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3/2015
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THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE MAZDA MX-5 CLUB OF VICTORIA & TASMANIA

NatMeet XII
- Launceston, February 2016



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In this edition:
NatMeet XII - Launceston 2016 - book now!
Back-to-back wins in the RACV Showcase
Book Review: The Stig's "How to Drive"

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**Mazda MX-5 Club
of Victoria & Tasmania**

Your Committee: 2014-2015

President

> Don Nicoll | (03) 9437 2787 (ah)
e: president@mx5vic.org.au

Vice President / Communications

> Murray Finlay | 0416 247 677
e: editor@mx5vic.org.au

Secretary / Public Officer

> Peter Dannock | 0408 522 093 (ah)
e: secretary@mx5vic.org.au

Treasurer / NatMeet 2016 Chair

> Dave Collins | (03) 9755 2167 (ah)
e: treasurer@mx5vic.org.au

Club Captain – Motor Sport

> Tim Emery | 0424 091 167 (ah)
e: captain@mx5vic.org.au

Assistant Club Captain – Motor Sport

> Randy Stagno Navarra | 0409 210 872
e: captain2@mx5vic.org.au

Club Captain – Social

> Cary Warren | 0418 368 246 (ah)
e: social@mx5vic.org.au

Assistant Club Captain – Social

> Alex Hailstone | 0414 155 383
e: social2@mx5vic.org.au

Social Media

> Ben Sale | 0434 906 673 (ah)
e: facebook@mx5vic.org.au

Membership

> Will Campbell | (03) 5261 4816 (ah)
e: membership@mx5vic.org.au

Merchandise / NatMeet 2016

> Bruce Gray | 0478 219 856 (ah)
e: merchandise@mx5vic.org.au

Points

> Coral Campbell | (03) 5261 4816 (ah)
e: points@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - Central

> Geoff Roche | 0409 039 867 (ah)
e: central@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - Eastern Victoria

> Peter Ferguson | 0419 108 128
e: eastern@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - North-Eastern Victoria

> Ron Gillick | (02) 6033 0253 (ah)
e: north-eastern@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - Western Victoria

> Ian Bradshaw | 0407 556 135
e: western@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - Northern Tasmania

> Bruce Harvey | 0438 562 224 (ah)
e: northtas@mx5vic.org.au

Chapter Captain - Southern Tasmania

> John Waldock | 0409 658 716 (ah)
e: southtas@mx5vic.org.au

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Cover image: One of the many great MX-5 roads in northern Tassie ... will you be there for NatMeet 2016? *Photo: Kelly Berggren*



Find us at:
**MX-5 Club of
Victoria**

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- e-mail: editor@mx5vic.org.au
- post: **mxtra**, Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria & Tasmania, PO Box 7438, Beaumaris VIC 3193

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Don's Drive(l) ...

■ Don Nicoll – President president@mx5vic.org.au



**Mazda MX-5 Club
of Victoria & Tasmania**

Welcome to the March edition of *mxtra*. Another packed publication for your enjoyment.

I'm pleased to report that, 12 months out from NatMeet in Tasmania next February, Mazda Australia have already promised a hefty investment in the event. This has been really helpful in assisting our planning for NatMeet and, most importantly, the costing. The organising team's objective has been to subsidise the costs of accommodation and registration as much as possible in order to offset the additional burden of the ferry costs. With Mazda's much appreciated commitment, we are now in a position to estimate the level of subsidy possible. This will be communicated to participants in the coming months.

Registration for NatMeet has been open for a couple of weeks now and interest has been high so, if you want to be sure of a spot, log on to the website and follow the navigation to the NatMeet pages.

At this stage in proceedings the registration is a two-step process: first you register online, following which you will receive an email with your registration number. This number is then used in the second step of paying your deposit. In the event that NatMeet is oversubscribed, I imagine that decisions on the cut off will be made on the basis of deposits received. *Which reminds me: I really must pay mine!*

A week or so ago we received a link from a non-member which took us to an *Autocar* site in the UK. The site purported to have the first pictures of the Fiat Spyder, which will be built by Mazda based on the MX-5 ND platform. Our contact at Mazda thought that the photo may have been an *Autocar* creation rather than the genuine article. Whichever, it makes you realise just how easy it is to come up with an ugly car. Placed alongside the new ND you would not need very long to make a call in favour of the ND. Hopefully, for Fiat's sake, it is an *Autocar* creation.

Hot off the press is the news that the Club again took out honours at the RACV Classic Showcase. Last year Cary Warren with his NA took out the prize for best Japanese sports car. This year Bruce Gray's NC won the prize. Well done Bruce.

In this edition you will read about a driver training day at Winton on Saturday, 28

March. To quote Tim Emery, our Motor Sport Captain, "the defensive driving is aimed at people wanting to improve their understanding of how to react to situations in day-to-day driving and is great for new drivers". We have only had really good feedback from these training days and so, if you are interested, I encourage you to read Tim's *Track Torque* article (page 7) for details.

As I write we are one week away from the Vic/SA biennial weekend. We wish all the participants a safe and enjoyable trip. At the same time the NE Victoria Chapter will be taking on their annual Snowy Mountains run and the Taswegians will be getting in some driver training practice at Baskerville. Who says there isn't plenty to do in this Club?! By the time this edition of the magazine lands in you inbox or postbox, these events will have already occurred and we'll be lining up for the Eastern Vics' "Chip run to Inverloch" and the Midnight MX-press run to Apollo Bay. *Plenty for all tastes.*

This report would not be complete without another mention of the ND. If you Google "MX-5 at the Chicago Auto Show", you'll get some ideas on the kind of accessories that may be available with the new model. I was particularly taken with a carbon fibre boot rack which weighs less than one kilogram. The rack even comes with a built in brake light assembly – very spoofy! I'm not sure that I'm into the painted brake callipers that are so common now on Porsches and Audis (plus many other makes) but I did like the look of the set on the white ND at the Chicago show.

Finally, a big thanks to Kelly Berggren, who has been helping us with the design of the *Club area* of the website. We are getting ever closer to having a virtual club room where members will be able to view material which will not be available to the general public. The first big step and possibly the hardest, will be bringing our Club Membership activities in-house. We have talked about this a lot but we are now getting a lot closer to a finished product.

Must go – the driver's seat is getting cold!

Remember ... Safety ~~fast~~ first!

Don

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

March

- 21 *Central: Midnight MX-press GOR run*
- 21 *Western: Ballarat to Anglesea run*
- 22 *Eastern: Chip run to Inverloch*
- 22 *NTas: Devonport motor show*
- 29 *Sprints 2014-15 Rds 9/10: Winton – Double Header!*

April

- 4 *Central: Bendigo run*
- 12 *NE Vic: Tastes of the North-East*
- 12 *Western: 6th Birthday run*
- 12 *NTas: Kelly's Ladies' Day*
- 12 *Sprints 2015 Rd 1: Calder Park*
- 17-20 *Central: 4-day high country run*
- 19 *Eastern: South of the Highway run*
- 25-26 *NTas: West Coast Overnighter*
- 27 *NTas: Targa Tasmania - optional viewing trips*

May

- 2 *Club: Gymkhana/Show & Shine*
- 2-3 *NE Vic: Jamieson Loop run*
- 9 *Sprints 2015 Rd 2: Sandown*
- 17 *Club: run to commemorate first mass gathering of MX-5s*
- 23-25 *Eastern: 3 Peaks run*

Mark those corners!

Please remember, on social convoy runs, to mark the corners for those following.

