in doing so, Allwright/Morris and Ashton/Nixon. Cranston/Novak pushed on through deep sand along the boundary, and emerged 60 km later on the Walpeup/Patchewollock Road. Amazing what 12 psi does for traction in sand. Five cleaned, and Gibson/Cole took over the lead, on the road and on the scoreboard.

28 cleaned the 56 km tour to Walpeup where old BP hands, John Emery and Ian Home were on the in control, before a welcome 30 minute service and score update by Gary Hodgskiss at Poole and Jackson's BP.

Timberoo was another drop off route chart, commencing with a 10 km straight followed by a passage around the corner to catch the speedsters, given the 100 km/h maximum permitted maintained speed. Tim Reynolds had fun threatening the overshoots with WD. While the BP has only passed by, but not through this interesting little patch of native cypress pine, the 1981 George Derrick Memorial Trial passed through when it was very wet, boggy and rutted. Six crews cleaned, and three dropped 1.

The hints on the start of the unmapped Desert Road on section 38, Bronzewing, were obvious enough to the event checker, but not to all the field, as best were Wallis/Nicholas 4, Ahearne/Garth 5, Fulton/Fulton 6, Perkins/Bashford, and Allwright/Morris 9, while 17 crews gave up and WDeD the control. Mick Carey and Ron Grealy performed recovery where crews had to execute a complicated manoeuvre across a fence within the sandy easement approaching Dering from the north east. They had spent the previous two days ahead of the field putting up signs and gate markers. Maddock/Kelly persisted for 48 minutes, but got it right in the end. Rawson/Brown regained the lead.

21 cleaned the touring through Turriff West, while Tidd/Birrell gave up with wayward steering and headed for Ballarat, and Snell/McGrath proved that Peugeots can break down and got towed into Hopetoun from here with a broken driveshaft.

Philip/Bainbridge had been carefully dodging the "sand" sections, not wanting to have to use the bright new winch on the big Merc. Unfortunately the short drop off route chart to enter Dattuck from the North had become a real sand trap after the road was ploughed up as a fire break. When the first car did not turn up at control, the director went to investigate and found Gibson/Cole stuck behind the Merc. Given the time of day, both were pulled out, and the section deleted and rerouted.

The next section, the notorious Wathe had to be deleted earlier in the day, when the set up crew found one road had been dug up, and the entry road to Wathe from the North along a channel had disappeared as a result of the channel being filled in, and ploughed over. To have used it would have been 1965 over again. Wathe is one of the classic BP controls. How a shed and a pile of junk in a clump of trees in the middle of nowhere warrants a name and location on Broadbents is a wonder. In 1965 the entire field got bogged strewn across sandy wheat paddocks in the middle of the night, trying to enter Wathe from the SW. Geoff Thomas, three times winner of the BP, proudly proclaimed at the Sunday lunch, that he incurred lowest points lost, by finding another way, but that does not always work. Decades of cropping have removed any signs of a track, if there was ever one to start with from the SW.

23 cleaned the touring into Hopetoun, requiring crews to enter Hopetoun from the east threading a path between the now very dry Lakes Lascelles and Coorong.

Hopetoun had been fearfully flogged at football that day, but were cheered up by all the old blokes in old cars who had arrived at their ground to eat their excellent home cooked country food and ogle their chooks and daughters. The hospitality was most welcome after a tough day of 616 km in the pits of sand.

Division Three stars after Control 44 were:

Ahearne/Garth	.49
Wallis/Nicholas	.59
Knight/Knight	.68
Norman/Stewart	.86
Wilson/deVaus	.88
Maddock/Kelly	.91

Outright positions were:

Rawson/Brown	151
Ahearne/Garth	152
Wallis/Nicholas	161
Wilson/deVaus	189
Maddock/Kelly	193
Baker/McAdam	195

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Bruce Wilson / Roger Bonhomme

PIC: JOHN DOUTCH

Division Four

A 55 km transport down to Batchica gave navigators more plotting time, but the highway was a bit bumpy for those with their heads down.

The 75 km Touring linked up the Broadbents localities of Bangerang, Homecroft, Areegra, Boolite, and Laen in an easy diagonal run to the control at Rich Avon. Don Ellis, the compiler of "A History of the BP Rally", could not miss out, and came up to do the passage at Homecroft. Fatigue was setting in as crews inexplicably misplotted the odd via. The info at Laen was one mile after the via, but 27 got it while four missed it. 22 cleaned.

Only nine cleaned the next 37 km Touring to Gre Gre, with a few unmapped roads to figure out including the track around Walkers Lake at Avon Plains. Identifying the Mechanics Institute at Traynors Lagoon was also sought in the 1963 BP, while in 1961 the information requested was the distance to Volcano, which is still there, but too easy to find. Gre Gre was also a control in 1961.

