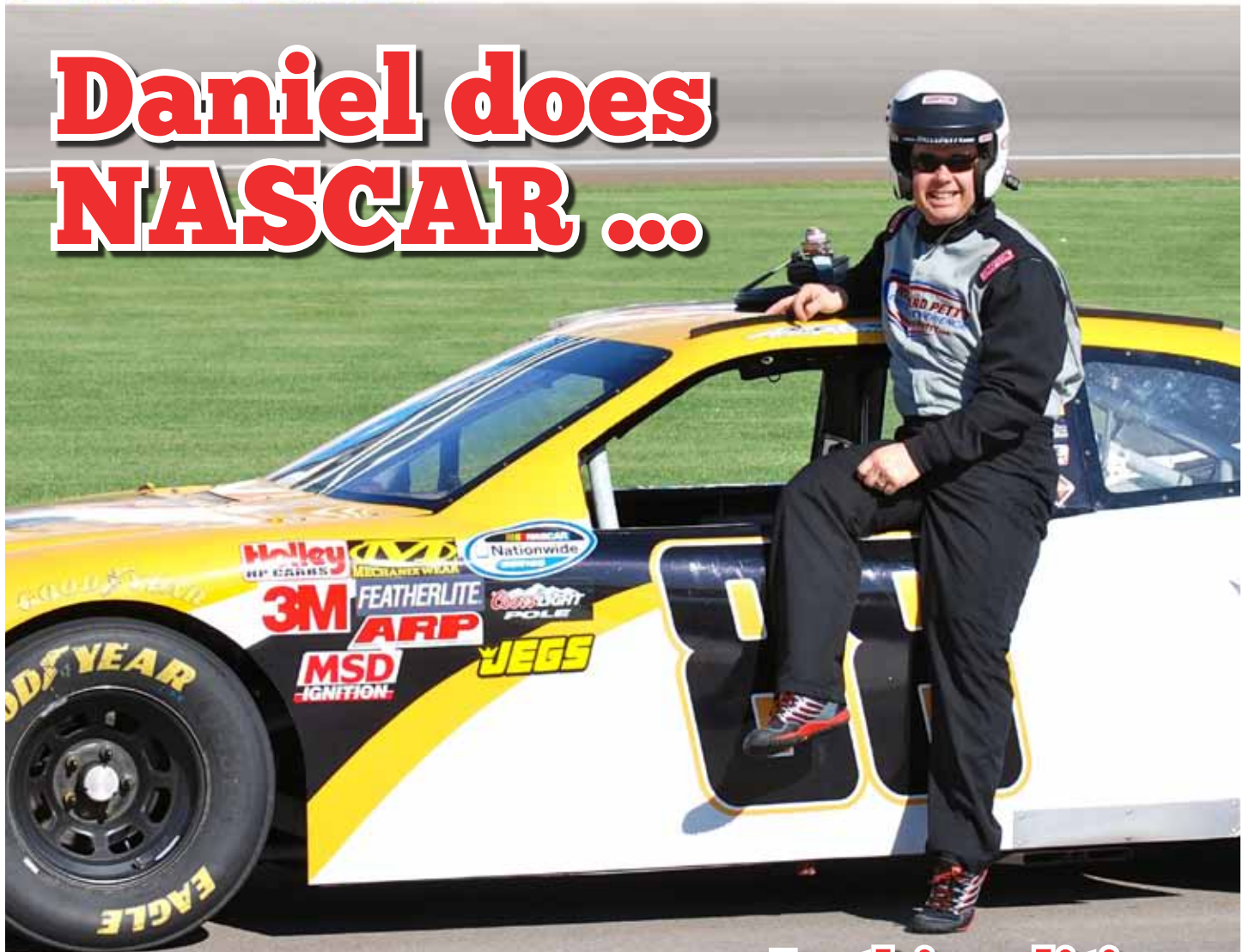


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE MAZDA MX-5 CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.



OBALT TOOLS

Daniel does NASCAR ...



In this edition:

Breakfast by the Bay
Turning a sow's ear into a silk purse
Passenger performance modifications



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Cover image:

Assistant Club Captain - Motor Sport, Daniel White, temporarily trades his beloved MX-5 for a NASCAR monster ... and lives!

Photo: Daniel White



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Murray's Corner ...

■ Murray Finlay – President president@mx5vic.org.au

G'day all!

Welcome to the future! We have arrived at a very exciting time in the life of the Club.

In the here-and-now we have notched up a new record membership – 473 (*and there's still six months of the year to go!*). We were put over the old 470 mark last weekend by two young men who both joined on the Saturday and came to their first run on the Sunday, and by a member of the Queensland club who says he's impressed by what he's seen of us from afar and wants to join our ranks as well!

This coincides with another milestone in the Club's history: our first Club "summit" (sounds important, doesn't it?) ... a first-ever meeting of the Committee with all the Club's Chapter convenors in the one place at the one time.

On Sunday, 15 January – within a few hours of these magazines being stuffed into their envelopes – all of the Committee and the five Chapter convenors from the North-East Victoria, Ballarat & Western Victoria, Gippsland, Hobart and Northern Tassie Chapters will be meeting to review the future direction of the Club in Victoria and Tasmania.

Discussions will include:

- » changes to the Club's "operating structure" that will allow the Committee to be less "Melbourne-centric" and spend more time on matters that affect the Club as a whole;
- » making the Club's Melbourne hub a Chapter in its own right, with the same structure and standing of the regional Chapters and its own convenor or captain and support team;

- » a more formalised structure for the Chapters, to accommodate future growth
- » plans for the overall future growth of the Club across the two states.

Watch this space for developments and outcomes, but I for one am very excited about the Club (sorry Julia) "going forward" ...

I was very pleased to meet the Queensland club president, **Denise Peck**, who was in Melbourne with her husband Neville this month, and was my passenger on the twilight run through the Dandenongs. Naturally, like a couple of proud (and sometimes perplexed) parents, we discussed and compared our clubs ... it's amazing how different our clubs are in some ways and how similar we are in others.

The Club presidents swap e-mails (frequently) and phone calls (occasionally), asking questions and advice and swapping information, but face-to-face meetings are so much more fruitful. Hopefully, starting this year with help from Mazda Australia and its video-conferencing facilities, we will be able to "meet" (or at least see each other) and talk at regular intervals throughout the year.

I'm delighted to welcome a new advertiser in **mxtra** – **City Mazda** has taken up residence on our back cover, and would be pleased to hear from any members interested in their services (literally). Committeeman Daniel White, who coincidentally features heavily in this month's magazine, is the service manager there.

Until next time ... look up, stay back!

Murray

Any colour you liked ... as long as it was red, white, blue or green!

Here's a little blast from the past ... the start of one of our Club runs from, we reckon, early 1992.

In those days many of our runs started from the old Mazda headquarters in Lorimer Street, Port Melbourne. And in those days, the MX-5 only came in four colours!

The photo is from **Sue Ransom**, seen here second from right talking to a tall streak named **David Henry**, one of our early Club presidents.

The staff car park was behind the Mazda sign. One day there, one of the staffers managed to confuse a gear and drive her very new MX-5 straight off the edge into the car park below ... not this day, fortunately! ■



Last month we promoted the AOMC Japanese Classic Car Show, coming up in Dandenong on Sunday, 26 February.

Unfortunately, despite requests, we have nothing more to report, so it's difficult to organise any sort of Club presence.

We'll have to leave it to individuals: if you're interested in displaying your car, make your own way to the Dandenong Showgrounds (in Bennett Street) on the day. There may be other MX-5s, but there won't be a formal Club presence.

