

MX TR A

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

DECEMBER 2010

www.mx5vic.org.au

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Merry Christmas to all!

In this edition ...

- » Targa High Country ... a new MX-5 adventure
- » NC vs NC ... a Series 1 vs Series 2 comparison
- » Molly's new lease on life
- » Two weeks in an MX-5



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Cover
image:

On the 35th day of Christmas, my true love gave to me ...
a gleaming row of much-loved Mazda MX-5s, all dressed up for
the Christmas Show'n'Shine. Photo: Rodney Laitt

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Murray's Corner ...

■ Murray Finlay – President



They say the years fly by as you get older. If this year is any indication, I must be 178!

I can't believe it's Christmas already. Time to jump on to eBay for my annual shopping!

Of course, for the Club member who has everything, there's bound to be something in our 20th anniversary gear range. We still have some stocks left, and it won't be repeated. See our summer range on page 7 (and out winter range in the November MX-TRA) and then contact our merchandise man, Steve Dunlop, with your order.

Alyssa and I will be heading to Tassie next month to visit both the South Island chapters, and we're looking forward to that. And speaking of Tassie, while there's no formal "Not

the NatMeet Tassie Tour" in 2011, a few members look like making the trip over Easter. Vice President Don Nicoll is the man to contact if you're interested in that.

With the end of the year fast approaching, I would like to extend my personal thanks to everyone who has helped keep our great Club going this year ... our hard-working committee, our Chapter convenors, our motor sport organisers and officials, and not least the 20th anniversary organising sub-committee. Without your efforts behind the scenes we would not have the Club that we all enjoy so much.

The 2011 calendar is filling fast, hopefully with something for everyone ... starting with my annual President's Run in February.

There will be not one but two racecraft driver training days at Winton (see "Motor Sport Torque", opposite) for those who want to learn or hone their track driving skills. If there's room for non-competitors, I encourage you to consider one (or both) of these days even if you don't intend joining in the Club's Motor Sport Championship. No matter how experienced a road driver you are, what you will learn will help you enormously in your day-to-day driving.

We are also planning another of our very popular DECA driver training days, where you can find out, in a controlled environment, more about

what both you and your car can do – on the skid pan and on the short back track where all sorts of situations that you don't strike every day are simulated in safety. We're hoping to have this event sponsored or subsidised by one of our sponsors ... *watch this space!*

Again, a DECA day is a lot of fun and highly recommended. I thank in advance all the motor sport competitors who give up their time to plan and act as instructors at these driver training days.

Another change, following the success of our 20th anniversary dinner, is that we will separate our awards presentation event (lunch or dinner) from our AGM.

I hope everyone has a relaxed and enjoyable holiday season. Enjoy your friends and family and, above all, drive safely!

Merry Christmas and happy new year!

Until next time, look up, stay back!

Murray

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

December

- 12 Hobart Chapter: Christmas break-up
- 19 North Tassie: Christmas break-up

January

- 22 North Tassie Chapter run
- 23 Hobart Chapter run
- 30 Cars of the World (#2)

February

- 6 President's run
- 27 Al & Rodney's Reefton Run

March

- 12-14 SA-Vic joint weekend: Mt Gambier
- 24 New Members' Night

April

- 3 Dave's Burger Run
- 22-25 Easter
- 26 Anzac Day (in lieu)

Who's looking at you?

On our website home page we have a map which registers the locations of people who have looked at our website in any 24-hour period. Normally we might have five or six in a day, but how about this from 12 November?

Visitors to our site today:





Motor Sport Torque

■ Robert Downes – Club Captain - Motor Sport



"State of Origin" Clash – Phillip Island, 12 December

Although there has been no on-track Club motor sport in November, we are getting set for a giant "State of Origin" encounter with the Mazda MX-5 Club of NSW at Phillip Island on Sunday, 12 December.

This is our annual Interstate Challenge and over 20 entries have been confirmed from NSW on top of the Victorian contingent, so approximately 60 MX-5s will be in action. According to Phil Munnings, who has dual NSW/Vic Club membership "the NSW entrants include a fair smattering of the NSW Class Champions and gun drivers". With our Club lap records being broken in each Class virtually at every recent meeting, it looks very much like a "clash of the titans".

Entry to the venue and pits is free so come and see what an MX-5 can do on the track. Food can be purchased at the track café.

"Tyres" – clarification of Championship Rules

As mentioned in past articles, a review of the wording regarding "Tyres" in the

Championship Rules has now been completed and e-mailed to all the motor sport group. Thank you to the small team involved in the process – Russ, Teruo, Noel, Sam and Matt King. A review of the wording of the entire Rules document and Entrant's Declaration is underway and due to be available for perusal before our annual motor sport meeting in March/April 2011.

Annual Motor Sport Meeting (March/April 2011)

I am open to "offers" of where and when to hold our annual motor sport meeting.

2011/2011 Motor Sport calendar

Contrary to an email I issued on 30/11 to the Motor Sport group there is a change to the Sandown meeting in February.

The new date is Sunday, 6 February. The meeting is being organised by the HSV Club with members of the FPV, JCCV and ourselves making up the numbers. They have a maximum of 84 entries and I have given a commitment that we will have a minimum of 20 entries. I will arrange to have entry forms available very shortly.

Entry will be \$200 but be warned that **late entries will be much more expensive.** There should be lots of track time. The change is due to MSCA giving preference to their members with a possibility that some of us may miss out ... in a Championship round!

In relation to the April race meeting may I suggest that you keep 10 April clear and I will endeavour to finalise the details asap.

"Racecraft" training – Winton, 5 March, 2011

Approximately 15 spots are available for MX-5 Club members. This is NOT a conventional defensive driving training day but instead it is aimed at people who are intending to join our motor sport program or who are inexperienced and looking to improve their racetrack driving skills. Let me know if you are interested.

I wish all members a very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and happy New Year.

**Until next month ...
"drive responsibly at all times"**

Robert #26



New ride - better than electric!

This is not a toy, not a concept car. It is a newly-developed VW single-seat car in a highly-aerodynamic tear shape. It went on sale in Shanghai this year for a mere RMB 4,000 (A\$650)!

Theoretically, you could go to Shanghai for a holiday, buy two or more of these cars, one for your other half and one for yourself, and one for each of your kids, have them shipped home and still spend less money than if you bought a car in locally.

Interested? Wait till you learn that it will cruise at 100-120kmh with an unbelievable 0.99 litre/100km (258 miles/gallon) and can travel 650km on a full tank!

Not sure about the rego, though ... WOB L1?

~ Alistair
Dennis



Membership

■ Will Campbell – Membership Officer

This month, I would like to welcome the following new members and wish them all a long and happy association with the Club:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| » Marc Adams | 1993 Neo Green NA |
| » Amelia Bock | 2005 Velocity Red NC |
| » Wendy Clark | 1998 Emerald Mica NB |
| » Margery and Andrew Johns | 1998 Dark Blue NB |
| » Melva Lees | 1993 Classic Red NA |
| » Roger Loveless | 2005 Velocity Red NC |
| » John and Iain McCartney | 1989 White NA |
| » Gary Prescott | 1998 Silver NB |
| » Garry Ridge | 1999 Atlantic Blue NB |
| » Kay Smith | 1993 Classic Red NA |

To all I have met, and to all those I am still to meet, have a safe and happy festive season.

See you out and about ... *Will*

Current membership count:

406

Groetjes uit Amsterdam!

(Greetings from Amsterdam!)

Thought your MX-5 was suffering in the recent Victorian / Tasmanian weather?

