

MX-TRA

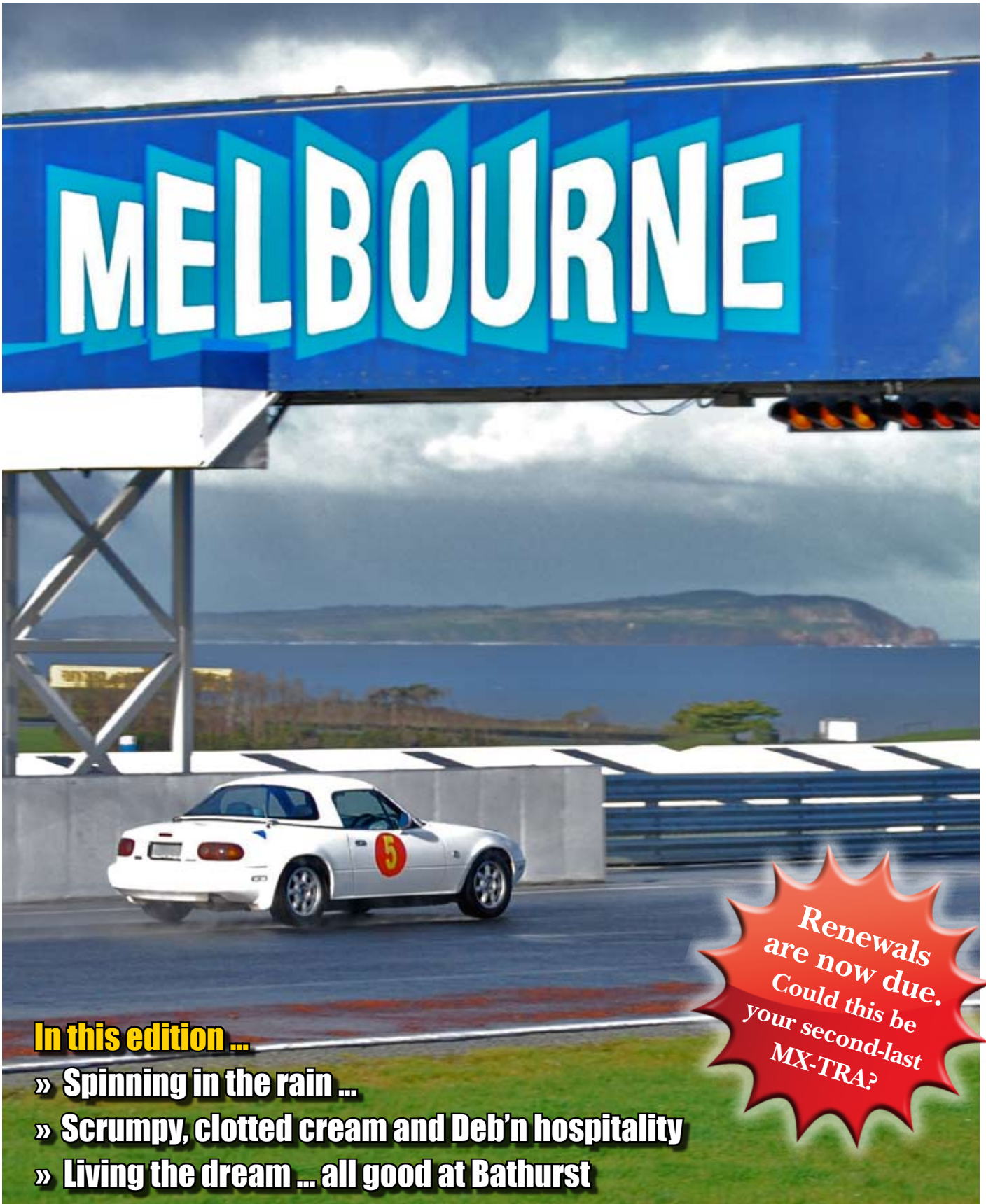
*The monthly magazine of the
Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria Inc.*

JULY 2010

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In this edition ...

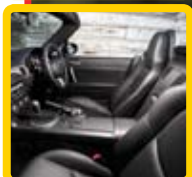
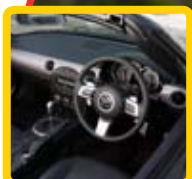
- » **Spinning in the rain ...**
- » **Scrumpy, clotted cream and Deb'n hospitality**
- » **Living the dream ... all good at Bathurst**

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Cover image:

The sign said "Melbourne" and so did the weather, but this was another wet day at the Island ... challenging, confronting, a bit scary – but way too much fun! *Photo: Ben Sale.*

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Murray's Corner ...

■ Murray Finlay – President

Only about 30 sleeps to go now until our 20th birthday bash on 14 August.

We have about 90 people coming along to the Westpac Centre for what should be the best event we have ever staged.

It will be a fitting celebration of our 20 years as a vibrant and constantly-growing club.

The organising committee has been working hard for about seven months to bring it all together ... there will be a great band, some wonderful prizes, special 20th anniversary motor sport and social award presentations, loads of fun ... and of course a special birthday cake.

We still have some final loose ends to pull together, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank our sub-committee – Janette and John Todd, Joan and Ken Read and Steve Dunlop – for their many hours of hard work in bringing the event together. It promises to be a memorable night.

Another 20th anniversary project that has been going on behind the scenes is the production of our milestone publication, **20 Roads for 20 Years**.

This is a collaborative effort by a group of Club members to produce a travelogue-style glovebox guide to some of the best roads we have travelled in Victoria and Tasmania (and some from southern NSW which also snuck into the mix).

They range from the Great Ocean Road, the Grampians, the Ballarat region, the Yarra Valley, the high country, Gippsland and the Mornington Peninsula.

Most of the roads have become favourites for Club runs over the years, but there are few roads less travelled brought to light through members' local knowledge. Each of the 20 chapters captures the essence of why each selected piece of road is an ideal MX-5 road. Our aim is to give the reader a sense of the exhilaration of driving those roads in an MX-5.

We have also tossed in two of our favourite motor sport venues, Winton and Phillip Island.

This 128-page full-colour labour of love will be launched at the 20th anniversary dinner-dance on 14 August, at the special price of \$20 (... for 20 roads and for 20 years!).



The print run will be limited to 200, and the first copies will be made available to those attending the dinner-dance.

After that, it will be first-in-best-dressed.

On the Club front, membership renewals fell due on 1 July. Membership for the new year already stands at over 200 which, even after all these years, still makes me shake my head. I well remember the struggling early years of the Club when we were lucky to hit the 60-member mark over a whole year!

Please remember that, if you have not renewed, the August edition of MX-TRA will be the last you receive.