Previous BPs in '67, '70 and '71 had flirted with, but skirted the Mt Bolangum Range. A testing drop off route chart, requiring a number of navigational decisions to find the way over the rough and rocky Bolangum Range to enter Kanya from the North, was made more difficult when all crews gave up at a fallen tree, which the zero car had driven around with little concern. Six crews found Kanya from the right direction, with Upton/Laidlay delayed by 4, Rawson/Brown 8, Philip/Bainbridge 15 and Maddock/Kelly 17, all looping to the south, while the Fultons, and Ashton/Nixon got there a little later by traversing the even rougher and rockier track along the top of the Range over Mt Bolangum. 19 WDED control while six cars missed the control, when they latched onto the convoy leaving rather than entering Kanya. For Gibson/Cole and White/Fiddymont, this was their sole missed control for the event. For those at the rear of the field, sweep Steve Farrar was on hand

to show them the way out of the forest. The fine run of Wilson/Bonhomme came to an end. While they were charging home, clean for the division to this point, unfortunately the alternator had ceased to charge. Roger enjoyed his return to rallying and many had enjoyed catching up with him after so long up north. They got up to as high as second outright and were sixth when forced to retire.

The competitive from Kanya to Navarre went via Paradise, which had been used as a via in previous BPs, such as 1961, but only along the main road. It was crying out to be entered from the West. When the Islamic significance of entering Paradise from the west and exiting to the east was raised with one local, he responded quickly that there weren't 70 virgins in this Paradise! I presumed that he had personally seen to that. The road to Paradise was littered with not much to assist navigators other than the advice that it is "a little vague across the paddocks" that were huge, bare and stony, with a distant remnant of ribbon on a gate to show the way out. Garry Harrowfield and Peter Stapleton from Ballarat greeted crews at the entry to the Navarre BP service break. Upton/Laidlay and Rawson/Brown 2, Baker/McAdam and Philip/Bainbridge 10 were storming home.

After a breather, it was back into a 20 km section via Landsborough West where nine crews WDED rather than go back around the block to the very obvious passage as Terry Naish had constructed a fire big enough to keep him and Barb warm till dawn. Canny/Walker, getting close to home and Rawson/Brown clean, Wallis/Nicholas 3, Devenish/Wylie 4 were best. The unmapped road to control was even vaguer than the last one, requiring keen eyes to detect the path across the paddock at the end of Kindred Road.



Brightest Lights / Biggest Splash at Nicholson River ford went to Steve Farrar in the Sweep Car

PIC: JOHN DOUTCH

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Six crews cleaned the Touring down through Crowlands to the Broadbents locality of Mt Cole, entered via the undulating Iron Pot Track at the western foot of Mt Cole Forest. Some worked hard to get the via at Joel Sth, for no reward.

The 23 km blast over Mt Cole commenced with a 3 km quiet zone to test the patience of drivers, then they were given their head up the hill and along the top of the mountain, until the signpost was spotted for Long Gully Rd, before going downhill, with a very steep and rough section, to The Glut, rivalling Mt Cole's infamous Hell Hole Tk, that was passed along the way. Control was a traditional location at the camp ground at the end of Fiery Creek Road, where a camper felt compelled to vent his spleen in the Ballarat Courier a week later. When he complained to the official of being kept awake, Alan Hall is alleged to have said that the same applied to the rally crews. Upton/Laidlay, Ashton/Nixon and Rawson/Brown were the speedsters on 2, with five crews on 3.

The ultimate section also gave drivers some excellent roads to finish on in the run through the Mt. Lonarch pines before coming to a halt to scratch around to find a very hard to see turn to get the passage at the end of the drop off route chart. No one appeared to take the shortest and intended route to enter Chute from the West along Trawalla Creek Track, especially cleared beforehand, but 13 crews persisted to find other ways to get there from the right direction. Allwright/Morris showed the way home on 7, to Wallis/Nicholas 8, and Rawson/Brown and Fultons 9. 13 WDED in their haste to get to the finish.

Division Four stars after Control 55 were:

Rawson/Brown	.23
Upton/Laidlay	.56
Wallis/Nicholas	.64
Norman/Stewart	.95
Knight/Knight	106
Ahearne/Garth	108

Outright positions were:

Rawson/Brown	174
Wallis/Nicholas	225
Upton/Laidlay	255
Ahearne/Garth	260
Wilson/deVaus	306
Norman/Stewart	326

My aim was for the winner to lose about 30 points. I failed on that one. The lowest possible score was 35 points, with 10 of those incurred in the Omeo Highway fog. Given that the winner lost 174 points, all of the top runners had at least one or two disastrous sections, which is not entirely unexpected over that period of constant driving. My other aims were to show crews some interesting terrain, work the drivers as hard if not harder than the navigators, and provide a memorable experience. We appear to have been successful on those counts.