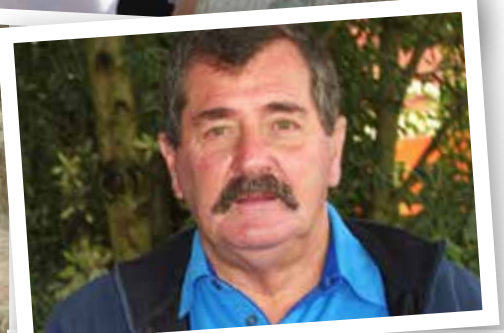
It's very simple: when you get to an intersection or a point where the route of the convoy might be unclear to the car behind you, please wait at the corner until you're sure the following vehicle has seen you.

If it's unsafe to wait at the corner, please wait in a visible position nearby.

You won't get lost because, if everyone complies, the car you're following will be waiting for you at the next corner!

Scene about ...

Photos: Karen Bradshaw, Alan Bennett, Jill Steer, Cheryl Murray, Marg Gillick, John Waldo





Membership

Current membership count:

569

and growing!

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

G'day again!

We continue to progress towards breaking last year's full-year record of 603 members.

I would like to welcome the following new members to the fold:

Central Chapter

Jon Andrews	1993 Red Clubman NA
Rodney Burfoot	1990 Classic Red NA
Tristan Callow	1990 Classic Red NA
Murray and Diane Heazlewood	2001 Classic Red NB
Tyler Khoury	1989 Merlot NA
Mark Lehman	2001 Crystal Blue NB
Anthony Pham	1994 Laguna Blue NA
Michael Roche	1989 Classic Red NA
Julie Ronalds	2014 Red NC

Southern Tasmania Chapter

Michael Watt 1993 Classic Red NA

I wish you all a long and fruitful association with the Club.

Enjoy your MX-5 and I'll see you out and about ...

Will



*Seen in a busy supermarket car park in Highett ...
(just near the large, empty foyer!)*

Trading Post



For Sale 1991 Classic Red NA with black/red leather interior and turbo

For details of this and other items to buy, swap, sell or borrow, see the "Trading Post" section in the "Clubroom" section of the Club's website, mx5vic.org.au

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*Note: only Peter Rutherford or Hayden Dally are authorised to offer Club discounts in-store.



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Waxit Car Care in Tullamarine is offering Club members 12.5% off all products (**excluding already-discounted kits and the following brands/products:** Polishangel, Vikan, Flex and Concours 900 Polisher).

Check out the Waxit range and order online at www.waxit.com.au. Our Club coupon code is **mx5club**.

Please add your Club membership number to the "comments" section of your order.



Track Torque

■ Tim Emery – Club Captain - Motor Sport captain@mx5vic.org.au



A big few months of Motor Sport

Well, here we are at the start of March with two rounds of the **City Mazda Sprint Championship** having already been run. The first event for the year at Phillip Island was also our first event for some time joining the WRX Club and I think everyone would agree it was a very professionally-run day – so a big thanks to Grant and his team at the WRX Club. Within a couple of weeks of Phillip Island the Motor Sport Team were off to Sandown for Round 8 of the Sprint Championship and, although a major torrential downpour didn't make the start of the day very promising, the day cleared to be a fine sunny afternoon of racing. (Check out the report on page 28.)

To wrap up the 2014-2015 Championship we have our double header round at Winton on 29 March, and then straight into our 'Official' calendar-year 2015 Championship.

Review of Sprint Championship Rules

Over the past few months I have mentioned that we will be looking at the rules of the Sprint Championship for any updates that we feel are required to keep the rules current, and most importantly ensure the club's Sprint Championship provides the right mix of competitiveness, sportsmanship, safety and fun.

A few weeks ago an email was sent to over 80 Sprint Championship competitors both past and present asking for their feedback on the current rules. Randy and I then put a "working group" together and all of this feedback was tabled, discussed and revisions put forward. The working group consisted of past, current and new competitors with more than 40 years' combined experience in the MX-5 Club's Motor Sport group and I want to thank them all for giving up their time (4-5 hours) to contribute.

As we only have a two-week break between the end of the current Championship and the start of the 2015 Championship and we would normally cover any rule changes or proposals at our Annual Motor Sport Meeting/Awards Night, we will be releasing the revised rules in the next few weeks to allow everyone plenty of time to go over them in readiness for the new Championship year.

City Mazda MX-5 Sprint Championship Awards Night ~ Friday, 8 April

Although we have never needed an excuse to get together away from the track to tell stories of how fast we are, after last



year's inaugural Awards Night we will again mark the end of the 2014-2015 Sprint Championship season with a night of fun and sledging. The event will be held at the Kent Hotel in Carlton and the proposed date is Friday, 8 April, which is the Friday night before our first 2015 Season round on Sunday, 10 April. I will send a separate email in the next few weeks with more details on how to buy tickets etc.

Circuit / Driver Training Day ~ 28 March, Winton

A regular fixture on our Motor Sport calendar is the Driver Training and Circuit Training day at Winton, held in conjunction with AROCA the day before our Sprint Championship round in March. The day is a great opportunity to encourage a partner, children or friend to improve their skills in a car under controlled conditions.

The **defensive driving** is aimed at people wanting to improve their understanding of how to react to situations in day-to-day driving and is great for new drivers.

The **circuit training** is exactly that: the chance to spend some time on the track to develop skills and try new techniques and lines without the pressure of timing and competition at a normal track day. There are instructors on hand to sit with you and offer feedback on driving style and technique. These days are always popular and are great value considering the track time and access to an instructor one-on-one.

If you're interested, let Randy or myself know (see page 3 for contact details) and we will get more info and entry forms out to you.

Tassie: Two Tracks in Two Days - 2016

Now that the details of **NatMeet 2016** in Tasmania have been released, some of you may have seen an exciting innovation as part of the NatMeet Motor Sport program – the ability for our Motor Sport Team members not attending NatMeet to compete in a track day at both Tasmanian circuits on consecutive days.

You heard it right! The NatMeet Motor Sport event will be held at Symmons Plains Raceway on Saturday, 13 February, followed by another (non-NatMeet) **MX-5-only** track day at Baskerville Raceway on Sunday, 14 February. As NatMeet will attract close to 100 MX-5s, there is also the ability for people competing in the track days to gain a discount on the ferry crossing. So ... the thought of a bunch of MX-5s travelling down on the ferry to Tasmania on the Friday night, arriving in the morning to drive straight to Symmons Plains for a day at the track, THEN driving to Hobart to do it all over again on the next day at Baskerville has definitely got my attention.

Now, if I plan this right I can 'propose' an Emery family holiday in Tassie around the same time! BINGO!

Tim

"The older I get, the better I was!"



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NatMeet XII in Launceston, 2016

■ Words: Dave Collins, NatMeet 2016 Chairman

It's All About The Car – Explore The Possibilities

NatMeet comes but once every two years when like-minded MX-5 enthusiasts from around Australia get together to share the love and passion for driving their wonderful Guinness World record sports car – the Mazda MX-5.

And what better place to do this than in Tasmania?

Last year Queensland hosted the event in Coloundra and it's our turn – our third time as host – in 2016. We have chosen Launceston in February. Launceston is the home of the world-famous Targa Tasmania Rally, so we know we have the roads to excite our passion for driving on the black top without a straight stretch in sight. We will be blessed with fantastic weather and wonderful scenery and of course great company and, without a doubt, fantastic food.

For those who know nothing about NatMeet, it's four days of having a great time. If you will excuse the adjectives, it offers the chance to show off your MX-5 in the Concours/Show & Shine, participate in some fantastic fun events, enjoy driving some of the best roads that Australia has to offer, sample the tastes of Tasmania, belly aching laughter, some fine and moderate drinking ... and a chance to share the passion with other enthusiasts from all around Australia – and perhaps beyond. For the motor sport enthusiasts in the Club, it's a chance to drive on not just one but two tracks that you will not have been on before. And of course we will have the new ND MX-5 to show off.

All of this packed into just four days.