I'm biased of course, but I reckon this fantastic Club magazine is worth the price of membership alone!

The Club calendar is chock-full of more events that have something for everyone. I hope to see you out and about at an event soon.

And please remember the "Cars of the World" charity display on 31 October. So far we have only had *seven* members register their interest ... and I was hoping for upwards of 40!

On that note, I'm off to pack more boxes and prepare for yet another house move. Oh, the joys of renting (and loopy landlords).

Until next time, look up, stay back!

Murray

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

July

- 18 N-E Victorian scavenger hunt
- 18 North Tassie breakfast run

August

- 8 10/11 Championship Rd 1: Sprints, Winton
- 14 20th Anniversary celebrations – Westpac Centre
- 22 10/11 Championship Rd 2: Hillclimb, Haunted Hills
- 29 Fed Square display



September

- 12 Great Ocean Road run
- 19 10/11 Championship Rd 3: Sprints, Sandown

October

- 3 Todds' Tour of Macedon Ranges
- 3 Ballarat run
- 23-24 Winton 6-Hour
- 31 Cars of the World display - 40+ MX-5s needed, please!

November

- TBC 10/11 Championship Rd 4 [event TBC]

December

- 12 10/11 Championship Rd 5: Sprints, Phillip Island



Motor Sport

■ James Saunders – Club Captain - Motor Sport

It was an exciting end to the 2009-2010 season, with our final event taking place at Phillip Island.

Our very own Greg Savage was back in charge as Clerk of Course and Greg, together with our hosts AROCA, must be congratulated for doing a great job under very difficult circumstances – it rained *ALL* day. Ben Sale will go into more detail about the event later in the magazine.

The results from the weekend have been finalised so we can now announce the winners of the 2009-2010 Club Motor Sport Championship. It was a very exciting end to the season, with some classes coming right down to the wire.

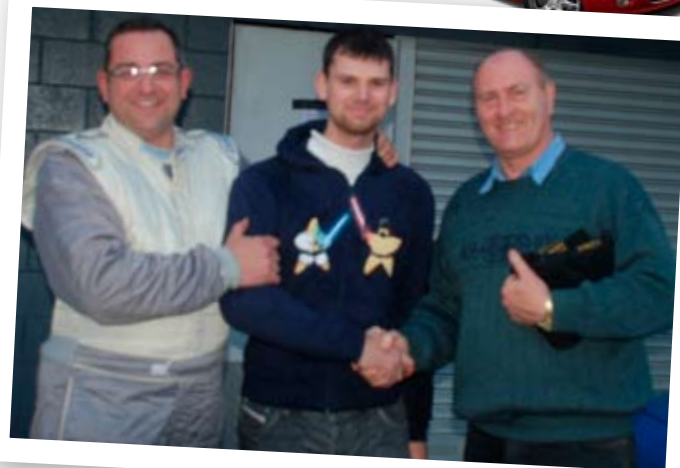
Standard NA This class was the most hotly-contested class in years with the final result being a three-way tie! It was impossible to separate the three winners, even on count back. They each had exactly the same results, being three wins, two second places and two third places. To **Teruo Delacroix**, **Brendan Beavis** and **Robert Downes** (right), I say congratulations and thank you for providing such an entertaining battle for all of us watching from the sidelines. It is also worth noting that this class had a fourth player who could have affected the result – **Noel Heritage** managed to score three second places, although for each of these there was a different winner: one of each of the aforementioned gentlemen. In any other season this could have been a deciding factor but as fate would have it this year was a little bit different and certainly one for the record books.

Standard NB This class had no fewer than four different winners at events during the season, proving that competition is alive and well in this category. **John Downes** was the most consistent performer and took an impressive three wins during the season, proving himself to be the outstanding competitor in this class. Congratulations on the win, John. **John McGregor** took second place and has moved up to Clubman for the upcoming season.

Standard NC **Lindy Anderson** has taken to motor sport like a duck to water and as a result she has also taken the gong for Standard NC this season. Congratulations Lindy! Since joining the Club, Lindy has been a regular face at all of our motor sport events and it has been very rewarding to watch this new member improve her times and her lines, which was especially noticeable with her excellent drive at Sandown in May.

Clubman This class was also very hotly contested. There were plenty of close results all season, however **Peter Phillips** managed to take the honours more often than not and as such he takes a very well deserved win. Congratulations Peter! He was kept very honest by several of his competitors, especially **Ray Monik** who did manage to snatch two wins from Peter. Peter will have an even tougher time defending his title in the upcoming season as more and more people join the Clubman category, but I'm confident he's up to the task.

Modified **Russell Garner** scored the win in this category at every single event on the Club calendar this season, setting many new lap records along the way. There was usually a fair gap between Rus and his closest competitor on the day (myself included) so it really was a very comprehensive victory. Congratulations Rus, you've set the bar quite high for the rest of us in Modified next season! Hopefully we can manage to close that gap a little bit, although we'll need a lot of good luck and some bravery pills before each event!



Restricted Open **Randy Stagno Navarra** maintained a very tight hold on this category this season, taking the win in all but his final event of the season. Congratulations Randy! **Marcus Stacey** provided some good competition but Randy proved what an awesome package a well driven and well modified NC can be, setting a lot of new lap records along the way. I can't wait to see what Randy will do next season with a set of R spec tyres added to his arsenal!

Open This category often seems like a bit of a war of attrition, with competitors coming and going as they chew through engine parts, gearboxes and all manner of things. Needless to say then, that consistency and reliability can often play a major part in deciding the winner. **Darrin Morice** had this in spades in the first half of the season with his very neatly sorted turbo Clubman and has been rewarded with the class win. Well done Darrin. There will be some epic cars in this category next season so it's a shame that Daz won't be there to defend his title, although I know he is keen to get back into an MX-5 sooner rather than later.

So, with all the categories decided we are left with the main prize and it should come as no surprise that the **Club Motor Sport Champion for 2009-2010** is none other than (drum roll please) ... **Russell Garner**. Rus has been the most outstanding and consistent competitor this season and is a most deserving winner. His has been a truly impressive debut season with the Club and, on that note, he has obviously also snared the **Rookie Award** as well. A clean sweep for Rus, you really couldn't do any better than that. Congratulations Russell.

The last award to hand out is a non-competitive award – the **Captain's Award**. This award recognises the motor sport participant who has made the most valuable contribution to the club's motor sport activities in the preceding year. I'm awarding this to Phil Munnings for his tireless efforts behind the scenes. Phil has done a power of work to improve and manage the way we do our scoring and classifications so that we can now publish our results more quickly and accurately than ever. Phil has also always been one of the guys on hand to offer help and advice to nervous new members (and even some older members like me!) at our track days. Clubs cannot run without volunteers like Phil and we've been lucky to have him on board, although he has recently moved to NSW (whilst remaining a Vic member). Even given this move, he has still made the journey down for a couple of our events. Thanks Phil for all of your efforts.