The BP rally was organised for the first nine years by Donald Thomson, who had a clear philosophy for the rally:

"Roads should be obscure, certainly; they should even include some which are rough or abandoned: but the best test is to pick a fair average of surfaces such as might generally be encountered by an Australian traveller outback. If you want to find the types of car - and men - who are best suited to the outback areas of our great and pretty empty land, then you must design a representative test. Road surfaces should include stretches of bitumen, gravel, pot-holes, grass and dirt. Speeds should be those used by a reasonable man determined to reach home by nightfall. Commonsense and initiative is said to be characteristic of Australians, and victory or defeat in these tours usually depends on that quality combined with determination and sportsmanship for which Australians also have a name."

Donald also claimed that every section in every BP he directed was cleaned, but no one ever cleaned an event.

For this event to survive it has to reflect Donald's vision rather than the hard, tough and faster event that it had become by 1973 under the reins of Frank Kilfoyle and Mike Osborne. If we do it again, in somewhere between two and five years time, we will have to make times slower and enforce reasonable speed limits. Drivers can still enjoy themselves without having to race across the countryside well in excess of the speed limit. And I still have more interesting corners of rural Victoria to show you.

Ross

Ed's Comment

Where did Ross find the time to survey and plan such an epic event and then write such a comprehensive report so soon after its completion?

Well done Ross and thank you on behalf of all HRA members, whether or not they were lucky enough to participate as a competitor or official.

I also note Ross' final sentence, which leaves me in no doubt that he plans to run another of his brilliant events in the next few years.

Nick

BP Rally of 2008

Re-fueller on the 2008 BP

from Clarrie Mitchell

Victoria is about as big as Britain and Ross Runnalls used a fair bit of it for the 2008 Ultimate BP rally, there being not much change out of 2000 kilometres, stretching into four days and two nights.

Not many rallies start at a fish and chip shop but this one did, at Pakenham, with 46 starters from 49 entries, two withdrawals and a phantom car 4. After getting acquainted with the Bainbridge family's Nissan Patrol in the evening traffic on Monash Freeway, I warmed up in the shop where event secretary Chris Runnalls was on paperwork with God at her side, along with rallyists, fellow hangers-on and the smell of hot food. You could feel a real buzz in the air as the first car headed out at 7.30 pm for the start proper at Stratford a couple of hours away, everyone keen to get on with it. One of the Volvos was getting last minute work underneath.

By 10.00 pm Thursday 1st May, competitors were heading lickety-split for Omeo. The opening legs were navigationally simple compared with what was to come and a quick agile rally car with clean error-free driving was required. Well folks, that's the theory. Drivers had a 90 kilometre stage along some of Mister Lister's roads, so naturally the Alpine adrenalin kicked-in and the odd corner was overshot, banks were kissed and edges looked over. Apparently Messrs Hodge and Seymour nudged a bank and had to walk out carrying their lights and a 260Z Datsun went over the side. At one point, Ric Bainbridge's big 2.9 Mercedes needed a wider bit of road than the one on offer and its rear wheel got stuck in a culvert, but it was extracted by a friendly Volvo whose auto had sprung a leak and had lost a few gears. Transmission oil changed hands and both cars pressed on after about 20 minutes.

After the Omeo re-fuel, the field headed north along the Knocker Track used in the 1963 BP. Today that track is called a "road" in VicRoads but its still a track in everything but name. Anyway, it popped out onto the Omeo - Mitta Mitta bitumen road and a nice bit of winding bitumen followed for about 30 km, with a bit of fog. In the true BP tradition, competitors were then invited to cross a ford. PRC tune and deep fords are not unlike oil and water but somehow the ford was crossed by that class of cars; better by diesel though. Now well north of Mt. Hotham, the infamous Trapper's Gap stage came next before rejoining the Alpine Way into Myrtleford. Meanwhile, Director Runnalls had headed straight over fog-bound Hotham, stopping from time to time to run around his 'Cruiser to keep awake while Chris slept inside. Visibility improved as the night wore on and by pre-dawn, it was just ultra-light rain with mist as chaser. Car 5, the Officers' Galant, was first into Myrtleford at around 5.00 am, President Kate clambering out of her seat and jumping up and down to get the circulation going again. They led other speedsters into Wangaratta but an axle failed on stage 13 so they hitched a ride for the next few days with friends who had only just moved from Launceston to Ballarat and were running another Galant.