Spaces are limited and registration has been open for a couple of weeks ... at the time of writing we have filled 50% of the places. ●



Go to our website for more information:

<http://mx5vic.org.au/natmeet-2016/>

or call one us on the NatMeet team:

Dave Collins - 9755 2167

Bruce Gray - 0478 219 856

Bruce Harvey (Tasmania) - 0438 562 224

psssst ... remember ...

Join the Midnight MX-press!

Great Ocean Road - Saturday, 21 March

Fellow MX-ers ... quietly pack your cucumber sandwiches, macarons and a thermos.

Tell the kids/grand kids, if you dare, not to wait up!

This role reversal will naturally spark their curiosity ...

Family: "So what's up?"

MX-er: "Um ... just checking out the night life in Apollo Bay."

Family: "What the ... urrrr ... OK, #have fun."

By the time you've changed into second gear your family will have diagnosed you (via search engine of course) with some awful incurable affliction.

C'mon ... lose those inhibitions ... remember, you own a two-seater car and you did not get a discount because it has no roof.

Don't forget that 80% of the general population (and 100% of your extended family) think you are impulsive, irresponsible and just plain mad.

See the flyer in this month's mxtra (or the online calendar) for full details.

So, see you under the stars!

~ Chris Biffin

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Chapter chatter ...

8.2.15 | North-Eastern Victoria

■ Words: Greg Jordan ■ Photos: Ron & Marg Gillick, Karen Bradshaw ■ Organiser: Ron Gillick

Sometimes, in the middle of your Monday, you look back and think: "What did I do on the weekend?" Sometimes you get there and just smile. Sometimes you drive nearly 1,000km.

After Saturday lunch I washed the car and headed from Melbourne to Yackandandah. It's only 320km. The wash was a waste of time. Although Melbourne was sunny, the rain started as I made my way out through Lilydale and continued through Yea and almost to Bonnie Doon. A brief coffee stop there, then on towards Benalla and the freeway to Wangaratta. Taking the Beechworth Road, Yackandandah was soon reached and I checked into the motel. A walk around town and dinner at the Yack Hotel and an early night in preparation for Sunday's drive.

After a great night's sleep I woke to light drizzle despite a forecast of 37°C. I set off to meet the NEV Chapter at Isaacs Park at about 8:30. Greetings, a chat and the briefing, then we were off for Mt Beauty via Carrolls Road, and the Happy Valley Road and a huge sense of déjà vu as we passed my uncle's old farm and childhood memories of milking, chasing calves and fun flitted by. Back to focussing on the road, we arrived in Mt Beauty and the bakery for morning tea.

Relaxed and sated (carbed and caffeinated), we headed along the Bogong High Plains Road into the Alpine National Park. This is a great road. Hairpins, sharp curves steady climbs with occasional short straights (to pass cyclists and vans) – ie, designed for the MX-5. *Google* lists it as only 30km, but with the constant gearshifts, brakes and turns it's a test of

skill, concentration and a reminder to do more arm weights in the gym. I must thank the non-MX-5 drivers who pulled over when safe to let us pass.

Through Falls Creek and we were greeted by the high plains. Cool with a gently undulating landscape, wildflowers and sweeping curves. It was a relaxing drive after the twists and turns to get there. We stopped for a group photos at the Rocky Valley Dam and were then into the cars again and off down the mountain. Around the same standard of hairpin bends and curves, only downhill this time.

On to the Omeo Highway we headed along the relatively newly sealed, and still gravelly, road over Mt Wills to lunch at the renovated Mitta Pub. Cold drinks and great meals, lively conversation and more chips (potato not paint) than could be eaten.

The sun was out with force as we prepared to leave. The temperature had reached near 40° as promised and a number of us put the roof up as well as the air-conditioning on cold and high. Over lunch, the Bright/Myrtleford group had decided to turn off early rather than to go back home through Yack.

We all took the back road to Eskdale, but somehow the 'Bright' group at the rear disappeared and so the rest of us waited for these "lost souls" in Eskdale. Having decided they had turned off early (or



earlier than we expected) we glided over Lockhart Gap, through Tangambalanga then back to Yack. My tacho was at 308km as we stopped at the Yackandandah Café.

Reminiscences of the drive with my fellow MX-5ers and cool drinks finished, I was then back in the car for the evening drive to Melbourne. Breaks every hour with a walk around and coffee, I put the roof down in Yea and cruised over the ranges to home.

Summary: 642km in the day. 308km of the best roads I have ever driven and the most fun you could have on a weekend. I'll be back for my third Mitta Mitta run next year. Join me? ●





At the back: Loz, Ron, Stuart and Ron. In the middle: Yvonne, Gerald, Ian, Greg, Ellen, Gerry, Karen, Ian and Roger. And in front: Alan, Dawn and Shane.



Chapter chatter ...

14.2.15 | **Central** ■ Words & photos: Alan Bennett ■ Organisers: Geoff & Bronwyn Roche





So how did you spend Valentine's Day?



*Very romantic, this Valentine's day thing.
Red roses, chocolates, wine, candlelight, soft music ...*

... or getting up early, checking the weather forecast and 5 1/2 hours sitting in a tin box on wheels, in three stages with spurs (and just 50 shades of grey clouds) attached no less – *what a choice!*

Yesterday's task was to wash the car in the middle of a thunderstorm with lightning amid heavy rain and overflowing gutters. Early this morning (5am alarm for some) it was cross-the-fingers whilst checking to see if there was any sign the run would be called off.

When Geoff and Bronwyn did their practice run four weeks earlier to check the traffic and run notes they were thinking of bush fires and the possibility of a cancellation due to heat. However this was all for nought as a brave but even dozen clean and wet cars with optimistic occupants and rooves up arrived at Maccas in Doncaster East before Geoff set us off on the first of a three-legged run.

Part 1 - From Doncaster. A quick 40km run, arriving at Kinglake where there were another seven shining MX-5s facing us (a case of Central meets Western) so we did the only thing natural and lined up head to head across the road and went for a chat!

Part 2 - 80km of corners, ups, downs, twists and turns but it was 70km before we saw any dry roads as we approached Healesville for the first time. Many of us took the chance with the weather and dropped our tops and it wasn't long before the optimists were smiling as fog sank below the clouds and tested our vision. A brave lyrebird rushed across between the lead cars and disappeared into the brush.

And then it was a loop up and over Mt Donna Buang before

stopping for a picnic stand up lunch under the still threatening weather and shelter. Not a cloud in the sky over the MCG where Australia were starting to give another cricket lesson to the Poms. Question without notice – of the 19 cars how many left their roof down over lunch? Answer: one. Brave but correct decision.

Part 3 - 105km to Healesville via Marysville. This didn't seem the longest leg at the time due to the pleasure of navigating the aforementioned turns and twists. Yellow road markings – left, right and centre – were amusing at best. Getting finer by the kilometre but patches of wet kept me honest and without a passenger to suggest an ever so slower speed occasionally. It was more a case of get there as quickly as the depressingly slow speed limits allowed whilst maximising driving pleasure and minimising risk. Maybe more of the former than the latter.

What I do not enjoy is 4WDs hovering over my bumper when there is a string of cars in front, solid white (or even yellow) lines and more curves than a weight watchers festival - one got close enough to read my number plate (no problem with that you may think) but what I did get a bit upset about was he seemed to be using braille to read it ...

A most enjoyable day with a minimal number of cyclists all heading towards us, a slow sedan on the last stretch back to Healesville but we'd had our fill by then. I will have to make up the lack of romance to my partner in other ways - perhaps I'll let her wash my car tomorrow as those wet roads didn't do my one day old wash any favours?!

So what did you do on Valentine's day while we were out enjoying ourselves? ●

Chapter chatter ...