Club members Mat and Renia Bock, who have just moved to the Netherlands to form our Dutch Chapter, sent back shots of these MX-5s in Amsterdam ... literally under the weather!




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Club gear for Christmas?



Short Sleeve Ladies' Polo

\$24



3/4 Sleeve Ladies' Polo

\$25

Looking for a Christmas gift idea? What about our MX-5 driver's companion, "20 Roads for 20 Years", featuring Club members' favourite Victorian and Tasmanian roads.
Cost: just \$20 per book, plus \$4 postage.



Ladies' polos

Approx. 210 gsm, 96% Cotton / 4% Elastane stretch pique knit with "Y" front placket. Black with gold 20th Anniversary embroidery. Short-sleeve or 3/4-sleeve length.

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| Size: | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| Half Chest (cm): | 46.5 | 49 | 51.5 | 54 | 56.5 | 59 |

Men's polo

Approx. 240 gsm, Combed 65% Poly / 35% Cotton, easy-fit, tight piquot knit. Black with gold 20th Anniversary embroidery.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------|------------|
| Size / Half Chest (cm): | S (53.5) | M (56) | L (58.5) | XL (61) | XXL (63.5) |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------|------------|



\$24



Rugby top

Approx. 350 gsm, 65% Poly / 35% Cotton. Black with black trim & gold 20th Anniversary embroidery.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------|------------|
| Size / Half Chest (cm): | S (57.5) | M (60) | L (62.5) | XL (65) | XXL (67.5) |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------|------------|

\$30

This one-off range of 20th anniversary merchandise is limited to this year. Contact Club Merchandise Officer Steve Dunlop: merchandise@mx5vic.org.au ...

Postage is additional

NC vs NC – a serious comparison

■ Words: Don Nicoll, Vice President and proud owner of a new Series 2 NC

In the middle of October I was the very lucky recipient of a brand new Crystal White Pearl Series 2 soft top NC.



It has been labelled the “retirement car” as it will be leased for a while, until said retirement in about 18 months, and then I’ll have to shell out the readies to buy out the lease.

Some of you will know that our first introduction to this great car club was via a Galaxy Grey (*GG*) Series 1 NC (with a retractable hard top), which we had from new in October 2007.

So, with the benefit of three years of experience in the *GG* and four weeks in the Crystal White Pearl (*CWP*), I thought I had enough information to share a “comparo” of the two cars!! You will have gathered already that this is a highly scientific comparison! For starters the *GG* had 66,000km on the clock when it was traded in and therefore my memories are of how it drove more recently and not of how it was in the beginning. The *CWP* has travelled a majestic 1500km at the time of writing. Secondly, the *GG* had a folding hard top while the *CWP* is a softie. Now I make no claims to being a good driver, but I can pick the difference in body roll when I negotiate one of my favourite corners near home. It may be the 35kg of hard top at shoulder height in the *GG* or it could be the engineers at Mazda who have played with the suspension and the centre of gravity in the *CWP*. More likely it’s a combination of both, but the new car takes my favourite corner near home faster and flatter, a fact endorsed by Ella, my daughter who reckons she could easily pick the difference from the passenger seat. *Yeah, well* – she’s an expert too ...

However, as of a few days ago, I now have another opinion on the cornering ability of the Series 2. Young Alistair Dennis took

the *CWP* for a spin while it was in for its 1000km service at Max Kirwan’s. A phone call in the afternoon to advise me that the car would not be available for collection ... *ever* (together with a suggestion that perhaps I had better keep Alistair’s car that I’d been lent for the day) probably says it all. At least Alistair knows why I was able to just keep up with him on a feisty little trip we took the previous weekend trying to follow Randy Stagno Navarra in his race-modified Series 1 NC. As I have already said, I lay no claim to being a good driver so the *CWP* was obviously contributing a lot to my ability to stay in touch.

The *GG* had two personalities, one below 3000 revs and one over 3000 revs. Having never owned either a sports car or another Mazda MX-5 before the *GG*, this split personality only became noticeable after Alistair very kindly allowed me a drive in his black NB SP (complete with turbo and other refinements) a couple of years ago. The lack of a split personality clearly differentiates the new NC from the Series 1. It revs from 1,000 up to 7,500 enthusiastically. It’s a sports car all the way from standing still to flat out, with no hint of a sub-3000 rev personality. So, if I have to pick one big difference between the two cars, then this is it. When Murray drove a Marble White Series 2 NC on loan from Mazda last year, he described it as more like his original NA than the Series 1. Now, I’ve never driven an NA so I can’t endorse that claim but I get the impression that this new car is closer to the original ideals of the MX-5.

Despite carrying on (to anyone who would listen) about Mazda’s unbelievable decision to offer Recaro seats only in the retractable



hard top, I guess I have to admit that the seats in the *CWP* are better than the *GG* seats. Only marginally better mind you, and definitely not as good as the Recaros. So at least I will still have something to mumble about as I approach senility. But, as for the rest of the cockpit, well all I can say is that Mazda listened to the complaints about the Series 1. Gone are the knee crunching side drink bottle holders. The bottle holders are still there but now they are let into the door panel. The centre console has a real glove tray that you can put things in (at least when you chuck out the removable drink separator you can) and there is even a place for a tyre pressure gauge or a pen. Just in front of the gear stick there is a little non slip rubber mat, with sides Here you can park things like a mobile phone and they don't fly off at the first spirited bit of cornering. *Bliss!!*

Yes, there is still a plastic bendy aerial which looks a bit cheap and yes, the carpet is so wafer thin you can see through it (fixed with some Mazda floor mats) and yes, the bloody sun visor only articulates one way ... but other than that I haven't found too much to criticise so far.



I have to acknowledge Alistair Dennis for his insistence on the choice of the Crystal White Pearl. I nearly got sucked into a yellow one, but fortunately (with the benefit of hindsight) that was deleted from the range before I could place the order. I had also flirted with the Aluminium for a while. The mica chip in the white paint certainly adds an interesting dimension which I have yet to find words to describe, but I really like it. Against the advice of some, I ordered a black removable hard top and I'm really glad I stuck to my guns, as I think it looks OK on the white car.

I hadn't given any serious thought to personalising the new car other than using the number plate from the *GG*, which the kids had given me for my 60th. However, at the Christmas party I asked our in-house colour specialist, Rodney Laitt what he would do. Rodney's suggestion is in his photograph (with help from "Photoshop"); now I just have to find a pinstripe specialist who has some red paint.

So, did I make the right decision in trading up to the Series 2?

I think the answer, for me at least, is a resounding yes. I suspect the new car will keep Linda and me entertained for many years to come and, with luck, some smart person will come up with a zimmer frame design that will fit in an MX-5 boot before I need it. ■

Life, summarised ...

Great truths that children have learned

...

1. No matter how hard you try, you can't baptise cats.
2. When your Mum is mad at your Dad, you don't let her brush your hair.
3. If your sister hits you, don't hit her back. They always catch the second person.
4. Never ask your three-year-old brother to hold a tomato.
5. You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
6. Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
7. Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time.
8. You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
9. Don't wear polkadot underwear under white shorts.
10. The best place to be when you're sad is Grandma's lap.

Great truths that adults have learned ...

1. Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree.
2. Wrinkles don't hurt.
3. Families are like fudge ... mostly sweet, but with a few nuts.
4. Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
5. Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
6. Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fibre, not the toy ...



Great truths about growing old ...

1. Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional ...
2. Forget the health food. I need all the preservatives I can get.
3. When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
4. You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you once got from a roller coaster.
5. It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask you the questions ...
6. Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.
7. Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

The Four Stages of Life:

1. You believe in Santa Claus.
2. You *don't* believe in Santa Claus.
3. You *are* Santa Claus.
4. You *look* like Santa Claus.