Most crews reached Wangaratta by dawn (7.00 am) on Friday morning and grabbed one or two hours sleep, before being fed

breakfast by a couple of burly blokes of the Wangaratta Football Club. They still had a tray of uncooked sausages left over but footballers eat even more than rally people so the bangers weren't going to waste. Being ancient and a bit light-on for sleep, I didn't take in much at this stop-over apart from a big breakfast, although Geoff Floyd was seen searching for driver Fernie when they were nearly due to leave, Geoff muttering to himself about "all drivers being the bloody same", but he found Doug near the food and I think they finished 9th outright. My car, the Philip/Bainbridge Benz, set off on the second division to Swan Hill sounding quite healthy while I got more coolant for it. We had checked its oils and waters at Wangaratta and it looked like it would need a lot more coolant before we were through, but then it didn't after all. Mercedes heaters have split systems so perhaps that was it. Who said old cars are simpler?

There was an optional fuel stop at Picola, a cross-road with a few houses scattered around, about halfway to Swan Hill from Wangaratta. It was preceded by a stage involving a gate marked with a rally entry microdot, or so some navigators had us believe, as they had hell's own trouble finding it. Anyway, not much happens at Picola, but it did have a good toilet block and thank you Ross on behalf of the service crews. We stood around awhile—still nothing—when a blue and white checker Toyota cruised by, driven by a Lisa McClune look-alike who was keeping a real copper's eye on things. After a chat with other rally people and a nap on the roadside in the sun, things livened up when Ted Perkins and Gerry Bashford arrived in their Cortina, needing an urgent fix for their car. They had lost a nut or two from the off-side front wheel and had touched a bank in the night. A new wheel, more wheel-nuts and a new wheel-stud came out of their support car's trailer and they were off. Ted and Gerry finished 15th with only one major control missed, so expect more from them in future. That car looks the goods and sounds good too. Bob Watson and Jim McAuliffe trundled through in their Gilbert sorted Datsun 1600, looking very business-like, just like the old days. They only missed one control too but Jim had it sussed later, drawing a map in the air at Ballarat to describe where the control point really was and the correct path of entry. It was all Greek to me but the McAuliffe passion is alive and well. They finished full of running. Rowland Tidd's Volvo hit Picola from an unexpected direction, but at division end Rowland was even chirpier than usual. "My best day's drive for ages!" Yep, they had skipped a control or two but if there had been a Pub nearby, he'd have shouted the bar.

After Picola, the field looped over the Murray river into NSW for several stages but there were no individual time penalties due to a minor hitch with authorities. Unfortunately, the Harpers' two Fords retired on stages 20 and 21, a long way from home but at least they were near one another and family should stick together in times of trouble. Division 2 ended in the late afternoon of Friday 2nd May at the BP service station in the heart of Swan Hill. By now the Officers were spectators and other fancied crews were making

BP Rally of 2008

Re-fueller on the 2008 BP

continued

their presence felt, not a lot separating the top six as the screws were now being applied to navigation. Various cars were being repaired on the large concrete apron beside the pumps and crews were quiet with little sleep after a day or so. An inner front wheel-bearing was failing on the Benz after only 44 years—I would write a stern letter to Stuttgart about that—but driver Matthew changed it at pit-stop speed and hey, if ever you are short of wheel-bearing grease after hours at Swan Hill, try the bigger Mobil outlet.

Director Runnalls kept the pressure on, just like BPs of old, first car leaving Swan Hill at 6.30 am on the Saturday morning 3rd May, heading for Ouyen via a Bermuda rectangle bounded by Manangatang, Ouyen, sandy scrub, fence lines and Hattah. Plodding along in the Patrol on the Mallee Highway, there was ample time to see farm inactivity, grey paddocks, dry irrigation channels and dead paddle-wheels, a pattern repeated all the way along the Murray. Up ahead, the field popped out onto the highway from the south a few kilometres before Manangatang; then they turned sharp right into spare country and the Rectangle. Even the Sweep had trouble finding a control in there although I gather said vehicle can muster a fair turn of speed!

The late morning fuel stop at BP Ouyen had everything. ULP and PULP fuel, gas, food, space for running repairs and fine sunny still weather. Crews were feeling it by then but the leading bunch were upbeat as always. The quick Datsun 180B SSS of John Rawson and Simon Brown was having WD40 sprayed around its engine bay to deal with a niggling electrical fault, perhaps the legacy of being waist-deep in a ford, while a Peugeot 504 set off with a spark-plug removed. Its 'plug threads had stripped and you can imagine the sound of three plus one. It beat walking, but not by much. Another 504 pulled in for fuel, a rear mud-flap gone. Its crew were worried about sounds underneath until they were told that it was due to the other mudflap dragging along the ground, which it was. Then they perked up again! Dunno where the truth lay but with these goings-on I forgot to try Ouyen's famous vanilla slices. Bugger.