14.2.15 | **Western Victoria** ■ Words: Dawn Everett & Karen Bradshaw ■ Photos: Karen Bradshaw

*Do not adjust
your sets ~
it's summer
in Victoria!
~ Two Spurs run ~*



^ The "lookout" atop Mt Donna Buang



■ Organisers: Ian & Karen Bradshaw

Four cars met out the front of the Gleesons' place in Ballarat for the Two Spurs Run, but the Gleesons weren't joining us this time; they had other zoom zoom plans in Tassie.

At 8.15am John waved us off on our way, with Noellene in her dressing gown waving from the front door. The weather conditions were slightly wet and cool and could only get better – *we hoped*. We accumulated two more cars on the way: the Carrolls at Darley and the Todds at Bulla.

Along the way we saw a kangaroo sitting on the fairway of the Growling Frog golf course on Donnybrook Road, watching the golfers hacking their way around.

We arrived at Kinglake to meet up with the Parkers from Rochester and then the Central Chapter group rolled up and we had a merry old time chatting away, all the while keeping an eye on the foggy mountains. The Central Chapter headed off first to Healesville, followed by the Western Chapter 10 minutes later. We had a lovely scenic drive from Kinglake to Healesville, then we headed to our lunch destination at Mt Donna Buang. The closer to the mountain we got, the foggier it got. We passed the Central group who were parked waiting for us at the lower

car park. We zoomed up to the top of Mt Donna Buang in the thick fog, had a spin around the lookout that was shrouded in cloud and then back down through more fog to meet our Central friends for lunch.

After lunch, in one group but in our respective Chapters, we headed off to experience the curvy corners of the Reefton Spur. Next time you travel this road you may notice some dead patches of trees and scrub which may be blamed on the occupants of two cars who had to have an urgent nature call, but they shall remain nameless! We arrived at Marysville for our scheduled toilet stop. Here we also said goodbye to a few MX-5ers before tackling the tenacious Black Spur which was spoilt towards the end by a SLOW oblivious driver we had the misfortune to catch up to. We arrived in glorious sunshine at the Beechworth Bakery in Healesville for an afternoon cuppa, a final gossip with our Central friends before saying our goodbyes to everyone and heading wearily but happily for home, having clocked up 750km for the day.



A big thank you goes to our two Chapter Captains for putting together a fantastic and sociable run, but we're so glad we did it on Saturday and not on the very hot Sunday that followed! ●



^ *Still foggy on the way down ...*



... but give it five minutes! ^

Chapter chatter ...

15.2.15 | Eastern Victoria ■ Words: Arthur Howie ■ Photos: John Poletti ■ Organiser: Peter Ferguson

On a pleasant Sunday morning 12 shiny MX-5s gather at McDonald's in Moe ready for some of Victoria's best roads. After a few words from Peter Ferguson with tops down we set off down the freeway.

At the regroup a few ks off the freeway Jenna runs up the line of cars with the sign-on sheet in hand checking off regos to find out who is not here. This would be a good time to remind a couple of Davids that, if you take a freeway off ramp and continue straight ahead at the top, you will go back on to the freeway! Yes, that is how we lost two cars at the start of the run.

David and Leanne find their way back to us but the other David must be some where between Moe and Traralgon. The sign on McDonalds Track says "Road Work Ahead". The couple walking their dogs don't look happy with a line of MX-5s blasting past, but it's all just fun for us.

As we come out of town the speed limit is 60 at the top of the dip and 100 at the bottom ... now that's *good* for an MX-5. A few more twisties and up to the top of Golf Links Road where you get the best view of the Latrobe Valley. Down through the sweepers and round the cooling towers of the Yallourn power station. The sign says "Road Work Ahead".

After a regroup on Moe-Glengary road (still got 11 cars) and the sign says "Road Work Ahead". This spreads the convoy out a bit so it's back up to 100 for the rest of the way into Rawson. As we come into town the convoy bunches up and the run notes get put down – you don't need run notes if you can see the leader of the run. First roundabout straight on, second roundabout left turn. Peter must know a different way to Erica or he is just making an MX-5 conga line through the streets of Rawson.

"Missing" David rejoins us for lunch at Erica. The pub does do a good lunch but it can take a while to get your food if you arrive in a big group ... of course, that just gives us more time for a chat.

The run back to Moe is more good roads, corners signed at 55km/h for the SS Commodores (that's 100 for MX-5s). Back at Moe it's coffee, a chat and thanks to Jenna Perks and Peter Ferguson for putting on an enjoyable and entertaining run. ●



ROAD WORK AHEAD!





WORK



Chapter chatter ...

22.2.15 | Northern Tasmania ■ Words: Roger Lehner ■ Photos: Jill Steer & Cheryl Murray ■ Organiser: Roger Lehner

*A perfect day for a perfect run ... well that's my story anyway, and I am sticking to it!
At least the DAY was perfect.*

We met at the Deloraine train park for the usual coffee and chat and to check out any changes to the cars, when Andrew popped the bonnet on his black NSW-registered NB to show us that it breathed in a different way from ours

(it was fitted with a *super charger* plus many more extras). This made us a little late for briefing

so it was very **brief** which suited me fine as I am not one for a lot of words.

So 13 cars set off on our run which took in seven Targa stages in a distance of 216km from Deloraine to Deloraine. We headed off in a northerly direction via Exton, Quamby Brook, Golden Valley, Montana, Red Hills, Dairy Plains, Western Creek and Caveside to Mole Creek.

After a short stretch-the-legs (or whatever) break, we continued west up over the "Gog", through to Paradise – and is that road paradise?!

We had a pleasant picnic lunch in the shade of the trees at O'Neils Creek (thanks to Jill and Ugly* for supplying

mine as usual). After lunch some members went on their merry way home. The rest of the troopers continued on through another three Targa stages to complete a very enjoyable day ... as usual, with good people and good cars.

PS: As Bruce (our fearless leader) and Cheryl (navigator) were not the lead car today, we stuck to the planned route! ●

* UGLY = acronym: **Uses Grey Loves Yellow ...** in reference to Peter Steer

FOOTNOTE: "Fearless Leader" comment – Took the wrong turn **ONCE ...** so what? We still got to where we should have been ... eventually!

~ Bruce, Chapter Captain





Cranbourn Airfield Fly-in

28.2.15 | Northern Tasmania

■ Words & organiser: **Bruce Harvey**

■ Photos: **Jill Steer & Cheryl Murray**

The Meteor(ill)logical office had cast their runes and were predicting thunderstorms and widespread rain for the day; however, peering through the gap between the curtains revealed no sign of any inclement weather.

A 40-minute scoot to the meeting point – the Blueberry Barn Cafe – revealed two things: the road kill count was abnormally high and the new iridium plugs I had installed the night before should have been replaced much earlier – what a difference they made.

After the obligatory coffee and biscuits, six cars – each a different colour – were soon at the airfield and, apart from a fright from a couple of free-range cows, the drive was pleasant and easy. The owner of the airfield seemed extra pleased to see us because the widespread “Met” office predictions seemed to have kept many at home. We lined the cars up behind the other six cars of interest that had already arrived and, armed with cameras, went to see what was on show.

A Chinese Yak aerobatic trainer, various kit planes, some looking like they were constructed from tin that would be more at home on the side of a shed, a lone Helicopter as well as some extremely talented demonstrations of model aircraft control. For some however the highlight was the \$1 BBQ, with one Life Member heard grumbling about *two hands and only one mouth!*

A decision was made prior to afternoon tea time to adjourn to the newly-opened Hillwood café where the owner welcomed us warmly and offered to look after us in the future if we ever returned with the whole chapter.

Tasmxnia ... great roads and people. ●



Chapter chatter ...

15.2.15 | Southern Tasmania

Words: Michelle Waldock ■ Photos: John Waldock ■ Organisers: John & Michelle Waldock



Well, not quite.