We know it's \$10 per car for entry and display and \$10 for spectators, with proceeds donated to local charities. ■

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

2012

January

22 Gippsland Chapter
> Tarra-Bulga run

February

19 Past Presidents' run

March

22 New Members' Night

April

1 Run to Phillip Island

6-10 NatMeet 2012, Canberra

June

TBA DECA driver training

July

22 2012 Awards Lunch

Scene about ...

■ Photos: Ron Macdonald, Karen Bradshaw, Jenna Ferguson, John Waldock, Ron Gillick





Membership

Current membership count:

473

■ Will Campbell – Membership Officer membership@mx5vic.org.au

G'day all ... welcome to 2012!

Membership continues to grow steadily with the current count at 473. That's a new Club record and compares with 412 for the same time last year.

Of course, whilst an increasing membership base is a good indicator of an organisation's health, a club is all about participation.

In the past year, most members attended a number of events and enjoyed the ensuing fellowship. I encourage you to continue this fine tradition and take pleasure in all that the best and most affordable sports

car in the world has to offer.

A glance at the Club calendar will show you that there is already an impressive array of events listed for the coming year ranging from the Past Presidents' Run in February and a mid-week tour of Victoria's West Coast in May to Driver Training in June and August, and the Winton-6 Hour in October. Something for everyone!

With this in mind, I would like to welcome the following enlightened folk who have joined our ranks since my last report:

Mark & Fiona Greaves	2007 Ebony Mica NC
Tony Haslam (Qld)	1991 Neo Green NA
Erin Hokin	2001 Silver NB
Tristan Penfold	1999 Twilight Blue NB
Neil Savanah	2004 Classic Red NB
Charlie Tickler	2004 Classic Red NB

See you out and about ...


Will

And this is why we do the "GO Road" at dawn!



Will, who lives in Torquay and is a frequent visitor to the Great Ocean Road, sent us this photo by Surf Coast local Warwick Tucker of traffic on the road towards Anglesea between Christmas and New Year.

Second gear, anyone??



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A worthy cause ... can you help?

This letter was received in early December from Club member Peter Phillips, well known to many in the Club for his exploits on the track. The committee supports his request to seek support from fellow Club members.

Dear Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria members,

We are participating in the 2012 **SHITBOX RALLY**, a motor sport-based event to raise funds for the Cancer Council, which assists in funding vital resources for cancer sufferers Australia wide.

The event starts in Melbourne and runs through outback Australia, ending in Cairns in May. It is in its third year and the 150 participating teams are aiming to raise over \$1 million.

As a cancer survivor I know the benefits the Cancer Council provides. Participants come from all over Australia and we have entered a local team.

The event is called the **SHITBOX RALLY** because teams must spend less than \$1,000 on the vehicle (including registration and roadworthy!) and hope it makes it to Cairns ... *thankfully, one of our team is a mechanic!* At the end of the rally the cars are auctioned which goes into the pool of funds.

We cannot use an MX-5 – *unless you know of one with four seats under \$1,000!* Our team, the “Cupcake’s Crusaders”, have got ourselves a little Mazda Metro (pictured) courtesy of Daniel White and City Mazda who helped us with one of their trade-ins. We are confident we can do well in this little car.

I am writing to seek members’ support in the form of a donation to our team to help us achieve our entry into this event. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

As part of our entry into this event we have to raise in excess of \$4,000. We have already raised about \$2,000, but more donations are most welcome.

There are plenty of panels available for sponsorship.

Donations can be sent to Pam and Peter Phillips at 2 Tunbridge St, Rhyll VIC 3923, or direct via credit card or Bpay to: www.everydayhero.com.au/cupcakes_crusaders We will e-mail you a tax receipt straight away.

Please feel free to contact us on 0428 569 264 if you would like any further information.

*Peter (Princey) & Pam (Cupcake) Phillips
“CUPCAKE’S CRUSADERS”*



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Best of times at the best of tracks ...

■ **Words:** Robert Downes, Club Captain - Motor Sport ■ **Photos:** Ron Diprose, Jess Murphy (www.mx5pics.com.au)



Over 50 MX-5s “attacked the Island” in what was the largest-ever turnout at one of our Club motor sport rounds.

Ten of those were from the NSW Club and it shows that the track is something special for each of them to make the large commitment in terms of effort, time and cost to attend the meeting.

In addition, there were several Club members driving other cars including Darrin Morice in his EVO X, Graham Wilson in his Mazda 121 “bubble” car and Marcus Stacey returning albeit in a BMW 318i. Despite the big turnout, there were several regulars missing due to travel commitments or car issues .

Every MX-5 recorded a “best time” of under 2:20 despite some drivers being inexperienced or indeed first timers. Just on half recorded under 2:04 whilst about three quarters were under 2:10.

Despite heavy overnight rain, the track was dry for the entire day and our hosts, AROCA, managed a very full field of 125 entries extremely well.

In my opinion, the standout drives of the day were Paul Ledwith in Restricted Open (1:56.4); Randy Stagno Navarra just failing to break the two-minute barrier in Standard NC; Mike Kirby and Dean Monik in Modified; Brendan Beavis in his recently-acquired NB; Robert Hart and Jeremy Fredersdorff in Standard NCs; Stephen Downes (only 0.2 seconds off Matt King’s long-standing Standard NB lap record) and Noel Heritage putting me “under the pump” with an impressive 2:05.3 in Standard NA.

Full results are available at www.natsoft.com.au and Jess Murphy took a stack of fantastic photos which are on www.mx5pics.com.au (all sorted into run groups).

About 18 people enjoyed a meal together at the Cowes RSL on the Sunday night to top off a great day.

We return to Phillip Island on Saturday,

4 February, and I look forward to perhaps seeing Teruo Delacroix make his long-awaited return to competition and even David Wilken in his NA8B (yes, the drivetrain, brakes and dash of a NB8B in NA6 shell). ■



Motor sport calendar

See the full calendar for details

2012

January

29 Motorkhana practice day, Werribee (on dirt!)

February

4 Rd 6: Sprints, Phillip Island

March

3 Racecraft/Driver training, Winton (motor sport participants only)
 4 Rd 7: Sprints, Winton

April

27 Rd 8: Sprints, Sandown

May

TBA Rd 9: Event/venue TBC

2012-2013 Championship

June

30 Rd 1: Sprints, Phillip Island

Results - Round 5	1st		2nd		3rd	
Standard NA	Robert Downes	» 2:05.05 ¹	Noel Heritage	» 2:05:30	Nelson Zea	» 2:11.34
Standard NB	Stephen Downes	» 2:03.83	John Downes	» 2:10.37	James Young	» 2:15.45
Standard NC	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 2:00.28 ¹	Robert Hart	» 2:03.29	Colin Denman-Jones	» 2:03.80
Clubman	Peter Phillips	» 2:02.77	Max Lloyd	» 2:07.77	Paul Murphy	» 2:08.00
Modified	Russell Garner	» 1:57.58	Mike Kirby	» 2:01.22	Phil Munnings	» 2:01.87
Restricted Open	Paul Ledwith	» 1:56.15 ¹	Brendan Beavis	» 2:01.49	Daniel White	» 2:03.14
Open	Owen Boak	» 1:52.72	Andrew Hardeman	» 1:54.32	Kim Cole	» 2:00.87

¹ New Club motor sport group lap record

Championship standings after Rd 5 - Phillip Island Sprints, 11 December, 2011

(corrected points)	1st		2nd		3rd	
Overall Champion	= Robert Downes /Peter Phillips » 50				Russell Garner	» 43
Standard NA	Robert Downes	» 50	Noel Heritage	» 35	Nelson Zea	» 24
Standard NB	Stephen Downes	» 40	John Downes	» 14	James Young	» 13
Standard NC	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 36	Lindy Anderson	» 25	Colin Denman-Jones	» 21
Clubman	Peter Phillips	» 50	Paul Murphy	» 25	Max Lloyd	» 20
Modified	Russell Garner	» 44	Phil Munnings	» 27	Craig Healy	» 26
Restricted Open	Brendan Beavis	» 35	Daniel White	» 29	Paul Ledwith	» 20
Open	= Christine Boak / Owen Boak » 27				Steven Cook	» 23

Best of times at the best of tracks (continued)



Mud skating revisited

The postponed fourth round of the Victorian Motorkhana Championship for 2011 was finally held on 11 December, hosted by the Peugeot Car Club of Victoria at the Pakenham Auto Club.