Now the rally headed due west towards Pinnaroo SA where my family did some pioneering and into the sandy country near Cowangie with several controls on dotted Broadbent roads north and south of the Mallee Highway. Director notes mentioned the Perkins family from Cowangie—they breed 'em tough out there—starting with Eddie, father of Larry and winner of the 1956 round Australia Mobilgas Trial in a VW Beetle, kick-starting that brand in a big way in Australia. This stretch was not going to be easy, especially in a three cylinder Peugeot. I cruised down to the optional fuel stop a few kilometres south of Yarto, pronounced Yartoo by the locals. At Patchewollock, typical of many small towns on the brink in western Victoria, the Pub was shut for good, some houses were abandoned and drought was everywhere. Further south a roadside tractor tyre advertised "Lizard racing, Feb 18", a drought-resistant sport. Then there was a signpost which read "Yarto speed road". I thought it was pointing to a local speedway

venue—I have a soft spot for speedways—but it actually referred to a thin dirt road from Yarto to the neighbouring town of Speed.

Peter Fraser, of recent Monte Carlo fame, and his son Jeremy were manning the Yarto out-control down the road a bit from a wheat silo which does for Yarto. Director Runnalls arrived at half-time of the Geelong/Brisbane AFL match in perfect Saturday arvo weather and after conferring with the Frasers, the control point was moved 20 metres east to ensure that the exit route chart was accurate. Now that is attention to detail! Shortly after, and to my surprise, the first car to arrive was car 25, the Benz. They had lost a round or two in the Bermuda Rectangle that morning but had re-grouped at Ouyen, skipping the afternoon's sand, or so they thought. Yet another jerry-can of fuel went into car 25 and off they went followed shortly afterwards by Greg Gibson and Jennifer Cole in the BMW 2002, but both German built cars then bellied in the same uphill sand track/trap near Dattuck and the Director kindly towed them out, scrubbing that stage and the one after, saving a lot of grief. The one after was another infamous leg on BP rallies of old, located in more sand near the Wathe Reserve, a stretch of Mallee wildness nor' east of Dattuck, which had stopped most of the field in the 1965 BP. Crafty nav. Geoff Thomas skirted around it and won the event with Reg Lunn, one of three BP wins to Geoff, his first being as an apprentice nav. to Frank Kilfoyle in Harry Firth's Falcon in '63.

Division three ended with an evening meal stop at Hopetoun, where the footy match between Hopetoun and St Arnaud was on that afternoon, the home side getting thrashed by 18 goals, teenage boys playing farmer men. Everyone, including the leading bunch in the rally had lost plenty of time during the day and Dark Horses in car 47, Tony Ahearne and Laurie Garth, were now in with a chance, serving notice that the regular leaders would have to try harder, get luckier, or both, if they were going to win this one. We were all invited (by prior arrangement) to the Saturday night social at the Hopetoun clubrooms where the locals were intent on putting the day's loss to St Arnaud behind them. A huge three course meal cost \$15—proceeds to the Hopetoun netball club—and you got stamped as proof of payment. The Mobil outlet stayed open for us and the mother-in-law of the proprietor ran things like clockwork in the kitchen over at the clubrooms. Mallee people are resourceful as well as resilient. Since then, they have had a bit of rain.

First car left the Hopetoun footy ground at 9.00 pm with several hours and 360 kilometres to go on Division 4. A bitumen transport stage let dinner settle, then it was on again in earnest with vestigial tracks, paddocks, gates and Mt. Cole. Sadly, the Datsun 1600 of Bruce Wilson and Roger Bonhomme stopped with electrical trouble on stage 48 out of 55. Some of us still recall Roger's ball-tearing drive in a Mini S in Bruce Ford's 1968 Alpine. Roger led the late Tony Roberts and that ilk by miles going into the very last short competitive stage when it slipped from Roger's grasp. Also, he did at least one BP navigating for Matt Philip in a Torana XU1

Past Events

BP Rally of 2008

Re-fueller on the 2008 BP

continued

in the early 'seventies, a live-wire pairing. Hopefully, Roger can be persuaded back again soon. Promise of a game of golf at Kingston Heath should swing it.