It was the day after Valentine's Day that a small group assembled for another run in the changeable weather. The promise of *something fun for Valentine's* and a request to *bring your lipstick* had intrigued enough people that eight cars left our usual rendezvous point for the run.

The route was a familiar one: up through Fern Tree in the shadow of Mt Wellington, through Longley and Lower Longley then travelling through Sandfly, emerging in *mizzle* at the top of Vince's Saddle and then whizzing downhill to stop at Huonville. By then, the sun had appeared from behind the grey cumulus clouds and shone on we MX-5ers who had stopped to grab coffee and a chat next to the Huon River. From there it was on to the next leg of our journey.

The next leg is also a favourite of the Chapter, but the novelty was travelling in the reverse direction to our usual preference. Lots of narrow bends meant this passenger turned *fifty shades of grey* with fear, losing any desire for thrills as the tattered shoulders of the road gave way to thickly-forested ravines. However, the cars regrouped on the slower sections through the townships of Gordon and Woodbridge before arriving at our lunch destination – *Grandvewe Cheeses* at Birchs Bay.

The Chapter has visited this farm on previous occasions and once again our host Natalie provided some lovely cheeses for tasting as well as fascinating information about the sustainable milking of sheep in order to make cheese. While we waited for our lunch, the *something fun for Valentine's* got under way; one person from each car (lady or not) went outside, applied their favourite lipstick shade and *puckered up* on to a tissue. These were then numbered and laid along the dining table inside. The other members had to guess whose lips were whose, with a prize for the most correct. After much discussion and covert peering at other people's lips, each (male) member reached a consensus and handed their guesses to the judge. Our winner for the day was Eddie, who won the heart-shaped box of *Lindt* which he chivalrously handed to his partner Collette.

After more discussion, dessert, coffee and purchasing of cheese, the group made its way back to Hobart as the clouds parted again to reveal a warm late afternoon sun. ●



Mike Williams (right) with ... Michael Schumacher?





Valentine's Day run

Retirement? Not for our NAs!



We're not following any sheep!

We win the RACV/AOMC Classic Showcase!

Words & photos: Alan Bennett

Mornington Racecourse, 22 February:

Victoria's largest display of British, European and Japanese classic and historic vehicles saw about 900 cars - including 13 of our finest - head to Mornington for the day.

As the clouds lifted and the sun came out there were Sunbeams in the show as well as on our heads. I would like to say we were totally overwhelmed by the steady stream of interested spectators but they had to erect a fence between our display and the Jaguars to keep the crowds under control ...

There was a huge turnout of Austin Healeys and MGs, Mercs (including a flutter of gull wings both old and new), quite a few BMWs and minimal Ferraris including a rare white 458 Spyder that didn't fall into my web. It would have been a Triumph had I succeeded, but I roved on to discover some orphaned Saabs, a couple of humble Humber ambulances and some luxurious Aston Martins. There were a number of Nissans and Mazda RX-7s and -8s rotating around the Japanese section next to us.

There were impressive bonnet-mascotted Jaguars including E-Types and a stunning unregistered 1993 XJR15 from Lindsay Fox's collection, resplendent in blue curves and supplied

curiously enough with two sets of headphones so that driver and passenger can converse above the roar of the rear-mounted engine. Another mid-engined rear-wheel-drive special was the surprisingly well-equipped three-wheeled Messerschmitt microcar complete with picnic set, skis and a luggage rack.

I heard the yellow Lambo before I saw it, as it rumbled past a '50s Ford Thunderbird so long you could land a light plane on its boot - or bonnet. OK, slight exaggeration. But not as minor as a line of well-prepared Morrisies with a lone but brand-new Alfa Romeo 4C hidden in their midst. It was unclear if the owner had a sense of humour or was just confused. I know if I confessed to actually owning an Alfa I'd hide it too. The most retro car was an 1885 Benz reproduction that took three years to build.

And finally to the all important judging of the cars. Drum roll ... to cap the day off, for the second year running we won Best Japanese Open Sports Car - **this time it was Bruce Gray's Copper Red NC that stole the show.** ●



Inset, above: Bruce Gray (left) receives his award from AOMC president, Iain Ross

The upgrade you'd prefer not to have ...

■ Words & photo: Terry Murphy

I've upgraded from an NB to an NC recently, though it wasn't entirely voluntary. I certainly don't suggest it as a strategy for anyone else.

A few weeks ago I was heading home in the NB, northward along Warrigal Road in East Bentleigh. I was in the left lane, relaxed, minding my own business and surveying the road ahead when I felt the car slew to the right. Looking out of the driver's window I was faced with the front of a very large truck. Something along the lines of "This is a problem," flashed through my mind.

The next thing I remember is realising the car and I were on the nature strip on the other (wrong) side of Warrigal Road, facing north. Heart rate = 235,000! My right foot was groping for the accelerator, the car was still in 4th or 5th gear (I think). I don't recall if the car was moving (slowly) or not.

From inside the car, the only sign of anything untoward was the driver's door wing mirror being folded in. I remember thinking that I didn't know they folded.

A few expletives later, I was still trying to piece together what had happened, but it was dawning on me that I was lucky to be alive, let alone without as much as a scratch or a bruise.

The skin of the driver's door looked like it had been attacked with a giant can opener. I leaned on a fence and tried to catch my breath, still trying to figure out what had happened fully two minutes after it had all finished.

The truckie had stopped and sprinted across the road through the traffic to see if I was OK. Physically, I was unhurt. Mentally, I wasn't sure.

The truckie wrote down his account:

"6.00pm: Whilst B-double changing lanes into left lane, a Mazda MX-5 (reg no) was in blind spot and hit by front left corner of prime mover. Car spun around crossing road and parking on footpath."

For real? *Parking?* Nothing so controlled. I was definitely a passenger at that point.

As the truckie and I examined the front of the truck, we figured out that the right end of the truck's bumper had crunched into my driver's door and bounced me across two lanes of oncoming



traffic, finishing up on the nature strip.

I'm not a religious man, so guardian angels and the like don't come into it. Somehow, the bundle of atoms that were my car and I managed to find a space between the bundles of atoms hurtling towards us at 60km/h. Somehow, there were no light poles, trees or other structures on the piece of nature strip where I landed. And the side intrusion bar saved my body being crushed by the truck as it hit me the second time.

By rights, I should be in hospital, staring at months or years of rehab. Slightly less likely, but still eminently plausible, I could easily be dead if there'd been another B-double coming the other way. Least likely is that I escape without a scratch or a bruise.

So, being made of stern stuff, I drive the car home to Greensborough — pretty nervously! And drove it again the next day, and every day after that for 10 days.

THAT was when I delivered my beautiful NB to the panel shop for repairs, as I thought. That evening the assessor called and intimated he was inclined to write it off. Devastated doesn't do my feelings justice.

I'd had the alignment checked at Pedders before going for 'repairs' and I'd made notes of how it didn't feel right. The next day the assessor explained that, the car having spun, it may have hit the curb and damaged the suspension.

With time to consider, I think he was right to write it off. I think the hit in the door had given the body a little twist and it was never going to be right again. Sadly I'd insured for 'market' value, but if you can find a car of the same quality for the Glass's Guide valuation, I'll take my hat off to you.

I've been — I was going to write dead lucky, but perhaps not — fortunate to find a one-owner NC within my budget. It has a lot of kms, but has anally-complete service history. I'm now trying to get used to the NC. It's only the second MX-5 I've ever driven, but they could hardly be more different.

And those differences are a good thing. It means I won't be reminded every day of the day I could so easily have died. I persuaded the assessor to let me get a piece of the NB door skin cut out and I'm going to have it framed as a memento. And the Tattsлото ticket I bought the next Saturday netted me nothing.