A run through the trees

■ Words & photos: Ron Macdonald ■ Run organiser: Don Nicoll

Diary Entry: 7 November, 2010

Occasion: Run through the trees (Modified)

Conveners: Don and Linda Nicoll – Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria Inc.

07:15 | A quick peek out of the window revealed a very overcast sky (bugger). Decided to consult the Bureau forecast - "Cloud increasing, isolated showers and the chance of thunderstorms from mid afternoon" (bugger X2). Finally a check of the Bureau of Meteorology radar showed light rain just passing through Hamilton (bugger X3). Oh well, as they say in the classics, worse things happen at sea.

07:30 | Woke Gracie and rolled her out to greet the day (topless of course). CD placed in the player, we motored off to the dulcet tones of one James Barnes. The drive from Frankston to Research was nearly a run in itself, especially once we were off Eastlink and having our own little "run through the trees".

08:30 | Arrived in Research after a pleasant but uneventful drive. Not long after we were joined by Eric and his little red NA (Nice tonneau!). Over the next 45 minutes a steady stream of cars slowly filled the shopping strip car park. As the drivers alighted from their little wagons (and pleasantries had been exchanged) talk strangely enough turned to all things motoring (well all things MX-5 anyway). One item of interest was the recent detailing day; of particular note was our MX-TRA editor's sudden interest in clay baring! Meanwhile President Murray and his good lady wife Alyssa were doing the rounds, catching up with the old and meeting the new (did you read the October Presidents message?). The 32 MX-5s assembled in the car park now gave the people of Research a full representation of the marque, from the earliest NA right through to Don's two-week old baby.

09:15 | Run briefing, Host for the day Don welcomed the "newbies", introduced the committee and gave an overview of the day's activities.

09:40 | Set off ...

09:50 | Only 10 minutes and a handful of turns into the run and the fun begins ☺. Flat Rock Road provided the first challenging curves and it wasn't long before Gracie (and friends) were into the rhythm (brake in – power out) with Gracie clinging to Bert Brogan's NB rear bumper (must say, lovely exhaust tone,

Bert!) as we wound down the narrow black strip. During this section there were some lovely views for those drivers game enough to take their eyes off the road and any passengers that may have still had their eyes open!

09:57 | Hit a one-lane bridge (not literally); however oncoming traffic brought our progress to a halt. Have to wonder what that driver thought as he alighted from the bridge to find a dozen multi-coloured "5s" eagerly waiting their turn to cross. Another minor interruption to our fun came when we all became banked up behind a truck, fortunately literally a few hundred metres down the road we came to a T-intersection, the truck turned left, we turned right.

10:05 | A change in country, from narrow winding mountain roads to a lovely lush green valley and a need to rein in the stragglers. Don and Linda opted to halt the convoy on the side of the road near the Hurstbridge/Kinglake/Healesville sign. After only a few minutes we were off again. It was at this point I realized Gracie was looking a little out of place in a sea of various shades of red, two forward and four aft.

10:15 | The devastation of 21 months ago was quite evident as we passed through a grove of blackened trees now fighting to return to their previous splendor. Mountain after mountain of charred "sticks" were visible in the distance, reminding us all of the need to treat fire with the due care it deserves.

10:18 | Entered Kinglake National Park, sign advised 6km of winding road, YES! This is MX-5 country, however a second sign advised narrow shoulder and steep drop. This second sign I am sure was responsible for the newly embedded fingernail marks in the passenger door trim (but I had fun).

10:27 | Welcome to Murrindindi shire and time for another regroup. The wind was now noticeably stronger and, I might add, cooler. This gave rise to some concern (with me) that the predicted rain might not be too far off; this however was short lived and before long the sun was poking its head out again. IZAMX-5 led the little procession into the Healesville – Toolangi





road, this surprisingly enough takes you through Toolangi, which (so the sign said) was closed today (sorry, in-joke, had to be there 😊). Toolangi is not the largest of towns but would have the best show of Rhododendrons of any town I have ever been through, the colours and variety were simply stunning. Myers Creek road, what can I say except this was obviously designed by a civil engineer who owned an MX-5. This road is not only deliciously bendy but most of the corners have a near perfect camber that seems to suck you around the bend, definitely the most fun you can have with your pants on! The only minor downside was the forest litter fairy in preceding me and covering the road in, umm, little vegetation "offerings". Anyhow*, 57 gear changes later (*Ed. Someone has read the "20 Roads" book!*) we rolled into Healesville and came to a stop at the Beechworth Bakery for a much needed, umm, drink (amongst other things).

11:35 / Wagons Ho, the run through Healesville township was a little "close" but once out the other side we could again "stretch our legs". Our journey took us down through Chum Creek and past a big pink pig statue (notice that?) and finally to a halt at some road works. John Todd took this opportunity to alight from his nifty NB and walk back towards me, to advise that I had knocked my lights on to high beam (Sorry, John & Janette). More windy roads including one sharp corner with what appeared to be a spring running across it (I took that one gingerly). A sense of déjà vu as we roll back through Toolangi (yep, still closed) and onward to Kinglake.

12:00 / Kinglake, plenty of new houses tucked between the trees but also still several caravans and empty house sites to remind us of the massive destruction this area suffered. The main drag is still only a shadow of its former self with several of the businesses still trading from makeshift premises and the "refugee" camp is still quite active. Onwards and upwards over bald spur (most aptly named) before pulling over for another regroup.

12:20 / On our way again through Kinglake West which is still using an ATCO site shed for the official post office, this goes to show how this fire will impact on this area for decades to come. Turn towards Flowerdale and more lovely bends, well that is until our convoy leader

got stuck behind Granny Moffat 😊. Still it was a pleasant (though pedestrian) drive.

12:30 / Wet stuff started to appear on Gracies windscreen. *Noooooo!* Turned out to be a false alarm, 10 big drops and it was all over. Rolling through Flowerdale it looked like there was a bikie convention at the local pub, must have been a good hundred of them parked out front. Leaving the trees we passed through a pretty valley with a large group of alpaca's sporting the latest haircut.

12:42 / End of the line, Strath Creek Pioneer Reserve. The driving now over, time had come to fill our faces. This was accomplished with the assistance of the Strath Creek-Reedy Creek Brigade who had put on a lovely spread of salads and desserts. After lunch a helmet was passed around for those who wished to donate to the brigade followed by an address by El Presidente. Murray explained to those present the reasons behind choosing this brigade for the run and introduced us to the Captain of the Strath Creek-Reedy Creek Brigade, Gary Henty. Captain Henty thanked everyone for their attendance and donations then invited all to inspect their brand new station. After a guided tour by Captain Henty and several of the brigade members the time had come to say our goodbyes and wend our way to our various homes.

I think it fair to say that the run was a complete success and was enjoyed by all who attended (I thoroughly enjoyed myself). I started this entry with a weather report so might close it with the same. The run back to Frankston was a long one (Gracie had not been this far from home since I met her), however still no rain. I had assumed the predicted rain had not materialised until on Monday morning I was advised it had P'd down in Lilydale on Sunday (Oh that is short for poured down, not what you were thinking). Guess kudos is due to whomever it was that put the order in for the weather 😊.

*Ron Macdonald, Wendy Clark
Gracie (NB&A)*





Social-lights

■ Janette Todd – Club Captain - Social

Christmas 2010

It is a special time of year – in our hemisphere the warmer weather finally arrives; children the world over are writing their letters to Father Christmas; retail outlets are stocked to the rafters with all manner of festive goodies, beckoning you to come and buy and kitchen aromas of puddings and mince pies suggest that even more calories will be added to those hips! I love it all and I don't mind saying that I am a "Christmas Tragic".