This was an important round with many of the Classes still up for grabs with one needing to be confirmed after the event.

Unfortunately our MX-5 Club team had reduced to only one: Bob in his NB8B.

After overnight rain, the weather remained clear with the sun eventually peeking through by the afternoon. The ground however was very sodden with a number of vehicles becoming bogged or skating through the finish garages due to a severe lack of grip in the morning. As more cars ran, the ground started to dry, but the organisers would then rotate to a new area for the drying process to start again. In all, 10 varied tests were conducted with many vehicles covered in mud by the end of the day.

And so the 2011 Victorian Motorkhana Championship drew to a close.

Congratulations and thank you to all that came along and experienced motorkhana at a State-level event. Of the 22 clubs represented during the year, the MX-5 Club finished a strong fourth place due to your efforts. Special thanks must go to the spectators who came and offered their support and help during the year. Your applause and smiles make the event even more worthwhile.

To the regulars, congratulations to Pam Collom in her Classic Red NA6 *Senorita* for winning Novice Class and to Nik Falkenbach in his Twilight Blue NB8A for placing third again in Novice Class. Congratulations to Bob de Bont in his Crystal Blue NB8B for claiming second in Class B.

2012 will kick off with a practice day on 29 January. The practice day is on dirt and is a great opportunity for all who are interested (or just curious) to find out more about motorkhana.

The Club events calendar has the details.

Motorkhana information is available from <http://motorkhana1.webs.com> and our 2011 video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8ORHxwCMYg> ■



Motor Sport Torque

■ Robert Downes – Club Captain - Motor Sport

Driver Training - Winton: Saturday, 3 March

This is the best way to improve your lap times instead of spending money on your car and separate skills training is available for "Juniors" on the same day.

Other Events

Keep an eye out for the dates of the "New Members' Night", "Annual Motor Sport Meeting", "Dyno Day" – open to all members and the "DECA Day" in June, 2012. I have opted not to have a "competitive event" in May because of these other events around that time.

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

Robert #26

~ Bob de Bont

The time a sow's ear DID turn into a silk purse ...

(Or how a Mazda 121 became a MX-2.5)

■ Words: Graham Wilson ■ Photo: Jess Murphy

I must admit to a little apprehension approaching the Phillip Island sprints, as the weather forecast was atrocious, with extremely heavy rain predicted.

This caused mixed emotions as it would be of benefit to my mighty Mazda 121 [now designated **MX-2.5** ... half an MX-5] as I can probably use 90% of its capacity in the wet [what's 90% of nothing??], whereas all you folks in high-powered cars may only be able to use say 70%. Yet an uncomfortable day of motor sport in the soaking wet did not appeal at all.

However, the Sunday began cold and windy – but at least dry – and things improved greatly throughout the day.

As is my wont, I arrived early to get organised and took advantage of the arrangement to have someone sit in with me as I had not done laps of the track before. I was lucky that the inimitable Noel Heritage was assigned to me [wonder why it took so many guys to force him into my car?] and, at the appointed time, we set off.

I had been doing some homework on “YouTube” watching some in-car videos, so had something of an idea. The practice seemed to be very short ... maybe due to having a deal of fun even at relatively low speeds.

The rest of the day went very quickly as there seemed to be little time between on-track sessions, although two of our sessions were red-flagged ... perhaps a sign of skill levels in Group 5.

I found out that Owen [Boak] was right ... I could take several turns flat out, as long as I kept a watch for the proverbial “nuns-on-pushbikes” wanting to pass me. The little shopping cart is reasonably quick in the turns, as a couple of following cars may have perceived, but just painful on the long straights.

As usual the organisation was fantastic and yet again I experienced so much good humoured fun amongst fellow competitors and officials alike, both on and off track.

This led to some thoughts on the way home.

Many people question whether there is such a thing as low-cost motor sport. I think I have proven there can be, PROVIDING you are willing to stay at the tail end and have a ball. If you have championship aspirations, then it IS going to cost you. I would seek to encourage those who have doubts to have a go and can assure any potential participants that our Club is a great, equal-opportunity club. You will get good treatment no matter what you drive.



I can only afford my *Bubble* (sorry MX-2.5) as I am on a disability pension due to somewhat poor health etc. But, I bought the car for \$300 and so far, including race suit and R-spec tyres it has cost about \$5000 – including the trailer. The amount of fun I am having is fantastic and maintenance so far has been to check tyre pressures and clean the windscreen.

It is also a multi-purpose car, in which I will get beaten on most tracks by real cars (ie, MX-5s) but when it comes to moorhens, the boot may well be on the other foot.

One aspect which has only just occurred to me is that driving a slow car well may actually improve you driving. With a high-powered car, any faults in your cornering can be compensated for, by using extra power on the straights, whereas in a slow car, any fractions of seconds lost *stay lost*. When you bear in mind the MX 2.5 has a stock standard 1.3 motor, a time of 2:23 is probably not too bad for my first time on a circuit.

In fact, if you look at the V8 supercars, many of the new recruits are drawn from Formula Ford ... a similar analogy.

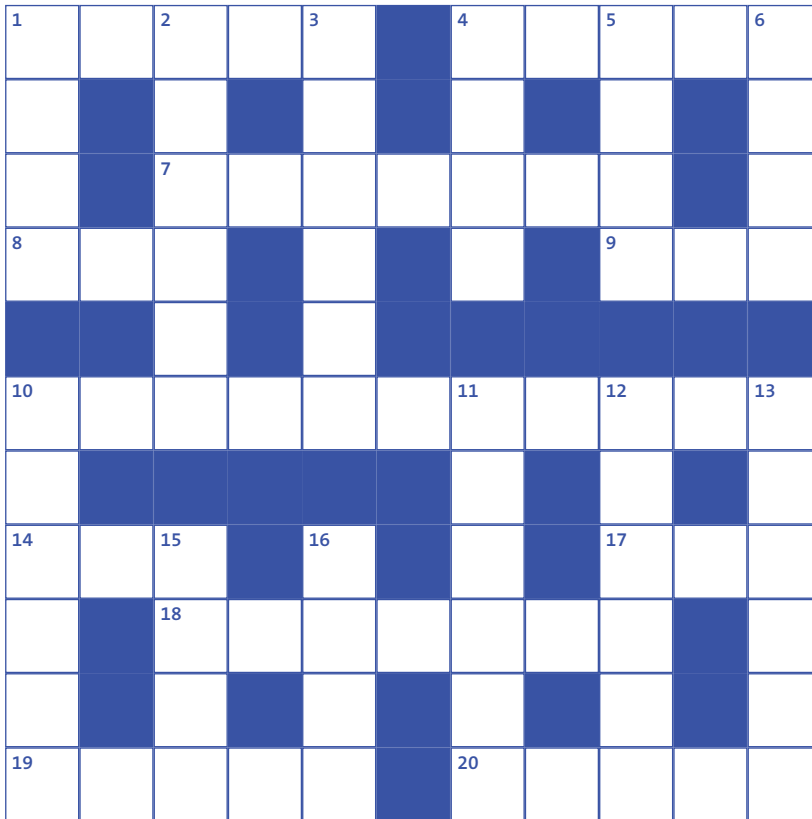
Should any new members be contemplating “having a go” I am happy for them to contact me if they feel so inclined.