... continued page 6



Membership

■ Will Campbell – Membership Officer

Current
membership
count:

204

Membership Count: 204 (and growing!)

With the new Club year now a couple of weeks old, renewals (and new memberships!) are flowing in. Reminders were emailed or posted to members late in June. If you missed out, or if you require assistance, please give me a call on 5261 4816 or send me an email at membership@mx5vic.org.au.

The new membership year promises to be a bumper one for the Club, with our special 20th anniversary celebrations in August, the Great Ocean Road Run in September, and the publication of our special "20 roads for 20 years" book, three of many highlights.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to 12 new members who have joined our ranks:

» Paul Frank	1990 Red NA
» Logan Gan	1990 Red NA
» Andrew and Renee Goodly	1989 White NA

» Patrick Hamakers	1998 Silver NB
» Sue Lowndes	2007 Copper Red NC
» Henny and Gary Lynch	1999 Tenth Anniversary
» John Rickard	1999 Green NB
» Ian Rogers and Annie Paliwal	2001 Blue NB
» Bailey Tsang	1990 White NA

The Club enjoys a particularly high participation rate, but there are some members, some of them long-standing, who rarely get along to events. Life can be hectic and timing is everything, but I encourage all of you to make full use of your membership and to enjoy the many and varied events that are offered.

See you out and about ...

Will

Motor Sport Report continued ...

That wraps up 2009-2010 and we move on to 2010-2011. Our first event is at Winton on 8 August and entry forms are now available so please complete them and send them in. We also have Haunted Hills Hillclimb on the 22nd but at the time of writing I haven't seen entry forms for that one yet; please keep your eye out for forms.

In closing, I have an invitation to our members from my counterpart in the NSW MX-5 Club, Mike Hicks:

"I would like to extend an invitation to your members to compete in the 2010 MX-5 Nationals to be held at Wakefield Park on the 30-31 October. There will be races for 2B and 2F Production Sports MX-5s as well as Regularity events for MX-5s. The MX-5 Nationals were first run at Morgan Park in Queensland last year. This year it's NSW turn and we would like to encourage as many of your supersprinters to come up and compete in

the regularities. In addition to the qualifying and regularities on Saturday and Sunday there will be practice available on the Friday."

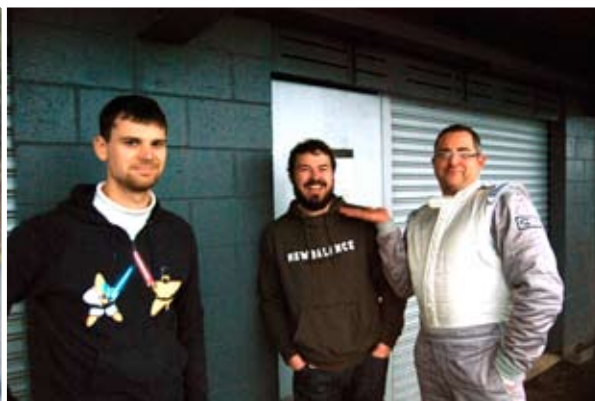
If you would like to attend this event please let me know and I'll pass your details along to Mike. If there is enough interest, we could look at organising some group accommodation rates.

James

Final 2009-2010 Championship standings after Round 9 - Sprints, Phillip Island, 3 July 2010

	1st			2nd			3rd		
Overall Champion	Russell Garner	»	70	Peter Phillips	»	64	Brendan Beavis	»	56
							Teruo Delacroix	»	56
							Robert Downes	»	56
Standard NA	Brendan Beavis	»	56						
	Teruo Delacroix	»	56						
	Robert Downes	»	56						
Standard NB	John Downes	»	55	John McGregor	»	44	Max Lloyd	»	31
Standard NC	Lindy Anderson	»	40	Colin Denman-Jones	»	10	Mark Davies	»	7
Clubman	Peter Phillips	»	64	Ray Monik	»	54	Damon Ethakada	»	29
Modified	Russell Garner	»	70	Craig Healy	»	34	Mike Kirby	»	28
Restricted Open	Randy Stagno Navarra	»	70	Marcus Stacey	»	31	Andrew Shenouda	»	13
Open	Darrin Morice	»	34	David Wilken	»	30	Hamish Hardeman	»	29

Scene about ...



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The MX-5 Club Grill

Chris Biffin



If not a Mazda (gasp!) what? Could go a Porsche Boxer S if you twisted my arm

How long in the Club? Pre-marriage, pre-kids, pre-distinguished grey hairs, so it must be 10 years plus ...

How many MX-5 Club runs? Lots ... but not so many these days. I love exploring with good company

Favourite Club run? Great Ocean Road (GOR) dawn run. Did my first on my 41st birthday, suggested it to the Club and now it's one of our Club's most popular runs

Funniest thing seen on a Club run? I love the Christmas runs with drivers wearing red caps and white beards

Done DECA? Yes, and loved it, ran out of skill on too many occasions. I call it the slip pan, not the skid pan

If yes, how many times? Around five

Ford vs Holden? No real interest in either of those bland brands

What's playing in your MX-5? I have the factory five-stacker with the Fast and Furious, Two Fast to Furious and Tokyo Drift soundtracks plus the Mazda Zoom Zoom CD and James Taylor live

Footy team (AFL/NRL/Soccer)? I am a typical dedicated Kangaroo fan who is not a member and only attends games when he gets a corporate/client/Auskick invite

Final comments? MX man for as long as I can enter and exit (the car!)

Name? Chris "Thurston Howell III" Biffin

Age? 44

Born? Box Hill Hospital

Current abode? Maidstone

Profession? Public Accountant CPA (not your average)

Partner? Married with four hungry children

Pets? One boxer+bulldog, one golden retriever, one placid cat and one terrorist cat

Fave food? "All of the above" (as in: everything on the menu)

Can you cook? When your wife is vegetarian, you don't have a choice

Favourite tippie? Give me a good coffee and a good Port and I am content

First drive? 18

First car? A 1970 bright yellow two-door Ford Escort which cost me \$1100. After six months I had to spend another \$1100 having the engine blueprinted, but it then gave me 10 years of reliable and faithful service

First fender bender? We (the Escort and I) scraped cars, hit trams and trucks together and it even tried to run away from me one day ... thankfully the stop sign 50 meters down the road brought it to a halt!