That is why I enjoy the Mazda MX-5 Club Christmas Party. It is just the best opportunity to get together with our car club friends and share yet more fun and laughter, and this year's party was no different. Numbers were down a little, but it didn't stop those of us who gathered together from having a wonderful afternoon.

We kicked off with a Show 'n Shine in the parkland surrounding Albert Park Lake and it was great to see the display of cars lined up, all having been washed and polished and parked up with pride. The event was sponsored by LUMLEY SPECIAL VEHICLES – a new advertiser with, and supporter of, our Club – and it proved a difficult task for Judge Dick Richey to find a winner. As well as checking for the obvious (the expected spic and span finish inside and out) Dick looked even deeper to find the pride and love that I am sure we all have for our MX-5s. All of the vehicles deserved to win, but to use a well worn cliché – there could only be one winner. Well done and congratulations to Eric Field for presenting your 1993 Classic Red NA to us – she truly shone on the day!

To keep things moving during our (very tasty) spit roast lunch I devised an Aussie Christmas Trivia Quiz – told you I was tragic ... in fact, there was a suggestion from one of my ex-Committee

friends that I should "get out more" but I noticed he still took part! It was all good fun and it certainly got people thinking. Now I have enjoyed quite a number of Merry Christmases, but I never knew that one of Santa's reindeer was called "Mincer" and, whilst Johnny Cash sang about a man named "Sue" many years ago, the two little boys in Rolf Harris' Christmas song of the same title were not called "Jack & Jill". And wouldn't you just love to receive 364 gifts from your true love over the 12 days of Christmas (check it out – yes Don, it is cumulative!). Lastly, for the record Rudolph's father spells his name Donner – not Donna. Accolades to Deb & Steve Dunlop and Ben & Sasha Rounsefell for taking out the prizes from autObarn – I am pretty sure it was 7year old Sasha's input that got you across the line!

As in past years we asked those attending to bring along an unwrapped child's gift as a donation to the Salvation Army Christmas Toy Appeal. Thank you so very much to all of you who did just that. The toys and games were delivered to the Salvos on the Monday morning following our party and to use their words "you will help make someone's Christmas a little brighter".

Of course special mention must be made of our Christmas Party Sponsors. The MX5 Factory (Dick & Carole Richey), Mazda Australia (this year represented by Ben Rounsefell) and autObarn Eltham (Peter Rutherford) are long-time supporters of our Christmas luncheon and once again we thank them sincerely for their very generous donations. This year they were joined by Lumley Special Vehicles and Novotel Forest Resort at Creswick – to them our grateful thanks.

Below is a list of the major winners and their prizes – from this you may gather that the Christmas Party is an event not to be missed!

Lumley Special Vehicles Show 'n' Shine

- » 2 Gold Class Cinema tickets (value \$150)

– Eric Field (photo opposite)

Trivia Quiz Winners:

(donated by autObarn Eltham)

- » Micro-fibre cloth packs and LED mini torches

– Deb & Steve Dunlop and Ben Rounsefell & daughter, Sasha

Raffle draws:

- 1st Major Prize (donated by MX5 Factory): Food & Beverage voucher from Crown Casino Complex (value \$300)

– Andrea Freidberg

- 2nd Major Prize (donated by Mazda Australia):

- » Dinner voucher for two on Puffing Billy Murder Mystery Train (value \$230)

– Lynne Downes

- 3rd & 4th Major Prizes (donated by Novotel Forest Resort, Creswick):

- » Two Accommodation & Breakfast vouchers for two (value \$220 each)

– Jeff Searl
– Rodney Lait

Other prizes included passes to Melbourne Aquarium, a Christmas hamper, a Décor cool bag, and a selection of wines as well as various items of Mazda merchandise.



As one of the fortunate ones who decided to attend this year's Club Christmas Party, I would like to thank the Committee who put in so much effort to make it such an enjoyable day.

The Committee do a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure that we have events to attend, whether they be social, motor sport and so on.

Apart from the lead-up work, many of the Committee were busy on the day selling merchandise, clearing tables, drawing raffles etc.

Also, on the subject of raffles, a big thank you to the Club's sponsors for the huge amount of prizes which were donated by them.

Thanks again for a great day.

Yours,

Ron Gillick
Convenor
N-E Victorian Chapter

So that was the Christmas party 2010.

John and I wish all of you a wonderful Christmas season with family and friends and look forward to sharing another MX-5 year with you in 2011.

It's a date – ink it in!

Janette

Scene about ... at Christmas



■ Photos: Rodney Laitt



The Show'n'Shine winner: Eric's much-loved '93 NA



Turning heads!





A Targa adventure

■ Words & photos: Christine Boak



On 5-7 November, Owen and I headed north-east to Mt Buller and Mansfield for the running of the first **Targa High Country**.

Our Targa story begins ...

Owen and I had been to Tassie to spectate at Targa and over many years said this was an event for our bucket list. The bucket filled in 2009 when we entered our Citroen Xsara in **Targa Wrestdpoint** and **Targa Tasmania** a couple of months later.

Wrestdpoint was a steep learning curve. *Beware!!* Driving in Targa is nothing like any other event, especially not the track. Car went to heaven, we missed Targa Tas and it was time to move on. It was during this time that I met my first MX-5 and my love affair started. We decided to build a WRC replica Citroen Xsara for Targa 2010. Those in the Club motor sport team will have heard the endless saga of difficulty in sourcing parts for this car.

Our Targa High Country plans were nearly dashed again when we were about three weeks out from the event and the parts saga continued. We had no choice but to withdraw the car from the event. We were devastated. Neither Owen nor I were too happy about missing High Country.

So, what else do you do when you have three MX-5s in the garage and a whole lot of nice windy roads? ... Decide which one to take on an adventure, of course!

We decided that my SE race car would be best. Given that it can take 8-12 months to prepare a car for Targa, this was going to be tight as I had the car entered in the 6-Hour at Winton only weeks before.

Home from Winton and the SE (nick-named *Evil Zoomy*) went into the shop for some Targafying: rally computer, brakes, extra seat with harness and all of that sort of stuff, but there was one thing missing. The suspension in the car is brilliant on the track but for pot holes, gravel, crests and dips it wasn't! We decided that we'd live with it and go out and have a ball anyway.

And have a ball we did!

I may have muttered a couple of times about the cramped conditions as I juggled a couple of helmets in my lap, but this in no way deflects from how much fun it was to take an MX-5 out and do what it was made for and it only reinforced my



affection for the car!!! If *Evil* could talk I reckon he'd say he loved every minute as well, he was revelling in it!

Thursday night we took the chairlift ride up to the summit for the official welcome party and fireworks.

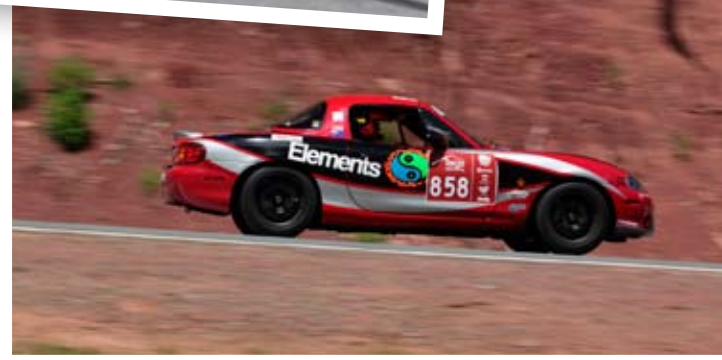
The competition was held over three days starting with a street stage in Mansfield on Friday evening, followed by a display of the competition cars in the main street of Mansfield that night. The local community really got behind it. They lined the street cheering as the cars went past and the kids ran around getting the team's autographs, making us feel like celebrities.