Anyway, may thanks to all concerned, especially to Noel for his expert guidance and to all members for the friendship shown.

PS: I really think the Club should instigate a class for best 121 on the day. (Ed. ~ Sorry Graham, not possible as we have no half trophies for half MX-5s.) ■

Alan Bennett's

Wine crossword



Mazda3 is Australia's #1 seller

After a neck-and-neck battle all year the Mazda3 has knocked the Holden Commodore off its No. 1 perch ... the first time in 15 years the Aussie icon has surrendered its top spot.

And, for the first time since World War I, an imported vehicle has outsold a locally-built car to be the nation's top-selling new car for the year.

Mazda's victory was sealed in December 2011 when it increased its edge over the Commodore by about 600 sales after swapping position six times and being separated by just 20 transactions at the end of June.

Mazda sold more than 41,000 Mazda3s last year after smashing its own records in June and August, despite earlier interruptions to Japanese parts supply in the wake of the tsunami. ■

Mazda signs memorandum of understanding to establish production facility in Russia

Mazda Motor Corporation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the intent to establish a joint venture production facility with OJSC Sollers.

The proposed production facility is to be established in Vladivostok, in Russia's Far Eastern Federal District and supply several Mazda nameplates for the Russian market.

Sollers is one of Russia's leading automotive companies, engaged in the production, distribution and servicing of vehicles.

Russia is Mazda's second-largest market in Europe and sales are rapidly increasing. Mazda sold approximately 28,000 units during the period from January through September 2011, a year-on-year increase of approximately 77%.

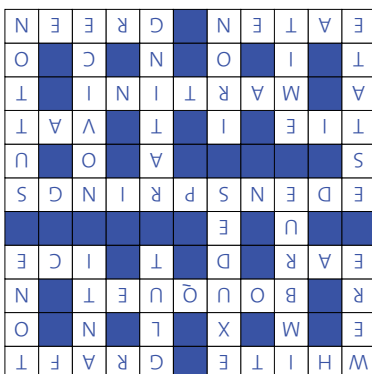
In line with its mid-term plan objectives, Mazda is expanding its business in emerging markets. ■

Across

- 1 I'm dreaming of a sav blank Christmas? (5)
- 4 To propagate by inserting into other stock (5)
- 7 An aroma, a perfume - or just a bunch of flowers? (7)
- 8 Senses sounds (3)
- 9 Solid water, it cools as it dilutes (3)
- 10 Small winery in Angaston producing Riesling, Shiraz and Cab Sav (4, 7)
- 14 Fasten the vine to support with this (3)
- 17 A large vessel or tub to store wine (3)
- 18 Shaken but not stirred (7)
- 19 Consumed (5)
- 20 Grapes as Kermit likes them (5)

Down

- 1 5-star wine producer in Wilyabrup, WA (4, 6)
- 2 To moisten, to soak but not a rare metal element called erbium (anag) (5)
- 3 To ooze out like an exodus (6)
- 4 Too much and the prices drop (4)
- 5 Against, opposed and certainly not in favour (4)
- 6 Of note, a sound with reference to quality, pitch or volume (anag) (4)
- 10 See 1 down
- 11 James Haliday, to name but one, uses this to compare wines (6)
- 12 Beginner, new to a field and having no moral failures (6)
- 13 No Grange but part of a winery 30km from Bendigo with names like Fairbank and Antarctica (6)
- 15 No time to send forth (anag) (4)
- 16 Pinot noir may not be strong tasting or as robust or firm as this (anag) (4)



Breakfast by the Bay ... 4/12/11



■ Words: Judy Searl ■ Photos: Ron Macdonald

■ Run organisers: Ron Macdonald & Wendy Clark



A fun little run!

Ron and Wendy decided to organise a lovely short-and-sweet run down the Mornington Peninsula at the beginning of December.

It was just the right event for this busy and hectic time of year.

We all gathered at the picnic area adjacent to Frankston pier at 7am on what looked to be a bleak and rainy morning but the sun came out and the bay looked beautiful.

Ron and Wendy were very well organised, providing a boiling kettle, tea, coffee and biscuits for those people who need a heart starter that early in the morning and I am sure many found it to be just the thing.

The run started with 14 MX-5s and their drivers. Ron gave a comprehensive briefing and it was then time to head off. Knowing I was writing the article I counted the cars I could see and came up with 11. It wasn't until we stopped to regroup before the Frankston/Flinders road that we realised that three of our group had been held up at the lights at the beginning. Fortunately with some good run notes they soon caught up. A 15th car joined us at Balnarring.

As we drove along, admiring the lovely scenery in this part of our state the sun kept appearing in patches. We were able to have the tops down the whole time which always adds to the enjoyment of a run. Being so early there was not much traffic and we admired the views of the Nobbies. When we hit Baldries Road we really enjoyed the sharp bends and nice curves. Then we hit the dip/ford that Ron had warned us about in the briefing. To borrow a competitor's catch-cry, "Oh what a feeling!"

When we turned on to Arthur's Seat Road I was amazed to travel the whole way down without any other cars or bikes on our side of the road. As other members would know this is not usual and it really added to the enjoyment of this steep and winding road. Maybe, like the Great Ocean Road, this is a road best tackled early. I was amazed when we stopped



to regroup at the bottom to hear that it was the first time that Steve Dunlop had been on this road. He had brought his son along with him and he seemed to be really enjoying himself.