Everyday driver? Red (of course) 2010 Mitsubishi Activ; good to cart kids around in and reasonably fun to drive for the \$\$

Current MX-5? Yummy red 2005 SE, "Mexy"

MX-5 improvements? Dick Richey made my exhaust note more audible and engine

feel stronger through the mid-range. No idea what he did technically. I just gave him a plastic card, he swiped it and we were back in business ...

MX-5 dislikes? My bank manager wished it was cheaper to buy

Why an MX-5? My girlfriend hired an MX-5 for me for the day for my 25th birthday. We drove it down the Great Ocean Road and I was hooked. After two years of saving and searching I had a 1990 NA. Needless to say that woman is now my wife, figured she was definitely a keeper!

Fluffy dice? Not my style

Passions besides the MX-5? My wife and four kids firstly, then stretching the budget and time to do as much golf, cycling, snow skiing and travelling as possible. Last, but not least, good coffee

PS: short note from my scales ... they said not to forget FOOD!

Favourite TV show / movie / book? I love my ABC, especially news and current affairs. As far as TV series go, I was a big West Wing and Boston Legal fan. Well, much to my wife's disgust, I think Police Academy was the best film ever made, closely followed (because I'm an avid golfer) by Caddy Shack

Dream wheels (money no object)? I love red cars that go too fast according to the VicRoads demerit points system, so it would have to be a Ferrari

Would you drive a Daewoo or SSangYong? Because I know people who have, I never would!

Favourite other Mazda? Mazda 6 – diesel station wagon



Spinning, just spinning in the rain ...



■ Words: Ben Sale ■ Photos: Ben Sale & Brendan Beavis



2009-10 Championship | Round 9 Phillip Island Sprints ~ 3 July, 2010

I think it was around 6am on the morning of the Phillip Island sprints that I began to question my sanity.

Driving down the South Gippsland highway to my first-ever Sprint event, the heavens opened to the extent that the sound of water hitting the MX-5's splashguards was almost deafening. The rain subsided, only to begin again just before the cars were due to take to the track. The first experience of Phillip Island for me and the other first-timers was certainly a baptism of fire with not even a hint of a dry line all day.

The fact that all but three of the 20 or so sessions ran on the day ended with the recovery vehicle being sent to winch people out of the mud says a lot about the conditions. There was a record 29 recoveries for the day! That we were still able to get a good amount of track time on such a terrible day also says a lot about the fantastic work of the organisers from AROCA and the MX-5 Club, particularly Greg Savage. All the volunteers, especially the recovery guys, flag marshals and the officials certainly had their work cut out for them.

My first day at the Island was definitely an experience! I've always wanted to drive the track after hearing so much about it and watching countless races there on television. For my first lap, the track was soaking wet and the car was moving all over the road, both in a straight line as well as in the corners. An MX-5 100 or so metres ahead spun, ending up in the middle of the road and the practice session was red flagged before I was half way through the lap when a gorgeous little red 105 Alfa went off at turn one.

Remember to breathe ... seeing the Alfa on the side of the road caked in mud waiting for recovery was a sign of things to come. When the session resumed I thankfully managed to keep the car on the black stuff, in large thanks to the fantastic guidance of my instructor for the session, Bruce Phillips. I, like everyone else, was really struggling for grip. It was a challenge keeping the car facing in the right direction at every corner and the number of cars littering the sides of the track, bogged in the quagmire, highlighted how tricky the conditions were.

The rain returned just minutes before my group's first timed session was due to begin ... *great!* On the warm-up lap

the track proved to be very slippery. I managed to prove just how slippery when coming out of the last corner onto the main straight. In the dry this corner is taken flat out. In the rain coming out I squeezed the power on in 4th gear which was all right until I momentarily lost traction and the car instantly swapped ends. I wasn't quite quick enough to catch the slide, so I jumped on the brakes and ended up going down the main straight backwards at 100-and-something kmh with all four wheels locked up! Thankfully I managed to miss the wall and other drivers and edged the car backwards off to the infield to let the field past, only for the car to sink in the mud while I waited. Bogged to the extent that the diff was touching the ground, I waited for the session to finish so the recovery vehicle could drag me out. At least it was still entertaining watching the cars go by.

I returned to the pits a little embarrassed by my excursion and, as expected, was at the receiving end of some admittedly well-meant but choice comments from some of my friends in the Club. After cleaning most of the mud off the car it was time for the next session. This time I started with less confidence and followed a few other MX-5s around. By the end I

Spinning in the rain ...



Results - Round 9	1st	2nd	3rd
Standard NA	Brendan Beavis » 2:25.386	Robert Downes » 2:26.637	Teruo Delacroix » 2:27.997
Standard NB	Mike Trathan » 2:39.856	Patrick Hamakers » 2:44.007	John Downes » 2:50.458
Standard NC	Colin Denman-Jones » 2:35.575	Mark Davies » 2:38.520	---
Clubman	Peter Phillips » 2:23.812	Ray Monik » 2:24.554	John McGregor » 2:34.166
Modified	Russell Garner » 2:24.775	Bruce Phillips » 2:29.530	James Saunders » 2:31.270
Restricted Open	Greg McPherson » 2:26.304	Logan Gan » 2:46.242	---
Open	Hamish Hardeman » 2:23.171	Steven Cook » 2:32.905	---





started to gain more confidence and on my last and quickest lap of the session managed to overtake the two MX-5s I'd been following and a BMW. It was great to actually have a full session out there without any mishaps; while the track was wet it wasn't raining which meant grip levels were more predictable. Sadly though this was the driest track that my group would see on the day as the rain returned, of course. One notable person to go off in this session was Motor Sport Captain James Saunders ... especially poignant after he had chipped me about my moment in the previous session!

The final two sessions were fantastic as I began to learn more about the track, the car and my own limitations. Getting a clean lap without either overtaking someone or being overtaken, making a mistake or having someone in front spin was impossible. I had one major eyes-wide-open, heart-rate-increasing moment coming into Turn 1. I decided to try to enter the corner a bit quicker

than before only for the car to lose all grip when I turned in and begin to slide, the only way to save it was to plant the foot in 4th gear and power slide at quite a large slip angle through the corner at something like 140-150kmh, as backing off would have resulted in quite a big off.

Somehow I managed to make it through, only to nearly lose it again at Turn 2 from carrying too much entry speed left over from Turn 1 due to the slide. With the atrocious weather it was truly frightening out there, especially when coming down the main straight flat out in 5th with the car tram-lining through puddles! *Despite that it really was awesome fun!*

The more laps I did the better it all began to feel. The more experienced, faster guys in the Club were very impressive in how they managed to maintain much faster lap times. I was able to keep up on certain parts of the track but didn't have the confidence or ability to maintain anything like their speed for a whole lap.