There were eight stages each day heading north to Wangaratta via Whitfield and Eildon via Jamieson and each ended with a 20km stage to the summit of Mt Buller, where the event was based.

It was a buzz and one of the highlights was when we were met with fanfare from the Mazda Motorsport Team when we finished!

Targa Tasmania is approaching its 20th year in Tasmania with wide acceptance from the community and I think that the fact that we now have an event such as this in Victoria is quite extraordinary.

As a competitor I send my thanks not only to the organisers but also to the local community, Victoria Police and local councils without whose support we would never have been able to enjoy driving our cars in this beautiful part of our state.



Owen and I have definitely been bitten by the Targa bug. It's like one of those things you know you shouldn't do but you just have to keep going back for more! The other thing we've been bitten by is the one thing that brings us all together, that super little sports car, the MX-5. Watch this space; I think it will become a regular feature in the Boak Targa story.

We also got to catch up with some fellow MX-5ers and I'd like to extend huge congratulations to team 933: Andrew Mckay (Vic) and Alex Hailstone (NSW) in their 2006 NC on their podium finish! What a great effort for their debut in Targa.

Also thanks to Steve Dunlop who made sure we were well attired in MX-5 Club merchandise for the event. ■

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The MX-5 Club Grill



Introducing ...

*Russell Garner, 2009-10
Motor Sport Champion*

Name? Russell (classified) Garner

Age? I prefer the Herald Sun

Born? Warragul, Victoria

Current abode? The country Gippsland town of Drouin. Nearly four years on and the bank still insists on regular cash injections before it will even consider handing over the title

Profession? IT Manager for an automotive component manufacturer

Partner? Married to Claire, three years this autumn, with a 1-yr daughter, Jenna, – who has single-handedly managed to completely change life as we (used to) know it

Pets? None. Very much a dog person, but no time to spend with it so it wouldn't be fair to have one. Besides, my memory isn't my greatest asset so I'd probably forget to feed the poor thing!

Fave food? No standout favourites, everything is good ... although I do have a fairly severe chocolate addiction ...

Can you cook? Haven't needed to admit Claire to hospital with food poisoning yet, in over eight years and counting, so must be a yes ...

Favourite tippie? Either a nice red with dinner, or an ice cold beer(s) on a hot day

First drive? Age 10, in a friend's dad's farm ute. Spent many afternoons there refining my driving technique. (Note: wet paddocks and mostly bald tyres are not the ideal

partners for impressive handling/cornering ability)

First car? Commodore V8 manual. In hind sight, probably not the best choice for my first car (hmm, Dad was right) as numerous sets of (predominantly rear) tyres and squillions of dollars in fuel over the coming year and a half meant I was unlikely to sneak into BRW's richest 100 list. Sold it for 30% more than I paid for it 18 months later, to fund my tertiary education

First fender bender? Abovementioned V8. Lost control showing off doing power slides while slightly inebriated with a car load of friends. (A message in there kiddies!) Ended up altering the steering geometry significantly from what the factory originally intended

Everyday driver? 2007 Territory Turbo Ghia. An excellent allrounder. AWD for trips up to the snow (no fitting snow chains for this black duck), plenty of room for baby and all the stuff that seems to come with them, and turbo for ease of towing the MX-5 to racetracks

Current MX-5? Grace Green 1999 NB8A which spends 90% of its life on the track

MX-5 improvements? Intake/exhaust. Suspension mods. 4-pt cage, seat, harness

MX-5 dislikes? Undeserved reputation as a hairdresser's car (obviously by those who have never driven one quickly around a series of corners)

Why an MX-5? Lightweight, rear-wheel drive, 50:50 weight distribution with proper wishbone suspension ... and its ability to circulate faster around a track than significantly more powerful cars

Fluffy dice? Never been a fan

Passions besides the MX-5? Snowboarding, motorbike riding, 4WDing, sadly all taking a back seat to the 1-yr

Favourite TV show / movie / book? Top Gear / The Matrix / "How To Make Your Car Handle" by Fred Puhn

Dream wheels (money no object)? Porsche 997 Turbo S

Would you drive a Daewoo or SsangYong? So long as I didn't have to own it. I enjoy driving variety. (Though

seriously, what are the designers at SsangYong smoking?)

Favourite other Mazda? RX-8 or Series 6 RX-7 Turbo

If not a Mazda (gasp!) what? Mercedes C63 AMG, as a cheaper (though sadly still out of my reach) alternative to preferred 997 Turbo S

How long in the Club? Just into my second year with the Club and loving it

How many MX-5 Club runs? None yet. Still awaiting my chiropractor to sanction using current track suspension on our rather less-than-perfect Victorian roads

Favourite Club run? Based on my present Club run count of nil, my next one

Funniest thing seen on a Club run? To be advised

Done DECA? Not yet, unless getting my truck licence counts

If yes, how many times? 0 or 1 depending on last question's answer

Ford vs Holden? FORD...

What's playing in your MX-5? The radio now, as I took the stacker out to save weight for the track

Footy team (AFL/NRL/Soccer)? AFL: the mighty Hawks. NRL: not interested enough to choose a side (haven't had a lobotomy yet!) Soccer: probably favour English side West Ham as Mum and Dad used to live one block from their stadium

Final comments? Definitely the best car club I have had the privilege of being a member. The friendship and camaraderie right throughout the club is second to none, whilst still managing to capture a healthy sense of competition



Chapter news ...

Coffee Run to the Coast

~ 24.10.2010 | Northern Tassie

- Words & photos: Peter Maddern & Ally
- Run organiser: Michael Lindsay



We all met at Andy's bakery in Westbury. Michael led us on a merry run through some of the back roads of Westbury and on to Beaconsfield.

There was a little light rain falling to keep us driving carefully.

An unusual sight was seen while travelling behind Carl and Kelly, with Kelly driving and Carl holding on to the passenger side external rear view mirror which had fallen off. Some of us needed a pit stop at Exeter and fell behind for a short section, but this allowed some spirited driving to catch up.

We arrived on the eastern side of the Tamar river where we stopped for a quick cuppa under the Batman Bridge before heading to Beauty Point Riverview Hotel for a delicious, leisurely lunch which all enjoyed.

It was then back in the cars for a quick sprint to the Blue Barn Café on the Frankford Highway, where we were treated to great coffee, chai and fantastic cakes. ■



Run to Sisters Beach, Boat Harbour

~ 21.11.2010 | Northern Tassie

- Words: Sandra Tillack
- Photos: Sandra Tillack & Bruce Harvey

After an extremely long winter and months of rainy Sundays, we finally struck it lucky with a perfect day for our November run.

Four MX-5s journeyed from Launceston for our 10am official start in Devonport where we were joined by six more cars. Everyone was eager to take advantage of the glorious sunshine and windless day (yes, we do get them occasionally in Tassie, but we waited a long time for one to fall on a Sunday!).

We had our usual meet and greet (and inspection of cars). We met first timers, Stu and Pippa from Launceston and two guest passengers, John and Brian, who accompanied Nigel and Michael (whose wives had gone AWOL) also from Launceston.

We began with a longer exit from the Devonport city centre by travelling along Victoria Parade past our renowned and controversial "Spirit of the Sea" statue, our \$8 million Mersey Bluff beach precinct makeover, Coles Beach and then through the 'burbs and back to the main drag, exiting at the Don Village and taking the back road through prime agricultural lands to the small village of Forth.