I had trouble finding the right road out of Warracknabeal (again!)

and did a couple of laps of St Arnaud before making my escape, but eventually reached the last fuel stop at Navarre, deep into the night. It is pretty quiet at Navarre even in broad daylight but the local BP people served competitors fuel and food while control officials were coming and going, including one who really came prepared, towing a caravan. The Benz took two more jerry-cans of fuel which barely touched the sides and we swapped a destroyed tyre for a good one. Ultimate winners John Rawson and Simon Brown tightened their grip again while others slipped back a bit, but one hiccup and Messrs Wallis and Nicholas could have won in their \$1000 Peugeot 404. Perhaps the most spectacular part of the Hopetoun-Ballarat division was the drop over the side of Mount Cole, although one car was driven along the top of a ridge which Director Runnalls later confirmed was not the intended route. No-one else has driven that "road" in living memory.

First car reached the Light Car Club's Ballarat Clubrooms after 3.00 am on Sunday 4th May where the heater was on and hot food, coffee and cold beer were laid on, as always. Much appreciated by everyone as were the preliminary scores coming out of Gary Hodgskiss's computer. Sunday luncheon was held in the members' dining room at the Ballarat racecourse and very well done too, John Emery acting as MC. As Ross rose to speak on behalf of his small band of helpers he received a spontaneous standing ovation and afterwards all competitors received commemorative badges just like those of old. This rally was full-on adventure, Runnalls' style. Wow!

Clarrie

Letters to the Editor,
HRA News,
PO Box 831 Camberwell 3124
VICTORIA

54 Parkview Road,
Glass House Mtns
4518 Old.
May 7, 2008

Dear Nick,

I would like to congratulate Ross Runnalls and his team on the recent BP Ultimate Rally. Congratulations are also due to John Rawson/Simon Brown who not only found more correct roads than the rest of us, but also managed to stay on them. Well won.

Car 18, Bruce Wilson/self, have over 20 BP's between us starting in 1986, so few would argue with us (I hope) that this was the most challenging, relentless, competitive, roughest, toughest BP in which we have competed.

Using transport, touring and competitive stages was new to us old farts but proved to be an excellent idea as was the use of historic Broadbent's charts in conjunction with the slightly more modern 100 and 250 survey maps and the odd 19th century parish plan.

A major difference between the new and the old BP's was comprehensive service crew instructions - so thank you Adam and Dave for finding us in the middle of nowhere for fuel and a quick check. Spectators? Very few in the good old days and not many in 2008. But thank you to those brave souls who stood on the skyline at Cowangie railway line (and other places) to welcome us in. Just like old times.

For Bruce and I, both very competitive 40 years ago, we decided that finishing in the top 10 would be great. We were 9th at Wangaratta, fourth at Swan Hill and back to ninth again after three navigational blemishes during division three to Hopetoun. Early in the final division to Ballarat, a fading alternator took out the lights (temporarily) and T erratrip (permanently) so we called it a day.

Finally, on a personal note, thank you to all those people I knew well in the 60's and 70's (before I migrated to the warmth of Queensland) who came up and said "Hello". It was nice to see you again.

Regards,



ROGER BONHOMME

BP Rally 2008

from Ray Potts

When contemplating a trip one tends to look at a reasonably direct path, partly to minimise the inevitable complaints of "Are we there yet" and also to facilitate the transport process from A to B.

Why then, I ask myself, did we travel from Pakenham to Ballarat via Omeo, Swan Hill, Ouyen and Hopetoun? The answer, I suspect, is "Because we could!" Other good answers could be: "Because we went the pretty way." And "Because we should have turned left at Albuquerque."

The 2008 BP Ultimate Rally was a marathon endurance event, oh, and the cars had to endure a bit too! The sight of so many sleep deprived faces appearing at Wangaratta didn't augur too well for the rest of the weekend, and it was only Friday morning.

I was asked by one David McAdam whether I'd consider servicing for the ex '79 Repco Commodore while he was chauffeured around the event by Denis Baker. Like an idiot I said I would, little thinking of the outcome of this idle conversation. The next thing I knew I was partnered with David Brown in his rather amazing 1965 AP6 Valiant Wagon. This car has to be experienced to be believed. Being a French car chap from way back I've always been rather scornful of those overblown tanks that used to be regarded (in the 60s) as the Big Three. Consequently, I'd never actually driven a Valiant more than a few miles and certainly never owned one. I was in for an eye opening trip.

We gathered in Pakenham and many were the tales told over a flake or ten that evening while the Navigators nervously waited for their precious plotting time to start, and the rest of us sort of lounged around. The time arrived for Car 24 to head into the wilds of Gippsland so we saddled up the Val and followed them down the highway.

After a refuel at Stratford they went off to do their thing in the bush while we wended our way to Omeo to set up a service point and boil the kettle. Luckily we were prepared for cold because there were many shiny monkeys scampering around whimpering and clutching their nethers, and that was in the main street! Who knew what was awaiting us out there on top of Victoria?