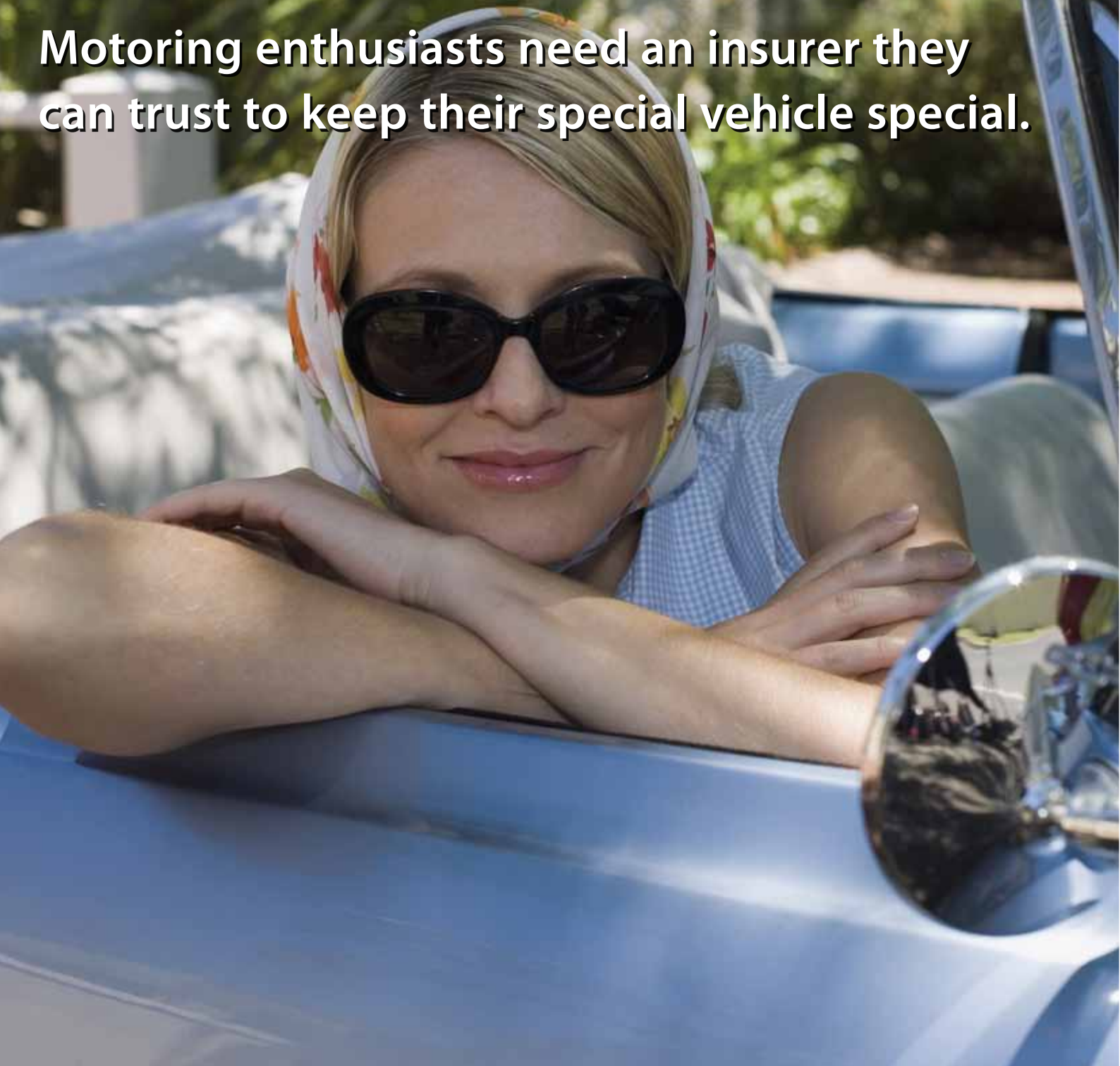
We then wound our way through the back roads of the peninsula, ending up in Blairgowrie. The whole run had taken only 1.5 hours but it was great for relaxing and enjoying the driving and the scenery. We certainly made a statement when we pulled into the car park just after 9am to the interest of the early morning breakfast crowd.

We enjoyed a lovely breakfast and a chat before heading off to continue our day. Some were taking the opportunity to catch up with friends on the peninsula. It was great to have had such a nice drive and social time but still have the day free to do other things.

Thank you Ron and Wendy for organising this great little drive. ■



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Chapter news ...



Almost Christmas ... 4/12/11 | Gippsland

■ Words: Saeko Fujiki ■ Photos: Jenna Ferguson ■ Run organiser: Grant Butler

On the way to Yarragon, the starting point of the run, we had a sprinkle of rain. For the first run of summer we had to rug up with winter clothes. What else do you expect from a Gippsland run?

There were only seven cars in the convoy. Paul from Warragul came to see us off at the Yarragon starting point. Unfortunately he had to leave for work but assured us he would be on future runs. It was so nice to see many cute NAs lined up, especially the red ones. We have a soft spot for the Classic Red NA. Our official photographer Jenna was hard at work snapping shots off here and there.

We left Yarragon under grey skies with the roof down. Our mission for the day: "Drive faster than 80kmh and you will never get wet. Is it true or false?"

The leg of the run to Noojee provided a good opportunity to test the theory. We only got slightly wet in the township where we had to slow down to 40kmh, arriving at our lunch spot safely and in a dry-ish condition. Thus the myth is in fact true!

By the time we had finished our lunch the area of blue sky had started to spread. The next leg, from Noojee to Willowgrove, was through a beautiful forest along a windy road and almost devoid of traffic. A wonderful drive it was. The second half was over a straighter road and the number of the potholes made the drive less enjoyable and more challenging.

At the drivers' briefing in Yarragon, we realised that our convoy's radios included only our in-car CB and one little half-watt CB. Colin and Chris kindly took up the sweeping position and took control of the little CB. At the corners we used a corner marker system and the blinkers. Most of the time the convoy was small enough for the little unit to be functional. Only when three motorhomes, which came out of nowhere, cut into the middle of our convoy did the distance between the lead car and the last car become too great for the little CB to function adequately. All things considered we managed the situation quite well. **Someone always waited at a corner until the cars behind caught up.**

This was probably our first run to lead a convoy with next to no CB communication. When we spotted some cyclists, on-coming traffic, debris, holes and a wallaby on the narrow winding road I instinctively grabbed the CB, but there was no one with a CB to hear the warnings. It was a strange feeling and a little unsettling.

The run finished in Trafalgar under blue skies. Thank you to all the well-mannered MX-5ers who made the day run so well. We will meet again in January.

Happy Zoom-Zoom in Gippsland. ■



From an MX-5 @ Sandown to a NASCAR in

■ Words & photos: Daniel White #146

18 September 2011 AROCA Sprints, Sandown



It's the 18th of September and here I am at Sandown competing in the Round 3 Sprints of our Motor Sport Championship.

I really enjoy these events for the camaraderie with fellow competitors and the exhilaration of driving my MX-5 as quickly as I can. This weekend marked the end of my second year of competition in the Sprint rounds in my MX-5.

This is just two days before my wife, Tammy, and I are due to fly out to the USA on three weeks' holiday, touring LA, Palm Springs, Vegas, Utah, Vail, Denver and Beverly Hills. Tough I know, but someone has to do it ...

During the day I had taken great delight bragging to the boys about my upcoming overseas adventure. Aside from the usual excitement and anticipation of heading off on an overseas holiday, I was particularly excited because I had also arranged a couple of motor sport activities during the trip. I was booked in for a *Richard Petty* NASCAR drive experience during our stay in Las Vegas and also had arranged a tour of *Flyin' Miata*, in Colorado, which we just happened to be passing by on our way to Vail. Why not?

So let's fast-forward nine days and upgrade the MX-5 from Sandown to a NASCAR in Vegas on a banked oval circuit ...

27 September 2011 And here I am at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

... After a restless night's sleep and avoiding the early morning traffic on the I70 North Interstate I arrived at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway (which is 20 miles out of Vegas) at 8am and made my way to the infield for the drivers briefing at 8.30am.

I had booked myself in for the "King's Experience" with *Richard Petty Driving School* in which you get to drive a NASCAR for 18 laps at speeds of up to 140mph. To say I was like a kid in a candy store was an understatement.

The venue and surrounding precinct is amazing. Picture this: as you drive in off the freeway, you go past the *Shelby World Headquarters* and multiple outfield circuits, drag strip, dirt oval track and a circuit with four Shelbies flying around on it at full noise. Then, when you go through the tunnel to the infield there are Lamborghinis, Audi R8s and Ferraris being hammered on an infield circuit; meanwhile there are four NASCARs out for a shakedown and, if that wasn't enough, there is a nearby US Air Force base with fighter jets flying overhead. I honestly didn't know where to look first. *It was awesome.*

After signing six pages of indemnity waiver forms in about 40 places, I was then ready to get suited up and attend the one-hour drivers' briefing. The key points of the briefing were as follows:

- » following distance plus line equals speed,
- » change gears at 4000 rpm,
- » get on the gas gently,
- » a following distance of three car lengths to the pace car must be maintained at all times,
- » no drag racing (slowing down in corners and charging up on the straights),
- » place your left hand at 10 o'clock and right at 4 o'clock on the steering wheel,
- » trust the car because if the car in front can do it then so can yours,
- » on the back straight turn towards the wall to keep the car straight so it doesn't run down the bank,
- » keep an eye on the oil pressure light,
- » lift off at the deceleration cone and get back on the gas when you see the cones just after the apex at the acceleration point,
- » if there is a fire pull the red lever and get out,
- » when you come back into the pits check to see if you have any brakes.
- » Oh, and by the way – *are you okay to drive a stick shift???*



Vegas

Drivers' briefing out of the way, bring it on.