We then turned west and followed the Kindred Road through more undulating farmland, twisting our way onto Top Gawler Road which, on our trial run back in August, promised lots of twists, turns and challenges winding down to Gawler. In fact, we got caught behind a slow-travelling farm vehicle towing a horse float, with an equally slow-moving Suzuki caught in the middle of our convoy. Frustration plus! Those of us with hair (sorry fellas) were tried to the point of hair-pulling! Perhaps this slower pace enabled us to enjoy the scenery all the more. From Gawler it was a short run into Ulverstone.

In central Ulverstone we crossed the Leven River, observing the construction of the new bridge, and turned right on to the tourist route, Old Coast Road. This took us along our beautiful craggy coastline to Penguin, where we discovered a new stop-over at Hiscutt Park for a short break and stretch of the legs. We girls tried very hard to ignore the fact that the popular Penguin markets were open; after all, this was an MX-5 day, not (another) shopping day!

Leaving Penguin we again stuck to our coastal route via Preservation Drive to Heybridge, where we turned inland into Minna Road and enjoyed a few kilometres of winding country roads, blowing a few cobwebs away (figuratively speaking!). Turning towards Stowport, another small rural community, we then took a sharp left on to Rutherfords Road which also offered breathtaking panoramic views of rolling hills, blue sea in the background and Table Cape at Wynyard in the distance.

Passing by Fern Glade (a lovely riverside, thickly ferned picnic area on the outskirts of Burnie) we came to our next



turn off far too quickly, shot around the corner at a rate of knots and lost our next car temporarily. Fortunately, we only panicked for a few seconds before Nigel reversed and led the rest of the group in the proper direction. We were duly and deservedly chastened, but at least the reflexes on Keith's part were working well – if we'd been driving anything else but an MX-5 I think we would have taken the corner on two wheels!

A couple of kilometres south on Surrey Road found us at our morning tea stopover at the former Lactos Cheese outlet shop, now owned by National Foods. We spent 30 minutes ordering coffees, consuming lots of magnificent award winning cheeses in the tasting centre, and making purchases of fabulous Tasmanian produce including smoked salmon products, jams (savoury and sweet), sauces, pickles, relishes, honeys etc. Some of us were well prepared with cooler bags in preparation of the tempting items on offer!

Leaving Lactos we skirted around the southern suburbs of Burnie, turning off on Three Mile Line and heading west through more hilly farmlands and country roads, winding our way via West Mooreville Road, Cam Road and Somerset where we rejoined the Bass Highway. A few kilometres further on we once again turned on to the tourist route / coastal road leading us through Wynyard (and

past more market stalls under colourful umbrellas) along the grassy beachfront. In the centre of Wynyard we turned north and toured along the cliff-top road around the edge of the distinctive

tableland of Table Cape, where we could see Sisters Island off Sisters Beach and Rocky Cape in the distance. We were so thankful for such lovely weather, we must surely live on one of the most beautiful islands in the world when viewed on a day like this!

Rejoining the Bass Highway we only had a couple of kilometres to travel before our lunch stop at the Crossed Spoon Café, where our table was positioned so that we once again got to enjoy the lovely coastal and sea views. Here we were joined for a short time by Paul and Linda from Somerset who have a green NC model and who have expressed interest in our monthly jaunts. After suitable refreshments, sustenance and goodbyes to Paul & Linda, it was time to move on once more.

Still travelling west we reached our most westerly point of the day at Sisters Beach, a small beachside community servicing holiday makers from the 1950s but which is now almost an outer suburb of Wynyard (albeit 20km away) with many permanent homes lining the foreshore. Most of our club members had never been to Sister Beach and, after another stretch of the legs and walk to the local boat ramp, we then proceeded to the original centre of the founding settlement at the creek area with white sand and towering pine trees. Nostalgic for the writer, as my family were one of the first to build a holiday home in the

mid 1950s before sealed roads, septic tanks, town water, electricity or bread & milk deliveries. Mmmm, if I close my eyes I can almost smell my mother's home-made bread cooking in the combustion stove ...

Mike, one of our observant drivers, had noticed a spanner on the road leading to the beach and it was concluded that one of our people, who obviously "tinkers" under the bonnet and, after all the travelling, twisting and turning on the day, must have lost it. So on leaving the Sisters it was to scour the roadways in search of the spanner and yes, we found it! A good recovery, Rob!

We then took a quick detour into Boat Harbour, another picturesque small bay, sheltered from the west by steep hills, with magnificent blue waters on most occasions. This area was very busy with beach goers taking advantage of the good weather and so we only went in and around the beachfront area before making a much faster return towards home, via the Bass Highway to Leith just past Ulverstone.

It was here that Keith and I handed over to Carl and Kelly who had kindly invited us to their home at Melrose, and who led us from the coast through the last of our challenging country roads via Braddons Lookout, Bellamy, Eugenana, Abbotsham and onwards and upwards to Melrose in the hills. Those of us who weren't in a rush to go home enjoyed a cuppa and Kelly's home baked fresh scones, jam and cream and cinnamon scrolls – thanks Carl and Kelly for your warm hospitality in your lovely home – such a perfect way to end the day. ■

Chapter news ...

Liquid sunshine ... ~14.11.2010 | Hobart

■ Words & photos: John Waldock ■ Run organiser: John Waldock

The Chapter met as usual at Salamanca for an early morning charge of coffee before the "off".

The weather wasn't the greatest ... to be honest it was wet, dreary and a little soul destroying! But with forced cheerfulness we set off in our convoy towards Orford (on the east Coast) and hopefully better weather.

The drive to Orford is normally a pleasurable one. There are a few MX-5 sections where it's possible to feel the balance and poise that our fantastic little cars possess. Unfortunately, the weather conditions meant a very careful and measured driving experience, as none of us wanted to use the services offered by one of our group (John Sly), who is the local recovery vehicle driver.

So with caution we made our way to Orford, where we were to meet the members of the Post Vintage Car Club for a quiet drink and the opportunity to show off our cars.

Unfortunately, our seven MX-5s made up a significant part of the show, as many of the Post Vintage owners decided (understandably) not to take their cars out in what was a pretty bad day weatherwise. Anyway, we had a nice chat with the other attendees, checked out a few cars and huddled in the pub for a beer or a glass of wine.

We left the pub for lunch at John Sly's place, a BBQ no less. But John was well prepared for the weather and we enjoyed our lunch well protected from the rain and cold. John and his wife Kerry put on a pretty good spread too, and with a nice glass of the local drop (they live next to a vineyard) to finish off the afternoon.

Thanks to all the attendees who made the run such an enjoyable experience, given the challenging weather conditions. Special thanks to John and Kerry who hosted our lunch and made us feel very welcome. ■





Ian & Alan's Forrest Run ~ 14.11.2010 | Ballarat & Western Victoria

■ Words: Karen Bradshaw ■ Photos: Karen Bradshaw & John Gleeson ■ Run organisers: Ian Bradshaw & Alan Everett



On 14 November six adventurous cars travelled to Wallinduc meeting up with the Bradshaws and Everetts to participate in the inaugural Forrest Run.

After a bit of a chat and checking out the hot dog that Bradshaws have put on their little buzz box (the little car sounds all grown up!) it was off to Colac, three brave souls with the roof down. No rain - thank goodness after Saturday's downpour - just cloudy and mild.

On the way to Colac we played dodgems with cockatoos, pot holes and a truck tyre guard, but not a kangaroo in sight! It was good to see water in the lakes and wildlife enjoying it on the way to Colac.