I guess I'd used up all my luck, but I'll tell you all one thing: every day is a very, very good day! ●



Leon Bogers

Club Motor Sport Team / Central Chapter

Name? Leon Bogers

Age? 47

Born? July 1967

Current abode? Highett

Profession? Mechanical engineer. Currently working as technical manager for a gas and electrical appliance company

Partner? Yes, a lovely lady by the name of Mona

Pets? No

Fave food? Italian

Can you cook? Yes, but Mona is much better and faster

Favourite tippie? A robust Aussie red wine

First drive? My mum's Mazda 1300

First car? 1986 VL Holden Commodore

First fender bender? Knocking over one of the white posts at HMAS Cerberus Navy base car park which smashed up the old and brittle grille on the VL.

Everyday driver? 2009 VE Commodore. I appreciate it for its silence, space and large comfy seats (relative to the MX-5). For a large family sedan it also has well-sorted steering and a nice ride/handling compromise – a credit to the mainly-Australian engineers who designed it

How many MX-5s have you owned?

One so far. The goal is to keep this one going for as long as possible

Current MX-5? 2000 NB Series 2

MX-5 improvements? The two modifications allowed for Clubman-level motor sport which, in my case, are stiffer and slightly lower Kings Springs, limited slip diff, diff ratio change as well as the safety gear being roll bar, racing seat and harness

MX-5 dislikes? The "you left the keys in the ignition, idiot" alarm but this was easily disabled thanks to the article by a Club member in one of the 2013 mxtras

Why an MX-5? I concluded from my research there was no better car for sprint-level motor sport than an MX-5 for the costs involved

Fluffy dice? I'll be honest – yes, back in the early 1990s on the VL. A present from my girlfriend at the time (not Mona). Had to make sure the dice were on the mirror whenever we went on a date

Passions besides the MX-5? My lovely wife Mona, beach walks and holidays with Mona, socialising with family and friends.



^ Leon and Mona



< Leon in action at Broadford

Also music – I listen to a wide range but have a soft spot for Jazz. I play the drums occasionally in our work band.

Favourite TV show / movie / book? Classic Racers, Yes Minister, any of the Star Trek movies, the pleasures and sorrows of work by Alain De Botton

Dream wheels (money no object)? Porche Boxter or Cayman

Would you drive a Daewoo or SsangYong? Not unless I was very desperate

Favourite other Mazda? Any of the RX-7 and RX-8 models

If not a Mazda (gasp!), then what? Toyota 86/Subaru BRZ (or, funds permitting, the Porsche)

How long in the Club? 3 ½ years

How many MX-5 Club runs or track events? One Club run (would love to do more but time pressures have prevented this), almost all of the motor sport Sprint days during that time (about 35 in total)

Favourite Club run/track? A toss-up between Winton and Phillip Island

Funniest thing seen at a Club event? Noel Heritage draining the remaining 100cc of water from the windscreen washer bottle at a motor sport sprint day just in time for the next run to gain a weight and "lap time" advantage over his rivals. He must have been feeling the pressure ...

Have you been to DECA or NatMeet? Been to DECA, formed an appreciation for the skills involved in motorkhana events

Ford vs Holden? Holden. In my view the locally-built large Holdens have had the styling and dynamic edge. Sadly, with the demise of the Australian car manufacturing industry this will soon be an irrelevant debate

What's playing in your MX-5? An album titled "Fun Time" by the SWR big band

Footy team (AFL / NRL / A-League)? A diehard Carlton fan

Final comments? The MX-5 Club has a very friendly spirit. Amongst the motor sport folk there is a great team spirit and sense of friendship and camaraderie. ●

The MX-5 Quiz #1

■ More brain teasing from Alan Bennett



Put your thinking cap on (and your tongue in your cheek) and test your car knowledge!

- The first MX-5 was announced on 9 February in Japan in what year?
 - 1981
 - 1989
 - 1991
 - 1999
- Jinba Ittai* means ...
 - Japanese for Jim Tait
 - Front-engined rear-wheel drive
 - Four cup holders in a two-seater
 - Oneness between horse and rider
- In Japan they drive ...
 - On the left-hand side of the road
 - On the right-hand side
 - Left during the day and right at night
 - Left on odd numbered days only
- Red cars ...
 - Have fewer accidents
 - Go faster
 - Are red
 - Get a 10% allowance for speeding
- The first MX-5 has pop-up ...
 - Toasters
 - Stores
 - Ads
 - Headlights
- A 6-speed manual ...
 - Is the owner's manual that can be read at six different speeds
 - Has six forward gears
 - Has six sides
 - Is a hexagon
- Heel-and-toe refers to ...
 - A technique used in performance driving
 - The wrong way to put shoes on
 - A hip hop dance
 - A form of tyre wear
- Headrests are ...
 - For tired passengers
 - Another name for armrests
 - Misnamed head restraints
 - Places to leave your head for a rest
- How many MX-5 have been sold worldwide since 1989?
 - Over 900,000
 - Over 1 million
 - 842,763
 - 42
- In the US the MX-5 is called the *MX-5 Miata*; in Japan it was originally called ...
 - Cute
 - Sex on wheels
 - RX-8
 - Eunos Roadster

NEW!

Answers

1. D
2. A
3. C
4. C or D (or B)
5. B
6. D
7. A
8. C
9. A
10. D

MX-5 NA Clubman provenance ... can you help?

A recent MX-5 purchaser in seeking contact with his car's previous owners, at least one of whom was a member of the (then) Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria.

Details of the car:

- » "Clubman" NA in Classic Red, with charcoal cloth trim, factory air conditioning – delivered September 1994;
- » VIN: JMONA 30P 300100374;
- » sold new by Mazda Mulgrave/Garry & Warren Smith Motors, Springvale Rd;
- » confirmed by Mazda Australia as a genuine "Clubman";
- » the first owner lived in St Albans; only two owners were registered to 2003;
- » the car was brought to Tasmania by an MX-5 Club member in perhaps 2008-09, registered A-81-CK, and sold to Allan Waddle of Hawley's Beach;
- » current odometer reading 250,000 km.



It is without books, so the present owner is anxious to know its service history, and would dearly love to find its original books. Any help will be most gratefully received, and bottle of fine Tasmanian wine is offered in exchange for the service book!

If you can help, please contact Bruce Lindsay, phone (03) 6352 4246/0402 541 550 or email blindsay@chariot.net.au

Radiator pipe rubbing point - all NCs

Words: Bob de Bont

Any rubbing of hoses and pipes with a sharp edge is never a good thing!

I'd read about this issue on a US MX-5 site and decided to check it out. It is also claimed the hose generates a squeak in the area. Contra to the claim on the US site, the rubbing point is not a hose but a metal tube with a rubber sleeve.

The chassis has a curved cut-out to allow the hose to clear; however, during assembly, the pipe is not positioned correctly resulting in it rubbing against the seam. *How much it rubs and how quickly it will wear through the pipe in your car is anyone's guess!*

You may wish to carry out the following check ... I did.



Loosen the two clamps holding the rubber hose between the air cleaner and the inlet manifold.



Undo the two clips holding the air cleaner box together.

Carefully manoeuvre the air filter box apart and carefully disconnect the cable retaining clip.



Remove the MAF plug by pushing the release lever with your thumb. Force the plug into the socket a little before trying to pull it out.



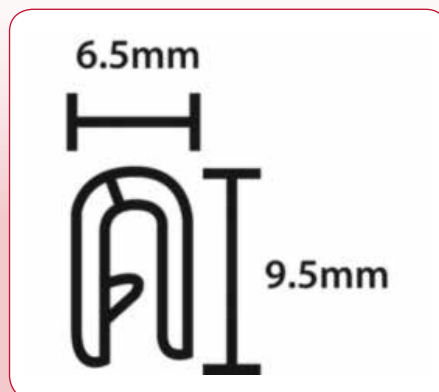
Pull the air cleaner box free and also remove the air filter.