After fettling the General and the crew, we saw them off, packed up and headed up and over Mt Hotham to the next point at Myrtleford. This was possibly the scariest drive I've ever had as a passenger, and that's not meant to be critical of David. Add up these risk factors. It was less than 2 degrees outside (warm in the Val, though), it was the wee small hours of the morning, there was snow beside the road from just before Dinner Plain, the rain was coming down horizontally and vertically at the same time, then the fog arrived. We had about 3 metres visibility so we straddled the white line so we could keep an eye on it to guide us. Then the road got so wet we couldn't see the line at times. David concentrating on the line, me concentrating

on looking ahead for any glare of oncoming headlights, and trying not to think of the fact I was in a 40+ year old car with a 60+ year old driver. The trip to Harrierville takes a lot longer when you're crawling along at barely 20Km/h!

Never mind, we made it to Myrtleford and caught a few zeds while we waited for cars to catch up. In went some more fuel and we saw the dawn arrive on our way to Wangaratta.

A four hour break in Wang saw the car fettled and the crew members dosed down in a handy shelter for a short snooze. Fresh eggs and bacon and a coffee can put a whole new complexion on a day after a night without sleep. So onwards we trek towards Moama and then Swan Hill.

The General was travelling well with only a bit of fan belt squeal to be of concern. The boys were handling the navigation but joined in the general discussions about Ross Runnall's parentage and what they'd like to do with him if he was handy to a pair of shears at the time. At Moama we topped up oil and fuel and checked a few bolts, but really it was coping beautifully.

At Swan Hill we sussed out the cabin for us and Wilson/DeVaus in the Pug 505 (car 48), and then scouted the options for some tea. By the time the lads arrived, weary but confident, we had things all organised so the order of business was to check out the car (a new bonnet restraint needed to be created), have a couple of well earned beers and tuck into the pizza once it was delivered. Car 48 arrives after giving a 'roo a headache so we sort out that a bit as well. By this time we knew that the General was in equal first place so naturally that meant an early start in the morning. A quick discussion about fuel stops on the morrow and so to bed until about 5AM. McAdam arose about 4AM and took advantage of the quiet to do some plotting. (He tells me it



A rose between two thorns

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BP Rally 2008

continued

was their route but, knowing him ,it could equally have been to overthrow the government!)

Once they were waved away we could then contemplate a gentle tour to Ouyen for breakfast. Egg and bacon at the bakery was lovely. I'm sure they make a good snot block but I still don't trust Jeff Kennett's judgment enough to try one. Set up the service point where we decide to seek a new air cleaner element, given the likelihood they were going to experience some dust during the day. A quick check underneath the 505 showed a dodgy bush was the cause of the noise they were hearing. No spare for it, so carry on regardless.

We stop at the Walpeup BP only to find they're fresh out of the oval type of unit we need, so on Dougie's advice we push on towards Cowangie via Glosta's at Underbool. They have one that's a bit smaller, so I reckon we'll give it a go. When asked for a price the bloke looks up a book full of scratched out prices and cryptic notes before saying, "Aah, call it a fiver, Mate." Gotta love the Bush.

We wait with a few others at Cowangie only to see the yellow Gemini rock in first. Hmm! Where are the other 6 or so cars that started before him? Director Ross turns up and chortles about the news he hears over the Electric Telephone that the strays are doing a bit of circle work in a claypan out there somewhere. They finally arrive and depart after a quick emptying of a Jerry into the ever hungry tank.

So back to Walpeup for a 30 minute service break where we get to try on the new air cleaner, and would you believe that it not only fits, but it's the exact right one for the housing! Bonus!

Our next task was to cruise on down to Hopetoun for a 4 hour service break and dinner as well. On the way we thought we'd get a replacement fan belt for the General as it was heard to be squealing when it left Walpeup and the night stages were coming up. We figured we'd get one at the garage in Hopetoun. Hah! The only garage open on a Saturday arvo only had petrol and lollies.

I guess it's understandable, but the Hopetounites lacked a clear idea as to what was really happening and what was involved. On sighting our Historic Service Vehicle they milled around wondering if we were on a Variety Bash and marvelling at how well the old Val was holding up. When we tried to explain the concept of a "real" rally it was still obvious they all thought we were on a "Car Trial" of the mystery picnic in the '70's variety. Never mind, when one of them asked if we needed any assistance I semi-sarcastically asked if they had a VB Commodore fanbelt in their back pocket. "Leave it with me" was Wendy's response and 5 minutes later hubby Duffy hove into view waving a selection of belts including a brand new standard one. He got a beer or three for his trouble and he and Wendy would still be talking to David about Valiants if I hadn't dragged him away for some food! Yep! Gotta love the Bush!