We met up with one lonely car from Geelong at the park in Colac - not a red MX-5 to be seen anywhere. We had another chat and coffee at Colac, whilst one car returned to Ballarat (we thank David and Deb for joining us as far as Colac).

After our morning tea break, eight cars ventured on from Colac through Gellibrand and into the very pretty Otway Forest with its various ferns, tall trees, moss and spring flowers. We stopped at Ferguson to put the roofs up before passing through Weeaprounah - the wettest place in Victoria.

We had a little misty rain travelling into Lavers Hill and on to the Great Ocean Road. We then zoomed towards Apollo Bay with low-lying cloud and mist, dodging a small band of escaped sheep on the way.

We regrouped at Marengo just before Apollo Bay for another chin wag and to put the roofs down again ... with the exception of the blue Roadster Eunus bringing up the rear. After our fleeting trip through Apollo Bay we went on to Skenes Creek where we turned on to the road to Forrest.

We stopped at the Skenes Creek lookout, just to check out some more fog! We had a snail's pace trip on the winding roads to Forrest as there was big slow cars that had been detoured because of a landslide on the Great Ocean Road between Skenes Creek and Lorne ... glad we weren't travelling in that direction!

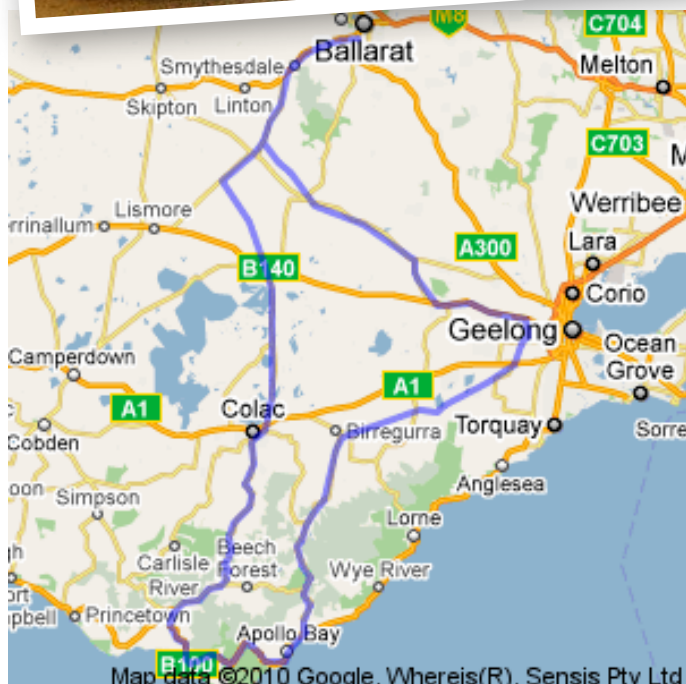
We arrived at the Forrest Hotel for lunch - a great meal and even better company, who weren't in a hurry to be on the road again. Two lady members even renewed their acquaintances after meeting 36 years ago in the labour ward! At three o'clock it was back in the cars with the roofs down ... except for that blue Roadster Eunus again! - must be worried about losing more grey hair!

Two cars returned directly to Ballarat while the remainder travelled through some lovely green farm land and on through Moriatic, Modewarre with the Geelong car turning off to Geelong.

We travelled on to the Hamilton Highway where we stopped at Inverleigh for a break and ice cream before heading to Rokewood where two more cars left us. The last three cars finished up at the Cape Clear Hotel for a celebratory drink at the end of a fantastic run and an extremely enjoyable day.

Those who didn't come missed out on a great time! ■

» I would like to thank Ian & Karen Bradshaw and Alan & Liz Everett for their great effort in organising this run and to encourage other members to think about something similar. ~ John Gleeson, Chapter Convenor



Map by Google

Resurrection: Molly gets a new lease on life

■ Words: Lachlan Story ■ Photos: Greg McLennan (Lockie's panel beater)

As you may have read in my last article, my little "Molly" was severely injured after a vicious suicide attack from fundamentalist kangaroos.

This is the story of her resurrection.

I took poor little Molly to Greg McLennan in Horsham to be assessed and then rebuilt. Greg is a fastidious automotive repairer and has worked on cars for me before. His work is flawless. Greg has provided a step-by-step photographic record of Molly's rebuild.

The first thing Greg did was to identify every little bit of damage. Even the obviously damaged areas were carefully marked with a permanent marker. He then sought the parts needed for the repair and quoted to Shannon's on it.



Following Shannon's approval, the work began. Every area affected was taken back to bare metal, panel beaten and metal

finished. When all the damaged metal had been repaired Molly was partly disassembled, masked and primed.

Greg left the primer a week to harden, thereby eliminating the possibility of shrinkage or cracking after the top coat.

The affected areas were then rubbed back and any minor flaws repaired. It was again allowed to cure properly. Then came the coats of colour. Greg does not skimp on paint and Molly now has a nice thick coat of paint to protect her. Even detail like touching up the paint on the wipers was not overlooked.

After allowing the top coats to harden for another week the masking was removed, the car reassembled and a new windscreen was fitted. While this was happening the new parts such as the mirror and aerial were ordered and then fitted to the car. Also the new roof was ordered and I asked for a couple of minor changes resulting in a much easier operation of the rear window zip.

With the roof fitted and the paint hardened, Molly was polished to within an inch of her life and detailed inside and out. This detailing is done as a matter of course at no expense to me or to Shannons.

When I picked her up I was thrilled with the result; in fact I don't think she has ever looked so good.

Those are enough words from me, as the pictures tell the story better than I ever could. Thanks to Greg McLennan and his team and to Shannons for their understanding and help. ■

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Before (right) and after the roo assault



My annual MX-5 road trip ...

■ Words & photos: Jeff Woolf



Jeff Woolf has recently been scribing for the Ballarat and Western Victorian Chapter. The plan for the Chapter to show off their cars at the Shannons "Picnic by the Lake" took a dive when the event was washed out, leaving Jeff with no story. Undeterred, he submitted this article which explains the teaser he left at the end of his Todds' Tour report in the November MX-TRA ...

I had two weeks' holiday planned in my MX-5, and I have heard from other MX-5 enthusiasts in our Club about travelling long distances and enjoying the experience.

I planned to head up to the Sunshine Coast the quickest way (via the inland route), travelling up the Newell Highway with some determined driving over two days. I then planned to slowly cruise down the coast on the Pacific Hwy for some well deserved R&R. Added to my plan were visits to some well known MX-5 merchandise outlets and specialist wreckers to see what goodies were available to personalise my MX-5. I guess I have got the bug in a bad way! Another objective of course was to enjoy the drive

and seek out some good winding MX-5 roads.

I had packed the boot to the brim after the Todd's Macedon run and was just able to squeeze everything in. Unfortunately my wife could not get the time off and so I didn't have a passenger. Conversely it could have caused major complications in the luggage, performance and handling areas, as well as shopping capacity on the return trip through Brisbane and Sydney.

It was the school holiday period and I planned to take pot luck with accommodation, so I packed a single swag and pillow just in case. Gladly they were not needed, but the penalty was paid in lost luggage space. Motels were not booked out, but they still take advantage of jacking up their prices at this time. I found the average price to be around \$75 a night.

On day one I woke up early and couldn't

get back to sleep. I was feeling excited about the trip and wanting to get some miles under the belt. I kissed my wife goodbye and I drove off into the night at 4.30am and quickly left the city lights of Ballarat behind [this only takes about 10 minutes in any direction]. But I kept the speed down and driving lights on. When driving through the forested wildlife areas I was grimly clutching the wheel, I had my eyes peeled and was on high alert ready for evasive action from roos, wombats and any other pesky creature. Luckily only a rabbit, a bird and a lizard ventured into my path, not to mention the usual smattering of suicidal insects taking the shine off things.