So here are a few firsts I'm about to tick off in my brief motor sport career. I am about to:

- drive a 650hp beast at speeds I had never driven at before,
- drive on a banked oval track I had never been on before and
- the steering wheel and gear stick are on the wrong side of the car!!

*Do you think I had the adrenaline pumping?
You better believe it!!!*

As is the case with everything in the USA they are very good at the upsell. So of course, I ended up being persuaded to do some hot laps as a passenger first and, of course, if you buy one you get the second half price, so Tammy got to have a few laps too. *Wow, what an experience!* The hot laps were a good idea to give you a feel for the track and car. The speed was incredible.

Hot laps out of the way and here I go. You literally jump straight out of the hot lap car, walk over and climb into the driver's seat of your designated car – #88 for me, a Dodge Charger. Once you're strapped in they start the engine for you and the crew chief gives you a quick refresher on what to do, waits for a gap in the traffic, then releases you and you're off.

The engine noise and the smell of AV Gas in these cars is unbelievable, and the responsiveness of the engine and acceleration is amazing. (I wish the MX-5 went this quick!!) When you turn into the corners the G-force pushes you down into the seat and because they are 24° banked curves you can't actually see all the way round the corner until you come up out of the banking and level out again. On the straights you only have to look at the gas pedal and the car accelerates effortlessly. It is quite an experience turning the steering wheel towards the wall to keep the car straight at 140mph, especially when the wall is only about two metres from the side of the car.

The format of the "King's Experience" is you get to do 18 laps. You go out for eight laps first, come in for a pit stop and the crew chief gives you feedback on what you are doing right or wrong and how you can go faster. Quick drink of water, then you go out straight away for the other 10 laps. The pace car that you follow has flashing lights on the back of it and the driver in this car monitors you via his mirrors. He will give you a green flashing light if you need to speed up or a yellow flashing light if you are too close to him. Provided you maintain the three car-length gap and stay on line then he will just keep going faster and faster. Happy to report I didn't get any lights flashed up so I managed to reach the maximum ceiling speed of 143mph, which is a 43-second lap for the mile and a half.

This was an experience I will never forget and would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in NASCAR or motor sport to have a go at it, if they have the opportunity when visiting Vegas. ■



Chapter news ...

A very coffee Christmas ... 11/12/11 | North-Eastern Victoria

■ Words: Ron Gillick ■ Photos: Marg & Ron Gillick ■ Run organiser: Ron Gillick

On another perfect early summer morning we met at our usual meeting place, Apex Park in Wangaratta, on the banks of the Ovens River.

With Marg and me were Ian and Karen Bradshaw from the Ballarat Chapter who had come up the day before. These two must surely be the most-travelled members in the Club as it had only been three weeks since their last visit up here to do the Snowy Mountains Run with us.

After a quick dash up to *Gloria Jean's* for some takeaway coffees, we waited in the park to see who would arrive for today's run. Within minutes the usual suspects were there: Sue and Stuart, Bill and Elaine, but a phone call from Gerry unfortunately advised that he had found his battery completely flat that morning. As our run was to take us through Yackandandah, where Gerry and Ellie live, we arranged to meet him there later. We had arranged earlier to meet Ian and Val Bruce there also to finish the run with us.

With no more arrivals we set off for the first part of the run to Myrtleford via Beechworth. Our first opportunity to have a bit of fun is a downhill section of Gap Road but someone had decided to spoil our fun by resealing the road during the week, leaving it covered in loose screenings.

After a stop in Myrtleford for morning coffee (and cake of course), it was back into the cars for the next part of the run to Yackandandah. After the turnoff at Ovens we were on one of my favourite roads, the Happy Valley Road which comprises about 20km of sweeping bends through open country and finishes with 10km of tight corners up and over a range of hills. Arriving in Yackandandah we met up with Gerry, Ian and Val and decided to top up with, er, more coffee.

Our next stop was to be the ABC radio studios in Wodonga where we were to drop off some gifts we had brought along to contribute to the station's annual Christmas Appeal. However, after a (very) late change of plan we decided to impose ourselves on Stuart and Sue's hospitality and have our picnic lunch in their garden. Following a leisurely lunch and much chatting, we left our gifts with Sue to drop in to the ABC the following day.

Thanks to Stuart and Sue for their generosity in allowing us the use of their garden and a big thank you to Ian and Karen for coming such a long way. It's always a pleasure having you.

In closing, please allow me to wish all Club members a Happy New Year from all of us in the North East Chapter. ■





Christmas in paradise ... 11/12/11 | Hobart

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

So, with Christmas approaching, it was time to celebrate.

December's run began with the Chapter meeting at Bellerive for a quick chat and a coffee. A good turnout of nine cars and a partly sunny day made for a promising start and so we headed north, towards Tea Tree.

The back roads are always enjoyable, allowing us to test our cars and enjoy the sound of running up and down through their gears.

We stopped for a few photos, before turning back towards Richmond and another quick comfort stop. The driving part of the day was almost over as we headed towards Lauderdale and the much-anticipated social event!

Arriving in Lauderdale, we scrambled for parking places before entering the Waldock residence, which was our venue for a wine tasting accompanied by a late lunch and dessert.

We enjoyed a selection of wines; some local, some interstate and a couple from overseas. Along with the wine, a few "awards" celebrating the achievements (or otherwise!) of members were presented. Of course, there were also the obligatory lucky door prizes.

The wines made for a very convivial atmosphere and a great end to the year.

Thanks to Michelle Waldock for preparing lunch and John Hadriil for his delicious desserts. ■



Chapter news ...

Christmas in a fire shed ... 11/12/11 | Ballarat

■ Words: Noellene Gleeson ■ Photos: Karen Bradshaw & Ron Macdonald ■ Run organiser: John Gleeson

Ho Ho Ho, it's 11 December and the Ballarat and Western Victoria Chapter are celebrating Christmas and the end of another great year.

We met at the car park of the Old Damascus College on Victoria St. Fifteen cars, including members from Ballarat, Bendigo, Horsham, Geelong and Melbourne made up the group.

We left at 10.30am sharp after John had given his usual instructions, although everyone must have wondered what he had eaten for breakfast as he called four people by the wrong names!! That was the start of our laughter for the day!

Off we went; the weather was a little threatening but we had almost all the tops down. Out Yankee Flat Road, under the trees to Buninyong then through some sweepers to Garibaldi. Back under the trees through the Enfield State Forest and Napoleons to the outskirts of Sebastopol. From there we headed to Smythesdale and Snake Valley. We were now on a narrow winding road heading to Linton, but alas stuck behind a FWD. Thank goodness he turned off.

We regrouped at Scarsdale but due to lack of toilets, headed to Cape Clear for a toilet stop and a chat. From here it was on to the Wallinduc fire shed where Ian and Karen were waiting to welcome us.