Once the General was sent off into the wilds again, we set off for a place called Navarre, which turned out to be a nice, warm, clean little general store with BP pumps and hot coffee. On the way we did our bit for the environment by rolling a large bunny into a ball

on the highway. I felt bad but we figured they're still a pest so it was ecologically (almost) acceptable.

After Navarre it was onwards to Ballarat where a nice warm clubrooms with a nice warm bar was beckoning. And so it came to pass that at about 3AM we were ensconced in the aforementioned warmth, enjoying a beer and speculating on the sort of lunacy that caused us to be there in the first place.

A successful weekend many levels. The General placed a provisional 7th with no mechanical woes at all. The Val made it on a few tanks of juice and no mechanical problems. Both crews (Rally and Service) completed the weekend without undue stress so all was well with the world. A few hours sleep with 6 of us in a Motel room saw us all recovered and ready for the Big Luncheon at Dowling Park. Breakfast at Macca's and a wash for the combatant vehicles and we were set and saddled for the race course.

It was great to be a part of such a milestone event as the 50th Anniversary Luncheon. I don't think I've ever seen so many rallying Legends in one room before, and probably never will again. The smiles on the Rawson and Brown dials couldn't have been bigger as they earned their place among such distinguished company. Well done blokes! And to cap it all off, David and I copped an extra award for piloting a Historic Service Vehicle for the weekend. It just gets better and better!

Well done all those who made it possible, especially those who lurked giggling in the bushes in the dead of night waiting for someone in a rally car to find them. I've been there and done that and while it's fun, it's also cold and lonely. Thanks to all of you the rest of us can feel good about missing most of a weekend's worth of sleep.

A bloke wouldn't be dead for quids!

Until next time,

Pottery

Glad it's all over



BP Presentations

from Peter Shearman



*First Overall, first Cat 4 PRC 1980
John Rawson & Simon Brown
congratulated by Director Ross Runnalls and
HRA President Kate Officer*

*Team award to Team Peugeot Ballarat Jeff
Stewart, Doug Norman, Brian Canny, Larry
Walker, Bruce Shepherd & Tim Shepherd*

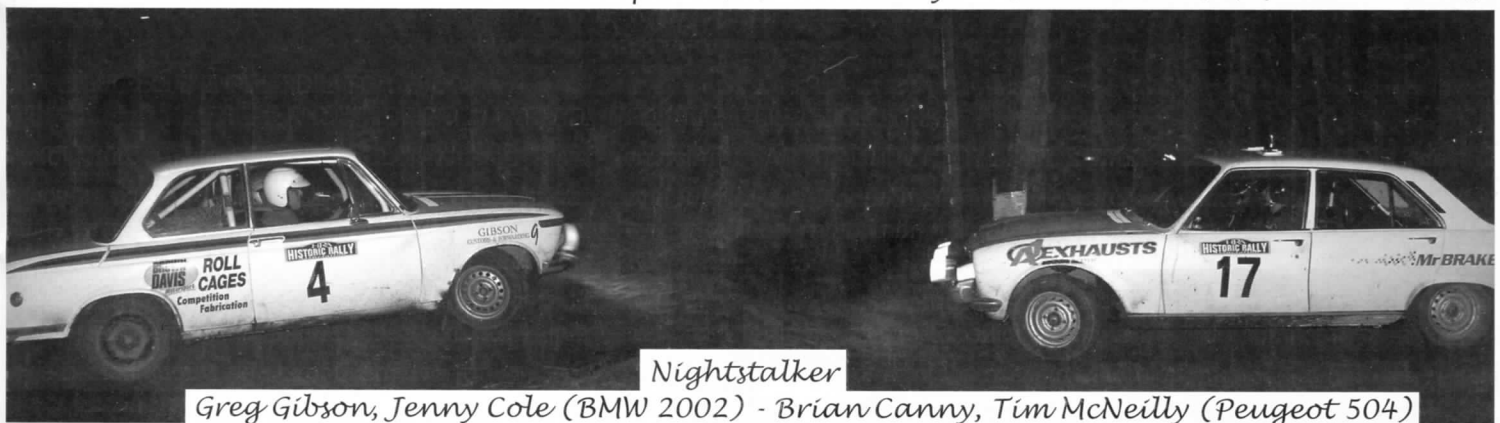


*First Cat 3 Post Historic 1980
Peter & Ian Fulton*

*Third overall, first Cat 1
Historic (Pre 68)
Alan Upton & Mark Laidlay*



*Second overall, first Cat 2 Post
Historic 1968-75
Phil Nicholas & Graham Wallis*



*Nightstalker
Greg Gibson, Jenny Cole (BMW 2002) - Brian Canny, Tim McNeilly (Peugeot 504)*