The road was dry, tank full, all lubricants topped up, new high-performance tyres pumped up to the correct pressures [no more aquaplaning off-road adventures for me], soft top up, heater on and a regular scan of the gauges ensured all



was well. I was looking forward to the sun coming up and relaxing a bit, but hoping not to be driving into it, or having to deal with any more road kill.

I made really good time and crossed into NSW in four hours and found I was still fresh and comfortable. Going through Finley about 20 NSW police had a road block set up trying to catch any ratbag remnants of the Deniliquin Ute Muster. As it was a long weekend they cash in on double demerit points and double fines to apparently keep the escalating road toll down. The road was straight and the only hazard was looking out for the frequent fixed speed cameras; I found it was well worth using the GPS as an added warning to the signs.

Good progress was made up through NSW. I was determined to make good time, with short regular breaks and little time wasting. The MX-5 performed faultlessly, excellent economy and of course the driving pleasure we all know and enjoy. Although the straight bits become boring, the country side is always changing and the towns all have a 50kmh speed limit which gives you plenty of time to check them out while passing through.

The first night was spent in Dubbo and as I emerged from the pool my motel neighbours said they had left Ballarat at 6am that morning. A bit deflating as I thought I could not be beaten, but the bloke did admit, while we were scoffing down a seafood platter at the RSL Club, he sets the cruise control at 112 most of the time. I wondered if he got a nasty shock in the mail a couple of weeks later.

I also met up with an interesting bloke driving a Westfield-type racing kit car; what an adventure that would be. The MX-5 was positively luxurious in comparison, his luggage was strapped on all over his car with 'occy' straps, even on top of his rear mudguards. He drives in the open all the time, but when it pelts down he has a clip on top which leaks like a sieve.

From Toowoomba I started to seek out scenic drives and struck gold on the Esk to Kilkooy road. The tourist information bloke said there was a choice of the winding or straight road. I took the MX-5 road through some thick rainforest with very tight turns. Also included in the itinerary were very steep hills, the occasional scenic lookouts and then around the Somerset

Dam on to the Sunshine coast staying at the Caloundra pub. That evening I was feeling tired but satisfied as I washed down my Surf and Turf with a XXXX.

I always make an early start to get the most of the day and avoid the peak, so I hopped on to the freeway and headed to Noosa, the most northerly spot of my trip. I went to the beach and had a look around and a quick paddle, took some snaps of the beach and the MX-5 and then headed south along the coast road which reminded me of Beach Road in Melbourne without the hell riders. I marvelled at the development of this coast. A lot seems unrecognisable since my last visit, 14 years ago. I stopped off for some whale watching and was in luck.

I then set off for the Gold Coast setting the Navman to guide me through to a wrecker's in Brisbane. Nothing much caught my eye and they wanted an arm and a leg for damaged goods. Then it was on to Coolangatta for a three-day break. I made a couple of trips into the famous hinterland and took my time exploring the Queensland of old (as I remembered it as a boy); again I discovered some ripper MX-5 roads.

On the third day the rain came down with minor flooding coming across the roads; the tyres didn't let me down so my tyre research had paid off. While driving carefully in these atrocious conditions, a hotted-up Celica with four young bucks wanted to race. I let them pass and wondered if they would make it home. I have experienced this phenomenon frequently in the MX-5. I just let them go by as I know the handling of the MX-5 is far superior to most production cars and those driving these souped-up bangers are driving way beyond their safety margins and abilities; a recipe for disaster.

After my break on the Gold Coast I headed south to move away from the severe weather heading towards the coast. Over the next few days [and weeks] there were reports the Gold Coast and inland had been hit by storms, record rain fall and floods. Car break-ins were hot news and luckily I was not a victim ... I always leave the glove box and other compartments open hoping to discourage tea leaves. I have heard some leave their doors unlocked also to avoid expensive break-in repairs to their soft top. I stayed at Port Macquarie for two days, watched a bit of

Bathurst, and toured inland taking the Comboyne and Lorne roads through some very pleasant NSW MX-5 countryside.

I travelled on to Sydney with a feeling of trepidation about the traffic. Again the Navman helped me through as without it I would have been well and truly lost. I also had a feeling of anticipation for the MX-5 shopping heaven. In particular one wrecker had an Aladdin's cave of goodies. Out came the wallet and, after filling the passenger seat, floor, glove box and parcel shelf with Gladwrapped parts, I had to call it a day and head south to be well away from Sydney with my ill begotten gains.

I had a nice drive down the Bulli Pass. It was most enjoyable so I decided to go up it and it seemed even better and more enjoyable powering up the winding road. I pressed on and decided to stay at Bateman's Bay for the night. Next day I headed south and recalled my younger days when unloaded logging trucks with their piggy-back trailers wanted to race you on the road. Nothing's changed except in an MX-5 they seem much faster and bigger, especially when tailgating you three meters behind at 115kmh in the twisty stuff, they must hand down their driving techniques from father to son. There is no comparison between the inland route and the coast road: for an MX-5 the coast is the way to go although you only see the sea occasionally.

The trip through Gippsland was uneventful apart from a terrorist cowboy truck driver, and probable pill popper. He was playing road games by crawling through the no passing areas and then speeding up and blocking the overtaking lane when they were available. I think this bloke may have starred as the trucker in the Steven Spielberg movie *Duel* starring Dennis Weaver. This road is in urgent need of duplication, and these rogue truckies need some severe counselling, speed limiters and brains installed.

On arrival back home I quickly stashed my shopping in the garage, washed the MX-5 and was asked by my wife if I had a good break. I said 'Yes dear, I had a nice drive'. My advice to anyone contemplating a long trip in their MX-5 is to go for it. Try to go the alternative winding way, starting early to get the most out of the driving experience – and, of course, pack light. ■

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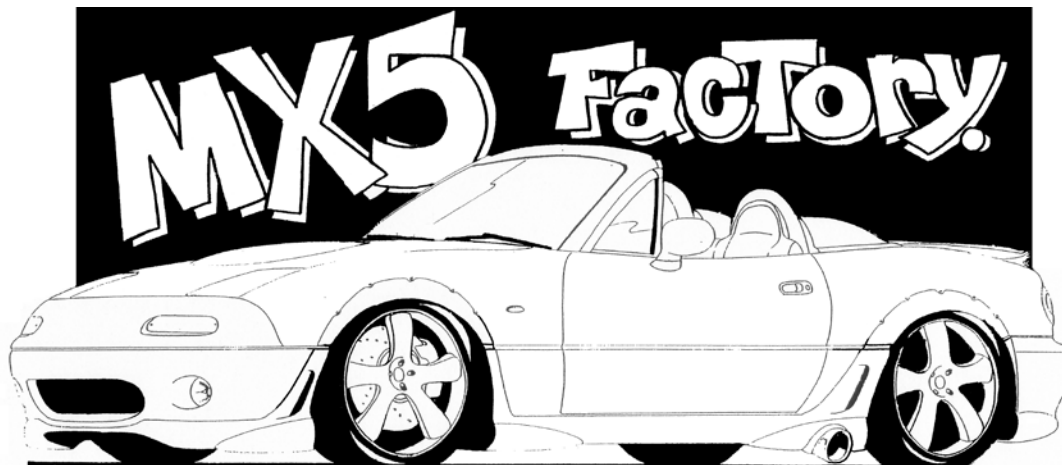
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