Repositioning the hose in the large white nylon clip won't permanently move the pipe as the clip doesn't hold the hose securely which is why it squeaks.

A suitable lubricant can be applied to the clip to stop the squeak.

I positioned about 50mm of PVC Pinchweld Protective Edge Trim (available from Clark Rubber #28) between the pipe and the body.



Others have sliced open some garden hose and glued that in place as an alternate.

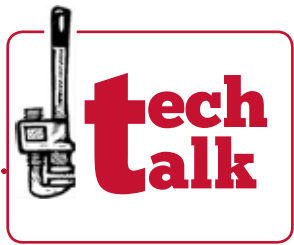


If the rubbing is severe, it would require the various radiator hoses to be loosened and repositioned to align the pipe in the correct position.

Refit the air cleaner box and air filter, reconnect the hose, tighten the clamps and plug in the MAF.

All up this only takes about 10 to 20 minutes. ●

NC coolant tank failure



Words: Bob de Bont

Heads up all you early NC owners!

Over the last couple of years there have been regular reports of coolant tank failures.



The issue is not restricted to distance travelled, with a number of low-mileage NCs suffering the problem.

Part number for the replacement tank is LFG1-15-350 and Mazda has revised the tank a number of times. Hopefully the issue is restricted to the early design tanks!

If you have an early NC ('06 to '08), consider replacing your original coolant tank before it fails. There is the possibility the tank could fail while driving and the resulting coolant loss, if not noticed quickly, could lead to overheating and expensive engine damage.

It appears that with age the plastic neck that holds the cap in place becomes brittle, allowing coolant to escape as the cap is not retained properly. The problem can be identified by coolant residue (white stain) on the battery case accompanied by an unusual sweet smell.



Replacing the tank is a relatively simple task:

- » remove the battery cover;
- » remove and save the coolant from the tank, you will need it later;
- » disconnect the two hoses on the side;
- » remove the bolts holding the tank.



Carefully lift the tank and disconnect the hose underneath, then remove the tank.



Caution: Some coolant may drain from the hoses.

Install the new tank in the reverse order, ensuring hoses are attached and clamped correctly.

Replace the coolant removed at the start (don't need to bleed the system)

Go for a short drive until the engine reaches normal operating temperature and check for leaks.

Ensure the coolant level is between the "F" and "L" marks and, if required, top up with distilled water. ●

NC - stuck thermostat

Another issue reportable affecting early NCs is a stuck thermostat.

A stuck thermostat is a lot harder to diagnose and more involved to rectify.

A stuck thermostat can cause the engine to take longer than usual to reach normal operating temperature.

When the engine does reach normal operating temperature, the temperature gauge may fall as speed

increases and rise again as you slow down.

If you suspect the thermostat is stuck or sticking, the only sure way to confirm the fault is to monitor the engine temperature using an OBD scanner.

These devices are cheap to obtain and easy to use, alternately ask around,

someone should have one you can use.

It only takes a couple of minutes with the scanner attached to confirm if the thermostat is working.

There are a number of guides on how to replace the thermostat available on the internet. ●

Please note: All "Tech Talk" information is provided as a guide only. All work is carried out at the owner's risk.

Camaraderie wins!



■ Words: Tim Emery, Club Captain - Motor Sport

With only two weeks separating the previous event, Round 8 of the City Mazda MX-5 Sprint Championship saw our Motor Sport Team return to Sandown for what was looking like a WET day.

Arriving at the track just after 7am we were greeted by regular downpours that literally flooded the track. With most people deciding to invest \$50 on the hire of a garage we all retreated into our pits to unload gear and ponder another wet Sandown. With 24 entrants braving the elements, from a possible 27, there did seem to be a number who had made the decision to stay in bed when faced with the weather report.

After a *gentle* reminder from the AROCA officials that the weather WOULD improve, and the track WILL dry out – so not to try and break lap records in the morning *wet* sessions – the first groups ventured out on to the very slippery circuit.

As the day warmed up and the track dried, any thoughts of *taking it easy* were out the door. The MX-5 team were back in action with competition hotting up in Standard NB class with four hundredths of a second separating the three fastest drivers in Simeon Ouzas, Jeremy Fredersdorff and Dean Hasnat. Seems the rain had given the track a good clean as times continued to tumble with Rob Downes braking the Standard NA lap record with a 1:37.01. It was great to see Ralph Thompson visiting from the NSW MX-5 Club and, although I found myself apologising for the Victorian weather, Ralph still assured me he had a great time and ended the day the fourth fastest MX-5.

As the day improved, the confidence of drivers also raised which brought on a number of cars *leaving the racing surface*. Gavin Newman discovered that the latches on the MX-5 soft

top are not 100% reliable with his roof coming down at around 140km/h just before the braking mark on the main straight. The glass rear window shattered and showered Gavin in glass and sent him sailing into the run-off area.

So another great round of the Sprint Championship was completed, and the final round double header round at Winton on 29 March will cap off a another great year of MX-5 Motor Sport.

In another reminder of how our Motor Sport Team look out for each other, we had more examples at our Sandown event. When Noel Heritage needed to trailer his wounded NB home there were numerous offer of transport and assistance. And Gavin Newman acknowledged the support in this email on the Sunday night after the event.

"I destroyed a set of front brakes on Saturday. Wore the pads out and stuffed the rotors. I wasn't expecting to wear the fronts out so quickly and didn't have a spare set with me (lesson learned there!), but a quick ask around and I had a spare set of pads from Tim Meaden for the drive home and a tool for pushing the piston back into the calliper from Dave Moore (again, leaving mine at home makes it useless!). Changed them in the pits and got home safely. Great example of the spirit of the Club right there.

Thanks everyone, Gavin." ●

2014-15 City Mazda MX-5 Sprint Championship | Round 8 ~ 14.2.15

Results - Round 8	1st	2nd	3rd
Standard NA	Robert Downes » 1:37.1071**	---	---
Standard NB	Simeon Ouzas » 1:36.2784	Jeremy Fredersdorff » 1:36.5837	Dean Hasnat » 1:36.6424
Standard NC	Alan Conrad » 1:34.1447	---	---
Clubman	Peter Phillips » 1:35.6089	Leon Bogers » 1:37.7635	Tim Emery » 1:37.8750
Modified	Ray Monik » 1:33.8763	Gavin Newman » 1:36.6137	---
Super Modified	Russell Garner » 1:29.3501	Colin Denman-Jones » 1:29.8465	Robert Parr » 1:33.3241
Restricted Open	Paul Ledwith » 1:26.4671	---	---

(corrected points)	1st	2nd	3rd
Overall Champion	Ray Monik » 80	= Russell Garner / Alan Conrad / Robert Downes » 70	
Standard NA	Robert Downes » 70	---	---
Standard NB	Dean Hasnat » 68	Jeremy Fredersdorff » 44	Peter Dannock » 42
Standard NC	Alan Conrad » 70	---	---
Clubman	Peter Phillips » 59	Max Lloyd » 56	Leon Bogers » 47
Modified	Ray Monik » 80	Gavin Newman » 45	Daniel White » 21
Super Modified	Russell Garner » 70	Robert Parr » 47	Colin Denman-Jones » 24
Restricted Open	Paul Ledwith » 64	Brendan Beavis » 37	David Wilken » 6
Open	Dave Moore » 30	Mike Kirby » 10	---

** New Club lap record

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Book review

Words: Alan Bennett, *mxtra* contributor-at-large

Ben Collins, world famous for his seven-year stint as "the Stig" on Top Gear, is a professional car and stunt driver, TV presenter and author.