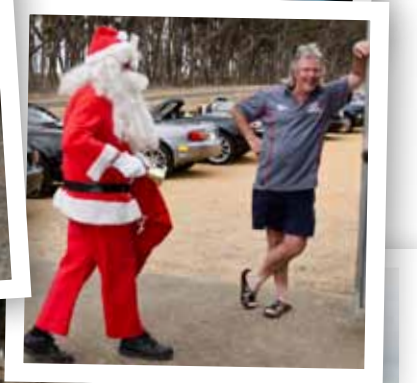
The fire shed was just right for our lunch break. Everything we needed was there and it looked a treat with its Christmas tree and decorations making for the perfect atmosphere. After we had finished lunch with tea, coffee and many Chrissy treats, a siren sounded out the front and we all headed out to find Santa had arrived on the back of the fire truck.

Poor old fella had a bit of trouble getting off the back of the truck as his beard kept blowing up and he couldn't see the steps. Anyway, we all – including Alan and Liz's two grandchildren – received a little gift. The looks on their little faces made it clear that this is what Christmas is all about: spending time with family and friends.

We all had a great day together and look forward to many more.

John and I would like to thank everyone for supporting us once again; we hope you all had a very good Christmas, and wish you a Happy and safe New Year. Thank you to Liz, Alan, Ian and Karen for their help in setting up for the day on Saturday and for arranging for us to use the fire shed.

See you all in 2012! Zoom Zoom! ■



Chapter news ...



An Aussie Christmas ... BBQ 11/12/11 | North Tassie

■ Words & photos: Ruth Beaton



Christmas seems to be earlier every year and this year Keith and Sandra Tillack from Devonport opened their home for our annual Christmas BBQ.

The Launceston and the Georgetown members met early and managed to get in a good run by taking the long way, via the back roads (that's their excuse, anyway!) before arriving at the Tillacks for a 12 noon start.

Twenty-two adults and two children enjoyed the festive atmosphere in the Tassie sun with a beautiful array of food which Sandra had laid on.

As we all had been *very good* throughout the year, Santa made a special visit with plenty of Ho! Ho! Ho! and a gift for everyone but, before leaving, the stitching in his red suit came apart from the seams. It could have been a very serious moment but he managed to hold himself together ... a very nice Santa indeed. Thank you, Santa.

Convenor Ken Beaton made a special presentation to Malcolm Eastley of his 10-year membership badge. Ken mentioned the help and advice that Malcolm had given over the years to our Chapter and made an extra special mention of Rita Eastley who gave a great deal of her time to act as Ken's unofficial secretary during the formation years of the Chapter. Ken also thanked Bruce Harvey and then read out a summary of all of the year's activities.

All our events for the year were well attended and it was good to reminisce over the past year and to look forward to sharing 2012 with our car club friends.

Our thanks go to Sandra and Keith for all their hard work in making their home available for our Christmas celebration. I know that everyone had a great time.

Happy new year and happy MX-ing, everyone! ■



MX-5 passenger performance modifications



Words & photos: Ron Diprose

Like a lot of MX-5 owners, following a settling-in period getting used to the car I thought some modifications could improve the performance.

Fortunately this is an easy car to modify, with any number of suppliers happy to cater to the whims and wants of the owners. In my case none of the parts on offer was suitable, so the stock of bits and bobs that would be "useful one day" was raided.

The first item needed was of course a more convenient water bottle holder, easily found at the bottom of the bin and with clear guidelines for use, per the photo. It was found to fit neatly in the dashboard recess under the radio. Appropriately-placed *Paddle Pop* sticks and glue soon had that ready for use.



Being an older model, our car is equipped with a cassette player ... not much use these days, although I have hundreds of tapes courtesy of a stint working in Bangkok. They were bought to relieve the boredom of an up-to-two-hour drive to work on the freeway. Distance 15 kilometres!! Much like Melbourne's freeways now, I believe.

Now owning MP3 players, I thought of ways to use them in the MX-5. Somewhere in the dim memory a little light went on. Cassette adaptors for CD players. *Sooo Eighties!!*



On to eBay. A week or two and 80 cents later, including postage, the device arrived. Pop it in the slot, hook up the MP3 and enjoy whatever music you wish.

Of course, when getting serious forget all that ... top down and listen to the engine sound.



Next item was a passenger vanity mirror, salvaged from a scratched Boeing 747 loo mirror. It was probably worth more than the car.

Made of plastic, with rounded edges for safety, it was attached to the sun visor with *Blu-tack* for easy removal. Blobs of silicone sealer on the corners prevent scratches to the windscreen surround.

It's an odd shape and looks funny, but it works well.



So, how has this improved performance?

Easy! It has all resulted in a measurable, sustainable 37.5% improvement in *passenger* performance ... ■



An update on Molly



■ Words & photo: Lockie Story, Mockinya

I took pictures of the scene but I don't think our esteemed editor wants photos of a recently-deceased kangaroo to sully these pages. Enough to say it was messy.

The damage was minor enough that I was able to effect the basic repairs myself, leaving painting of the nose cone to a later date.

A short time after this incident I received an anonymous package in the mail (post marked Ballarat), containing a number of vinyl kangaroos to be attached to Molly's driver's side guard. Although I have my suspicions the culprit has not owned up and, to add insult to injury, there were four representations for the four 'roos ... *AND some spares!*

In other news Molly has passed the 200,000km, over 100,000 of which were added in the last two years.

I recently had a timing belt changed at *Morrow Motors* in Horsham and, whilst the front was off, I had new timing pullies and a water pump fitted (just in case). I cannot speak highly enough about the

level of service and the consideration shown to Tracey by the service staff there. It is really nice to get good service for a change!

As a present for hitting 200,000km, I replaced Molly's shockers with a set of Konis and, now I wish I had done it when I bought her. The difference is astonishing.

On a recent Ballarat Chapter run I got to try her out on some seriously windy roads and just loved the difference. After the run I went to Melbourne then on to Geelong where I have had a new exhaust system fitted by Colin at *Town and Country Exhausts* and designed by Club member Peter Corkran. I had the car dyno'd prior to the change of exhaust and will have it dyno'd again next week. The driving tells the story. More torque, more top end, she now revs like a rotary AND she sounds like a sports car *should*.

To quote a well-known lady in the Club, "She has a lovely burble coming from her behind".

So overall, aside from a bloody nose, Molly is in the best of health. ■

Well, it's official!

Molly, my 1995 Classic Red NA, is now an Ace. Four kangaroos in a year!

Travelling home after a Club run recently, Molly hit another 'roo. Fortunately the damage to Molly was minor. The same cannot be said for the kangaroo, which has left this mortal realm.

I was travelling slowly through "Kangaroo Ally" when an Eastern Grey doe dashed out in front of the car. I swerved to avoid her so, naturally, she doubled back and dead-centred Molly's front and grille.

I have to say I could not believe it. I had fitted the grille only a week before. I got home thoroughly depressed, as you can imagine.

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Market place ...

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FOR SALE 2001 Classic Red NB

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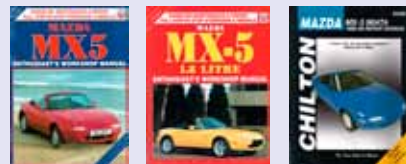
Tyres were replaced approximately five months ago – not been used much since then.

Asking price: \$12,000 ono

Contact Vinni (non-Club member, Ringwood) on 0417 584 082.

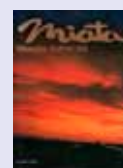
Club library ...