It really showed what a mix of experience and speed can do.

My fastest lap of the day was my last, achieved despite both the track getting wetter and slowing in part to let a quicker guy through. I was pretty pleased to be quicker than the other NA- and NB-driving Phillip Island newbies and a few regulars, despite still being way off the faster MX-5 drivers. It was also pretty satisfying to pull away from a 4x4 Lancer Evo in the last session.

To anyone considering getting out on the track I say "Do it!"

Despite the weather my \$200 entry fee was one of the most enjoyable ways I've spent money. I can't wait to try Phillip Island again, hopefully in the dry.

The day, for me, also showed the true brilliance of the MX-5. You can go out there, have a great fun day and drive home with no problems: a true sports car!



A jump-start to Club membership ...

■ Words & photo: Kevin Brown

■ Run organisers: Tyrone Dark and Pam Bown

As a new member I approached this event with some reservations. I am not a skilled sportscar driver and have owned my MX-5 for only four months ... plus I am still coming to terms with it on nice straight roads, let alone twists and turns.

I convinced my wife Margaret to join me as the run was to finish at a nice winery.

We all met at The Pines shopping centre under threatening skies. After meeting fellow members I was most impressed at the distance some had travelled to take part. It was also comforting to know that there were other new members taking part for the first time.

Someone said "tops down" and I reassured my wife that this was indeed a car club!

The weather was kind for the first hour or so as we negotiated bends and curves through the Eltham-Research area, but eventually rain set in requiring a good deal of caution when driving ... and a stop for tops up.

A coffee/toilet break was made at Hurstbridge. Due to some slow service, the newcomers were running late and this resulted in a slight hiccup when one car was left behind. However, due to the excellent directions sheet provided, they



were able to complete the course and arrived at the winery only a minute or so behind the rest of us.

The wet weather did make we newcomers proceed cautiously through the narrow bends and curves of the Kangaroo Ground, St Andrews and Panton Hill areas; probably a good thing on our first outing.

We arrived at Lovegrove winery in Cottles Bridge and enjoyed the food and drink as well as the chance to chat to other Club members about their experiences. Unfortunately we learnt that one car had sustained some damage in the slippery conditions but thankfully no one was hurt.

As we left one newcomer (Lester) found his car would not start and, thanks to another newcomer (Wendy) who had carried jumper leads, we were able to move on.

All in all a great day ... Did I learn anything? Yes, drive according to the conditions and your own capabilities without worrying what others may think – and carry jumper leads.

Thanks to Pam and Tyrone for their organisation and to other Club members for making we newcomers feel most welcome.

From The London Times ...

A well-planned retirement

Outside England 's Bristol Zoo there is a parking lot for 150 cars and eight buses.

For 25 years, its parking fees were managed by a very pleasant attendant. The fees were about \$1.40 for cars and about \$7 for buses.

Then, one day, after 25 solid years of never missing a day of work, he just didn't show up; so the Zoo's management called the City Council and asked it to send

them another parking attendant.

The Council did some research and replied that the parking lot was the Zoo's own responsibility.

The Zoo advised the Council that the attendant was a City employee.

The City Council responded that the lot attendant had never been on the City payroll.

Meanwhile, sitting in his villa somewhere

on the coast of Spain or France or Italy ... is a man who'd apparently had a ticket machine installed completely on his own and then had simply begun to show up every day, commencing to collect and keep the parking fees – estimated at about \$560 per day – for 25 years.

Assuming seven days a week, this amounts to just over \$7 million dollars ... and no one even knows his name.



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Scrumpy, clotted cream & Deb'n hospitality

■ Words & photos: Janette & John Todd

A statement that we often hear from people visiting or from those new to our Club is: "what a friendly and welcoming group" we are.

We all take pride in this and from our experience it is equally true of our interstate cousins.

Last month we travelled to Devon in England to celebrate Janette's parents' 80th birthdays, which fell on consecutive days.

Needless to say this was an event that we could not miss. Our daughter Karly decided she couldn't miss out either and so joined us for the trip.

This was also the first occasion in almost 20 years that all of Janette's immediate family were in the one place at the one time, as the family is spread across England and two Australian States. As you can imagine, it was quite a celebration!

Before flying to the UK we logged onto our Club's website and followed the link to the MX-5 Club in England and from there to the South West Area. As we were going to be in England for most of the month, we thought there would be a fair chance that there would be an MX-5 event or meeting somewhere that we might be able to attend. Sure enough, the South West Area calendar indicated their monthly meeting would be held on the second Tuesday of the month and that it was to be held in Exeter which, happily for us, was where we were staying. So,

we sent an e-mail to the Chapter Coordinators to introduce ourselves and to ask if we could attend this evening meeting.

The reply from Chris and Anita Read said that we were most welcome to attend and gave the details of the local pub where the meeting was to be held. Shortly after this we received another e-mail saying that there had been a change of plan and rather than just a meeting there would be a short run, followed by a fish 'n' chips tea at Budleigh Salterton (a nearby seaside town), then another short drive to a pub for a "bit of a meeting and get-together".

Now, being the shy retiring pair that we are, we decided to push the envelope a bit and see if there might be a couple of spare seats going or, if there weren't, would we be able to tag along in our hire car, a Ford Mondeo, which we promised to keep to the back of the convoy!

Now this is where we return to our opening paragraph of how friendly MX-5 owners are – to our delight, not only were our English cousins happy to pick us up from where we were staying (we didn't even have to drive to the start point), but we subsequently found out that the whole drive was organised in our honour and that they would be buying our fish 'n' chips and drinks. (We, of course, managed to pay for ourselves but their thought was what mattered and touched us greatly.)

So there we were on a cool summer's evening *zoom zooming* down narrow

English country lanes, top down, comparing notes on our two Clubs. It was great. We are just the same – the enthusiasm and passion for these little cars knows no geographical boundaries. The convoy of 21 cars and their owners came from near and far within Devon and neighbouring County Somerset to share the same camaraderie that we thrive on over here.

After dinner overlooking the pebbled beach we drove to another little village called Collaton Raleigh to round out the evening with a quick drink at "The Otter" Inn where Chris (Group Coordinator) gathered us all together to make a couple of announcements. To our surprise we were presented with a hand-made banner and a Devon County flag. Thankfully, we had taken along some back issues of MX-TRA and a couple of Club key rings which we offered to Chris, Anita and our drivers Hilary and Kevin. With their brief meeting all completed, it was time for general chatter – everyone was most interested in us and what we all get up to "over there".