He has competed at the Le Mans 24 hour race, the British GT Championship (think Porsche GT3), NASCAR, Formula 3 and our V8 Supercars as well. He also famously trashed an Aston Martin in the James Bond film *Casino Royale* (the car rotated seven times – still a world record stunt) and drove in *Quantum of Solace* and *Skyfall*.

So, some cred then. What does he know about road driving? Quite a bit, as it turns out.

Ben mixes history, fact, opinions and humour to get his points across. Starting by claiming that countries that drive on the right-hand side of the road have more accidents due to Napoleon's influence in Europe and the US due to "a disagreement over some tea in Boston ..." he adds that the global military aircraft carriers have their control towers on the right-hand side so that pilots can approach and take off from the left – with their dominant right eye avoiding accidents.

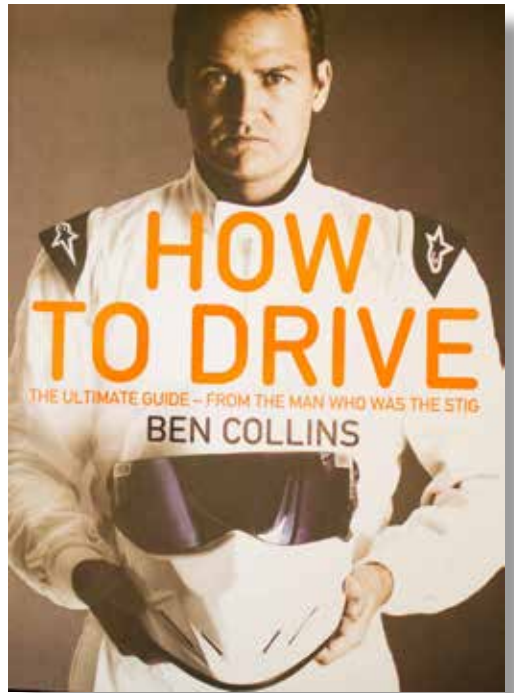
With personal experiences dotted throughout the book he keeps attention by always swinging back to improving driving skills. Sitting comfortably, keeping the right heel on the floor (the book assumes you are driving a manual and that the audience is UK-based, or at least pom-tolerant). He likes to use feel rather than strength to drive – for example, on accelerating and braking: "feel the pressure through the tips of your toes" and steering: "hold the steering wheel with the tips of your fingers". Hands at 1/4-to-3 driving position – including going round corners so that you know how far you've turned ... I've tried this and it works, except for corners larger than about 90 degrees or where you need to change gear or adjust something important.

The other key things I have learnt from the book are late apexing properly by taking a wider line through corners to accelerate earlier and therefore faster by sacrificing the natural desire to get to the corner as fast as possible. Looking past the corner also improves ability to position the car earlier for the next corner, something readily tested on the recent two spurs run. It really works.

Braking is an area that Ben illustrates the need to know your car and judge capability. He lists the stopping distance of a 1.2L VW Polo as 34.16 meters from 100km/h – and a Land Rover Freelander at 42.04m; guess which I'd rather have following me!

If you want to try handbrake turns for a 180 degree slide into a car park, J-turns (whatever they are) and drifting (including tandem drifting), doughnuts and burnouts ... then get through the safe driving stuff and head towards the latter chapters and start dreaming. He quotes drifting as costing £5 Sterling (\$10) per second on tyre wear!

A very enjoyable book, highly recommended for improving your driving or just reading pleasure. ●

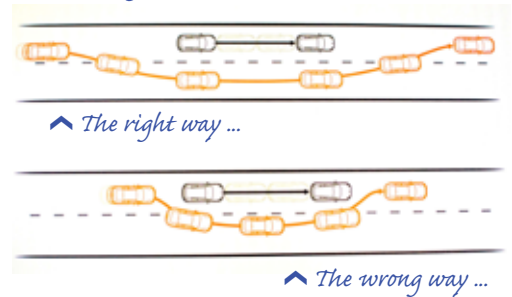


How to Drive

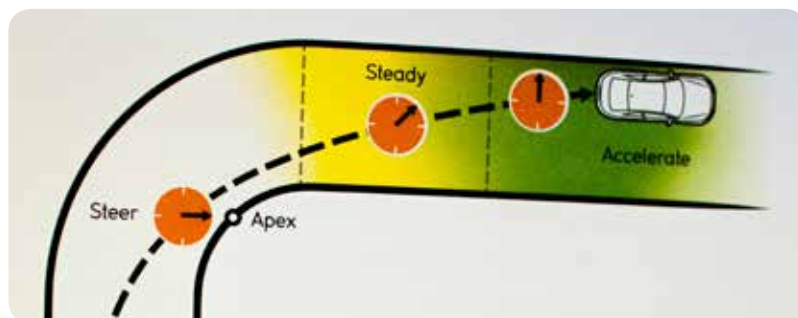
Author: Ben Collins (aka The Stig)

272pp; published 2004 by Macmillan.

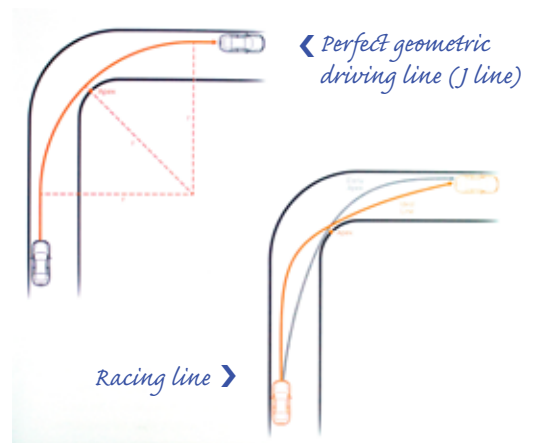
Overtaking



Braking



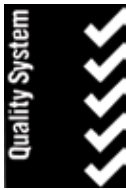
Cornering



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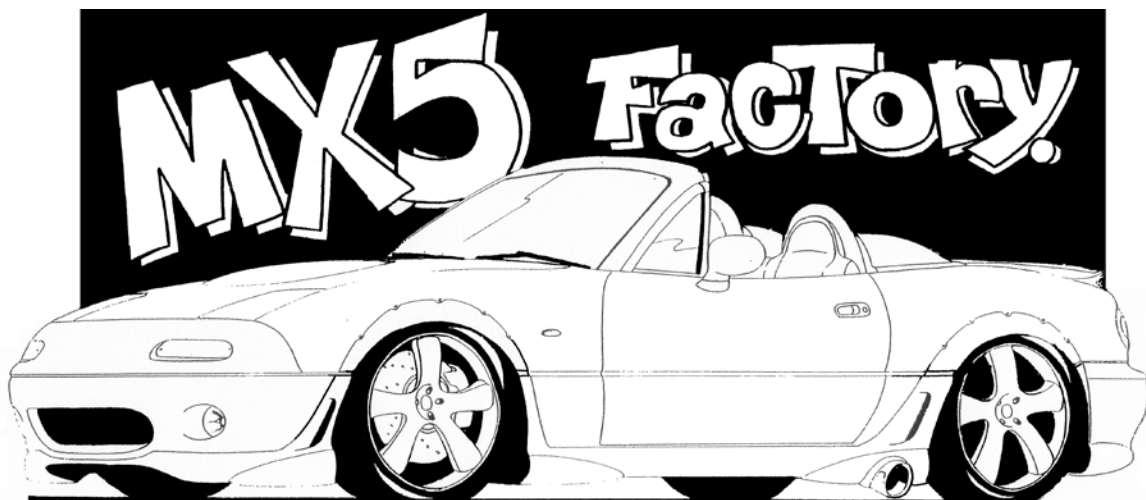
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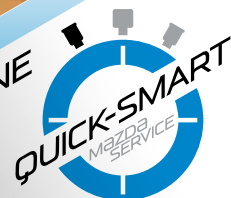
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