Books



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» 1.6 NA » 1.8 NA » 1990-2009



Miata Mazda MX-5

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2-book set

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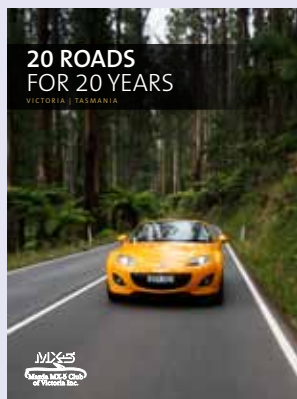


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Looking for the ideal birthday or Christmas gift for the MX-5 enthusiast in your life?

This is *the* perfect companion for the MX-5 glove box.

Put together by Club members for Club members to celebrate our 20th anniversary, this book profiles some great drivers' roads in Victoria and Tasmania.

» Cost is \$20 + postage. Contact Steve Dunlop, merchandise@mx5vic.org.au.

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Help promote the Club with one of our new windscreen stickers.

- » 300mm wide x 15mm high
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- » Cost is \$2 + postage.

Contact Steve Dunlop, merchandise@mx5vic.org.au.

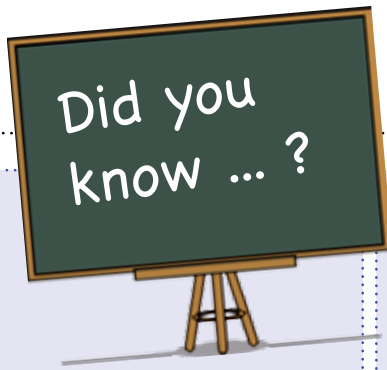
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Ask at your next Club run or contact Murray Finlay, president@mx5vic.org.au.



■ **Words & research:** Ron Macdonald NB8A
ron@gracies-place.net /
www.gracies-place.net

It's a chick's car ...

Sorry ladies ... this advice is aimed at the male Club members among us.

There are many non-MX-5 owners out there who justify *not* being an MX-5 owner by advising all and sundry that it's a 'chick's car'. Now, of course, MX-5 owners (of either gender) know full well it is not a 'chick's car' (or a guy's car, for that matter) – it's a **driver's** car.

For those who might be offended by the 'chick's car' mantle may I suggest you take a leaf out of the book of a Miata (MX-5) owner in the deep south of the United States. I read that he pulled in at his local 7-Eleven just as a 'good ole boy' pulled in alongside in his 'truck' (ute). On alighting from the Miata the ute driver

reminded him he was driving a 'chick's car', to which the Miata driver replied "So you're driving is a 'man's car'?"

"Yup," came the reply from the ute driver. The Miata man then advised that, yes his car was most definitely a 'chick's car' and he had picked up several of same because of the car. He then asked ute driver, "How many men have you picked up?"

I believe the conversation concluded with the ute driver walking off with a fairly good head of steam pouring out of his ears. ■

They call me mellow yellow

You don't see many yellow NAs on the road but, did you know that this was not due to a lack of popularity but was actually a manufacturing issue?

When Mazda first set their production schedule, yellow had been slated as being a low-volume colour, but in reality the demand for the Sunburst Yellow was far greater than Mazda had anticipated.

The problem came when the paint (made to Mazda's anti-fade specifications) arrived from the Japanese manufacturer. It was quickly found that the paint had totally unacceptable coverage, this meant that every Sunburst Yellow NA had to be painted twice!

To produce the yellow cars Mazda had to send a number of body shells through the paint line at the end of a shift and spray them with a white exterior paint. These shells were then taken off the production line and transported back to the start of the booth to be painted yellow at the beginning of the next shift. As the added cost and disruption to production was something that could not be sustained, eventually Mazda decided they would no longer produce the Sunburst Yellow cars. ■

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Profession? Service Manager at City Mazda

Partner? Married to Tammy

Pets? Oscar and Coco, the pugs

Fave food? Spaghetti Bolognaise

Can you cook? Yes – I'm the chef at home

Favourite tippie? French Champagne or a good Riesling

First drive? About 12 years old in the old man's car on some back roads at Port Franklin

First car? 1974 TC 4cyl Cortina – Electric Blue

First fender bender? Some idiot ran into me on the way to the airport a couple of years ago

Everyday driver? New Mazda 6 Luxury Sports (company demo)

Current MX-5? 1994 NA Clubman x 2 – one for the road and one for the track

MX-5 improvements? Road car: exhaust, roll cage, wheels & tyres, leather seats.

Race car: engine, intake, exhaust, suspension, wheels and tyres,



diff, fuel management and lots of bling and stickers

MX-5 dislikes? Not enough time to drive it

Why an MX-5? Great value for money, excellent handling, reliability and loads of fun to drive

Fluffy dice? No dice ... just a few stickers and a very shiny exhaust system

Passions besides the MX-5? The pugs, travel, cooking, guitar, photography

Favourite TV show / movie / book? Big Bang Theory, The Hangover, iPad2

Dream wheels (money no object)?

NASCAR or GT3 Porsche

Would you drive a Daewoo or SsangYong? No chance

Favourite other Mazda? Mazda 6 MPS

If not a Mazda (gasp!) what? SLK 350 AMG

How long in the Club? Two years

How many MX-5 Club runs? Only one social run but have done 15 motor sport rounds and the Winton 6-Hour twice.

Favourite Club run? Phillip Island sprints – awesome circuit

Funniest thing seen on a Club run?

Someone locking the keys in their MX-5 with the engine running just before they were due to head out on track (by the way, it wasn't me ... might have been an NC driver)

Done DECA? Yes, twice

Ford vs Holden? Neither; they are only good as taxis and even then they aren't that good!

What's playing in your MX-5? Coldplay

Footy team (AFL/NRL/Soccer)? Big fan of Formula 1 – favourite drivers Michael Schumacher and Mark Webber

Final comments? Warning!! MX-5s can be addictive! ■

Plus, read about Daniel's NASCAR experience - see our centre spread



Daniel in action at the 2011 Winton 6-Hour

A new option for the MX-5 owner

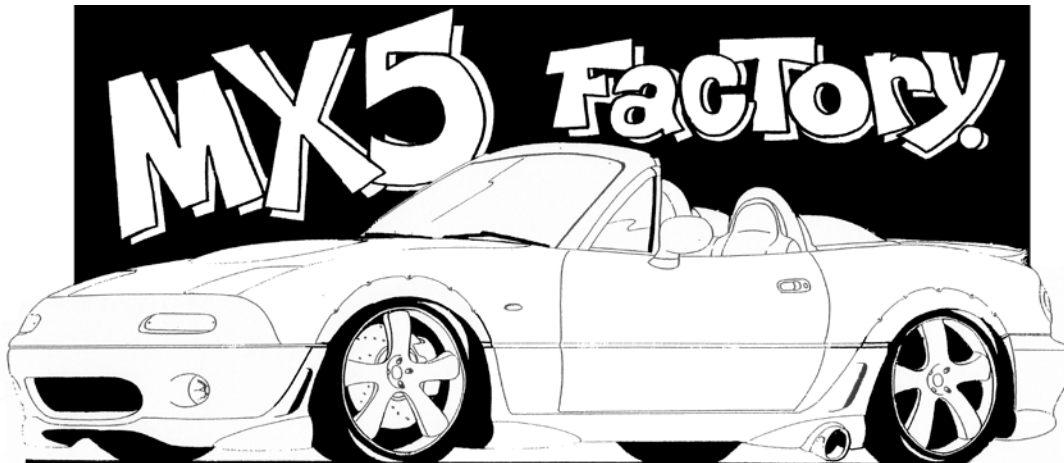
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