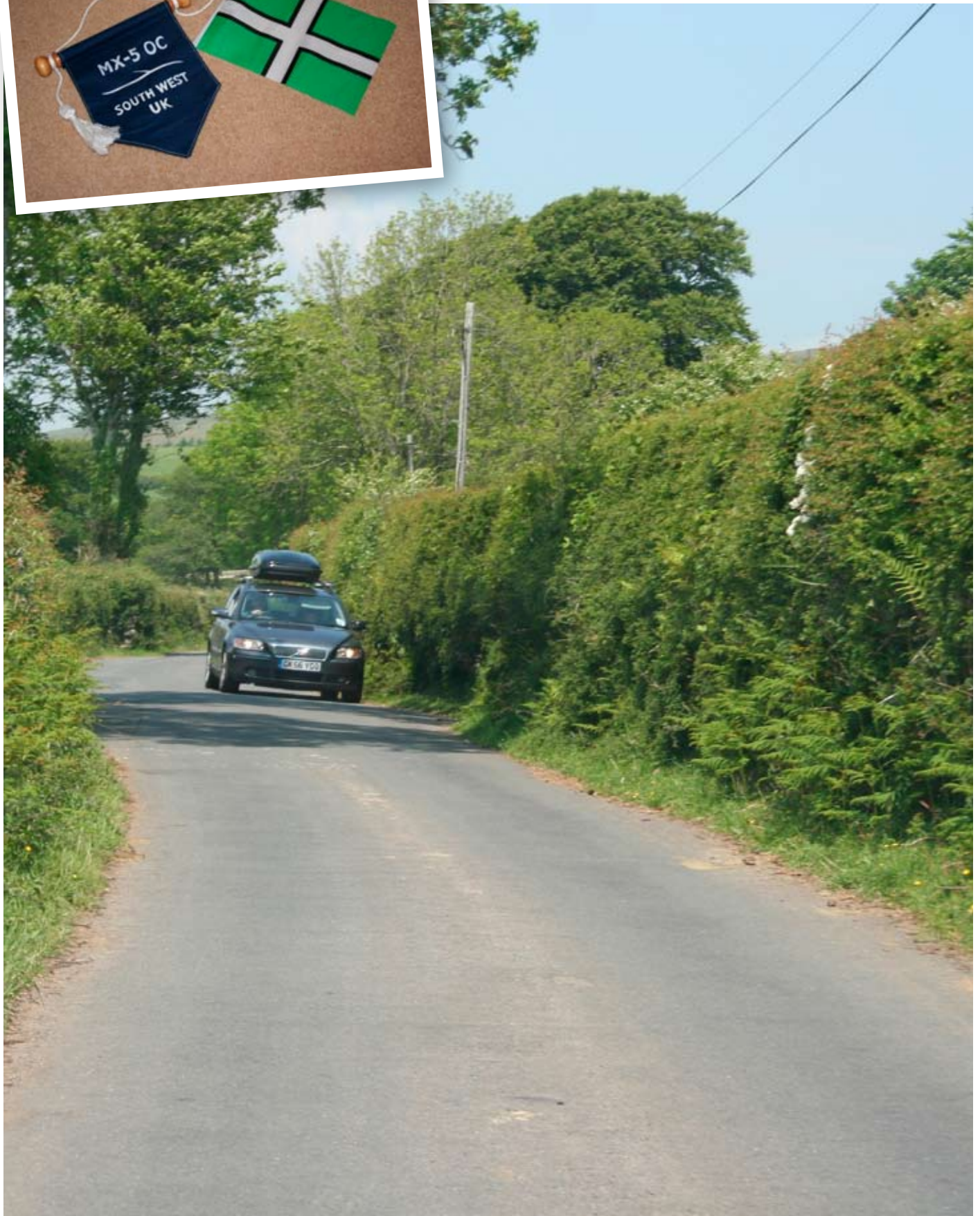
They particularly loved our name badges and admired the 20th Anniversary tops we were wearing. Before too long, it was 10:30pm and time to be heading home – so back in the cars (top down of course!) and some more of those famous narrow lanes with high hedgerow banks back to Exeter. We thoroughly enjoyed the evening and the company of new found friends.

It has been written about before by other Club members who have experienced MX-5 hospitality at an international level and now we have enjoyed it ourselves. So, if you are travelling and time permits, make the effort to contact the locals and continue to build the wonderful camaraderie that our cars and Clubs provide us with.

Our grateful thanks to Chris, Anita, Hilary and Kevin for all their efforts in getting us along to their run and to the members of the MX-5 Owners Club (South West) for making us most welcome. Extra special thanks go to Eddie and Graham for kindly making the banner presented to us.

There is a well known Devonshire poem that ends with the words: "*You'll come again in future years, We're certain sure of that m'dears*" ... we most definitely will, and we will be certain sure to contact the South West folk again to enjoy some more Deb'n hospitality!





A showdown with the MX-5's natural enemy – Volvous Stationwagonus – through Exeter's narrow hedgerows ...

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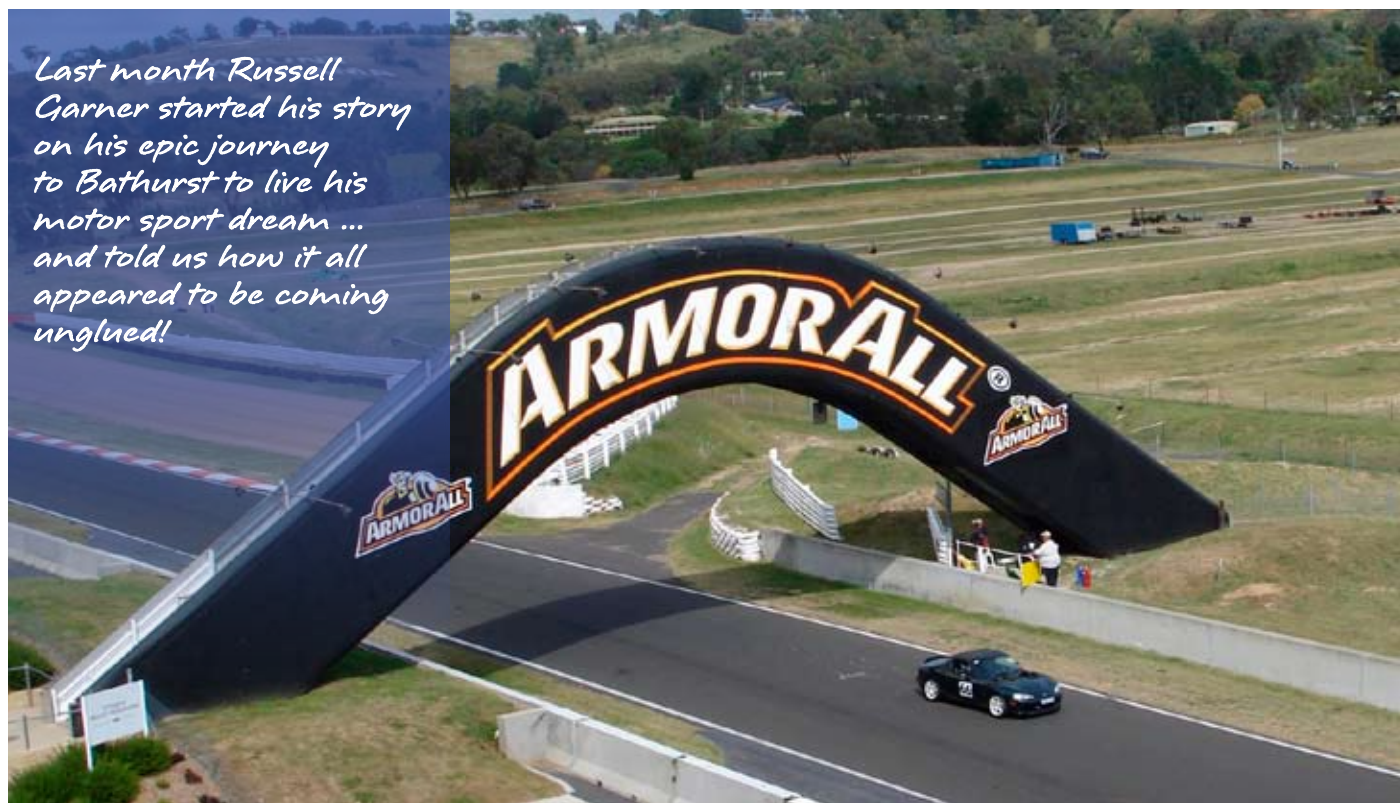


Living the dream! (part 2)

■ Words & photos: Russell Garner



Last month Russell Garner started his story on his epic journey to Bathurst to live his motor sport dream ... and told us how it all appeared to be coming unglued!



I was to be the first of our group out in the third session.

However that morning the pseudo organiser Porsche club had reorganised the runs and that put Col out in the first regularity session of the day. As he was resting up at the hotel not expecting to be on track till after lunch, Craig had to bolt over and get him and he made it out just in time for his session.

Two sessions later and finally I would get my first session at full pace. I lined up, waited for the call and then headed out. I anxiously accelerated up mountain straight and thankfully it pulled all the way to the redline and kept going through the gears. *A huge wave of relief washed over me!*

Over the hump halfway along mountain straight and the speed built more quickly on the other side as it's a downhill section leading into Griffins Bend, a deceptive corner that you can take quicker than you think as it's uphill. From here to the Cutting it's a long uphill slog, that our poor little NA MX-5s struggle with (another few 100Nm would make it much more enjoyable).

Turn in quite quick to the Cutting as it is

also uphill and from here through Reid, Sulman and McPhillamy Park sections over the top. The same track, that seemed quite easy during yesterday's slow Masters session, now took on a more daunting aspect, with the car drifting wide over the top and out towards the concrete walls once the speeds came up.

Reid Park is a blind corner that you need to take flat out to maintain speed over the top, even though you can't see where the track goes. It takes a quite a few laps of the track to be able to trust yourself enough to take this flat out and, being my first fast session, I couldn't bring myself to do it. A fairly steep drop after this corner and then into Sulman Park with the car once again drifting wide and running close alongside the concrete wall into McPhillamy which is next. Another blind corner that you need to turn into before you can see it. It's quite easy to drop a wheel off over the ripple strip on the right hand side on exit here.

Hurtling towards the next corner (Skyline) at almost 160kmh *with no road in sight* (as it drops away beneath you) is an amazingly unforgettable experience and made me appreciate just how good the quicker guys are that go over there almost flat out. Self-preservation caused

me to brake hard each time into here, though with practice I'm sure you could teach your brain not to.

Slide downhill through the next few corners and then try to stop it in time for the dipper, (as that wall on the other side had far too many marks on it for my comfort). Accelerate hard out of there and through the rest of the esses which are concrete lined for every inch.

Through the last right hander and set up for Forest Elbow, which again seemed quite easy on the slow Masters run but now caused the car to drift quite wide out to the concrete wall on corner exit (were all the walls here magnetic to the car?).

And away down Conrod. Flat to the floor and keep grabbing gears. The hump half way down, that is barely noticeable from the in-car shots on the tele, is *very noticeable* in an MX-5 and the car goes way too light here, walks around a lot and requires a fair bit of determination to keep the foot planted.

Through the right hand kink at the end of the straight, at almost 200kmh in an NA MX-5, which with more practice you can take flat, and then hard on the brakes as you enter the Chase. Turn in to the left hander and the car drifts wide again,

Living the dream ... and stepping out in the pouring rain

though lots of room and gets you over to the apex for the right hander and flat to the floor again.

Down to Murray's Corner and hard on the brakes again (this is a great corner for late-braking duels), then turn in and flat again all the way along pit straight. Almost 140kmh along pit straight then on the brakes back down to 90ish for Hell Corner, an important one to maximise the drive up the mountain straight ... and then the whole process repeats again.

My session netted about six timed laps (plus one out lap and one in lap) and it seemed to last about 25 seconds, not 25 minutes, as time always flies when you are having fun and this was some of the best fun I'd had on a track. My best time was a 3:08, which I was happy with for my first fast session, as it would take a lot of laps to build up the level of confidence required for the blind sections of the track to post consistently quick laps.

Back into the pits and I finally got to appreciate the buzz that the guys yesterday were feeling. Meanwhile Craig had managed to lower his best from the day before to a 3:05 and Darrin had also lowered his best to a 2:46 in the EVO X shopping trolley...

My next and final session was to be later that afternoon. Another questionable schedule change by the Porsche club left me and 10 other drivers without a session, as our names had been inadvertently left off the running sheet. A

90-minute 'discussion' with the stewards followed and we finally were allowed to run when it became obvious that the sheet was incorrect – when our session had been called only three out of 42 drivers had fronted up to the dummy grid for the event. We made a mad dash from the stewards' office down to ours cars to get them into the dummy grid.

Alas, by this stage the rain that had been threatening all afternoon had arrived. I had brought a spare set of new tyres with me, as previous visits to the mountain over the years had taught me that the weather could change quite quickly. Sliding around on the almost-worn tyres I currently had wasn't going to be much fun.

However the aforementioned discussion with the stewards left no time at all to change tyres before fronting the dummy grid, so I had to go out on my existing tyres, which weren't going to offer much grip on a wet track. I briefly thought about parking it, though Craig was still keen to go out. Peer group pressure got the better of me and so I remained in my car in the dummy grid, watching the rain come tumbling down and hoping that I wouldn't upset my weekend by having an off-track excursion. I had lined up next to Craig's car so we would go out in formation. At least I had a reference marker to use and I thought, if I could keep close to him, then it would make it less nerve-wracking.

The call came and we headed out on to the track. The track was extremely slippery in some sections, and the white paint used for the track edges, grid positions and wording caused a few nervous moments as the car kicked sideways when crossing them. And if our low-powered cars were stepping out, imagine what some of the more powerful cars were experiencing.

However, and this is a tribute to the inherent capabilities of our MX-5s, the slides that were happening frequently at multiple points around the track were still very controllable and, after a lap or two, I was beginning to enjoy slipping and sliding around. Across the top still demanded respect and slides here were less enjoyable though still easily caught and the confidence was returning. Visibility on Conrod straight was bordering on non existent whenever you came up onto the back of another car due to the enormous amount of spray and so there wasn't too many daring overtaking maneuvers occurring here.

After 25 minutes or so the session was red flagged as a BMW's engine had expired and we returned to pit lane while it was removed, where the officials asked us if we wanted to park it (as the rain was still present and getting heavier) or go out again. Without a moment's hesitation I replied 'go again' and Craig was the same, so we went out again for another 30-minute session. At the end of this session the chequered flag came out and



Easter, April 2010



we came back into the pits after nearly an hour solid in the pouring rain, at one of the most demanding circuits in Australia.

Thanks to our great little cars, we had no worries about off-track excursions and the level of feel and controllability was truly confidence-inspiring. Our times from that wet session also jumped us up from down near the bottom of the pack in the dry (due to our significant power deficit up/down the mountain, and it being our first visit to the track) to a solid top half effort, highlighting just how good these cars handle and how easy they are to drive, regardless of the conditions ...

All in all, even despite the issues with car trouble and the weather, it was an awesome unforgettable experience and one which I would thoroughly recommend for any of our members.

Thanks to my fellow team drivers and support crew for sharing it with me, and to my beautiful wife Claire for supporting me and my motor sport addiction and helping me live my dreams.



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Chapter news ...

Twisties and alpacas in southern Tasmania ~ 16.5.2010 | Hobart

■ Words: Allan Pryer ■ John Waldock ■ Event organisers: John Hadrill & John Waldock

A chilly but bright morning greeted attending club members for a run south to Tasmania's "Channel" region.

Following a hot beverage at Salamanca Place, and with roofs down (of course), five cars headed to Kingston via the picturesque suburbs of Tarooma and Bonnet Hill that always offer a lovely view across the Derwent River estuary.

We regrouped at Kingston Beach where the sun made the seaside a nice place to stop for a quick chat and to inspect a rather nasty "bruise" on John Waldock's rear end. During the week his 1990 NA had received a rude shunt from an inattentive driver leaving damage to bumper, rear panel and left rear light cluster. No MX-5 should look like this: a capital offence?!

Our route took us through Blackmans Bay and via some nice "twisty" roads to Piersons Point and on to Tinderbox where we stopped briefly at the marine reserve. This lovely little bay is a favourite for divers due to its rich marine life.

Some MX-5 drivers might balk at the road between Tinderbox and Howden due to it being mostly dirt, but it is in good condition and fairly quiet on a Sunday morning. From Howden we joined the Channel Highway and continued south through the small towns of Margate and Snug and on to Oyster Cove where a turn towards Nicholls Rivulet took us inland.

This road (C626) offers classic MX-5 motoring as you wend your way, turning this way and that over the hills, and then opening out on the flat for some rapid sweepers. Great stuff but watch out for shady corners that might be damp.

We caught our breath at Cygnet. Having chatted to us and admired the cars, one local was moved to resolve to suggest an MX-5 to her husband – I think she was rather taken with them. Obviously a woman of excellent taste and judgement!

Having covered so much of Tasmania's highways and byways the ever-knowledgeable John Hadrill suggested we take the Golden Valley Road (C640) to Wattle Grove before turning to Huonville. This is another great little drive – well worth detouring for. The fun continued north along the Huon River, coming inland to Cradoc and then back to the river to Woodstock and on to the "capital" of the Channel region: Huonville.

After a short stop by the river we drove north beyond the town and turned towards the rural village of Crabtree. After a quick "blat" the group arrived at our lunch destination, Moss Vale Alpacas. This is a farm of some 130 alpacas, mostly black and white and operated by Helen (my sister) and Mark Jessop, who kindly offered to host the group and give a guided tour of the property.

Whilst they are timid animals they have a strong sense of acting in the interests of the "herd". There appears to be some conjecture as to what the collective noun should be for a group of alpacas but their tendency to fire rather unpleasant saliva at unwanted company might suggest a spittoon of alpacas is most appropriate!

We were fortunate to see many cria (*cree-ah*), as young alpacas are known; they are very cute and have lovely big eyes and eyelashes. Alpaca fleece is very soft as Lawrence, a Chinese university student who was along for the run, was excited to find out.

After feeding time (and the same for the alpacas) we headed for home, some enjoying the twisty run through Longley and Ferntree to get back to Hobart.





Another perfect MX-5 day in Tassie ~ 23.5.2010 | Northern Tassie

■ Words & photos: Bruce Harvey & Cheryl Murray ■ Event organiser: Chez & Bruce



48 Wheels, 24 People, 1 Dog, and a clear sunny winter's day in Northern Tasmania perfect for MX-5s.

A civilised start time of 11am saw us meeting at the aptly named Blue Barn Café on the Frankford highway for a variety of coffee's and freshly baked snacks. The outside deck was bathed in the winter sun and we were able to chat and admire the cars in the car-park.

Cheryl had organised a syndicate in the upcoming \$40 Million lotto super-draw so there was plenty of discussion on what could be in our garages and where we could travel to once our numbers were drawn on the following Tuesday.

A unanimous decision to do some driving saw us form a convoy and travel via Holwell to Beaconsfield and then on to Beauty Point and finally down to Greens Beach where we parked beside the beach and were able to enjoy some more winter sun.

Reforming the convoy we ate up some alternate roads leading us back to Beaconsfield and then through Flowery Gully and back on to the Frankford highway but not for long as we turned off towards Bridgenorth.

A short detour in to the Notley Gorge via the recently resealed road saw some drivers sporting a bruised left arm or a sore left ear.

Rejoining the Bridgenorth road we zoom zoomed towards Westbury where ice cream and coffee waited at the famous Andy's Bakery.

Tasmanian roads, a perfect winter's day and a group of MX-5 enthusiasts ... life could not be any better.



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