

After putting a great deal of effort into running the 1981 'Derrick' in the Wimmera-Mallee and seeing an incredibly wet winter and weekend ruin what on paper looked great fun, I must admit that I was put off organizing a similar type of event ever again. But after competing in Noel Richard's and Kelly's 1983 event in the south-west of the state, I knew such events had to continue, and I couldn't resist the opportunity to bring rally crews for a tour of my new home territory - 'East Gippsland', but with no great desire to trick or confuse navigators.

I don't know about the competitors, but I was very happy with the way the event and the weather turned out 'as planned'. Following the experience of a very wet course check for an even wetter event in 1981 we should have stopped worrying after the fine weather encountered for the course-check this time. My Datsun even survived the trip. We were achieving the impossible already. The biggest plus though was the support rendered by the assistants residing on the spot along the route. It was a great help particularly in the final fortnight before the event.

When will the next 'Derrick' be? I will have a rest for a few years before tackling another one, but hopefully in the meantime someone else has the required curiosity and urge to run an event a little longer than normal and in areas not normally used.

It will also be interesting to see which enterprising club/director is the next to come to far east Gippsland to conduct an event. Remember-Orbost is a similar distance from Melbourne as Bright.

- Ross Runnalls.

#### EVENT ACCOUNT

##### Division 1 - Traralgon to Orbost

The 28 starters were made up of 20 or so VTC regulars plus about six entries that had responded to the call for some adventure. There were three Production Rally Car entries, and two three person crews.

Following a briefing which warned of average speed sections and primitive roads, the first car left Traralgon at 11.00pm under a clear moonlit sky, heading east where heavy but scattered rain had fallen in the afternoon.

The first competitive, a maintained average speed section to Hiamdale, saw Taylor/Laidlay bogged after only 200m, and Browne/Chirnside WD the first passage. They must have been distracted by the mass of lights at the Loy Yang complex. A tricky intersection before control delayed a few, but 13 crews were on schedule.

Fog prevented the next competitive from being cleaned; 48km of fast sandy tracks north of Kangaroo Swamp to a service control on the South Gippsland Highway. Four crews, dropped 1; Officer/McKenzie/Officer in the 'family car', Wall/Boyd, McLaughlan/Kelly, and Grealy/Byron. Palmer/Beet hardly got to use their \$55 worth of maps when they broke a ball joint in a large hole which all cars except the zero car managed to thump a wheel into. A regrettable lack of a caution board.

Another maintained average speed section followed, where like bugs to a light globe, crews were inevitably lured to the ESSO-BHP refinery where the flaming chimneys spread a vast orange glow over the night sky. The Simon Brown sub-event of treasure hunt questions started here with -How many helicopters parked at the Refinery Heliport? Answers ranged from 'What helicopters?' to '53' - '5' was a popular answer. An early group of McKenzie/Maude, Ashton/Nixon, and Comport/Listers must have confused each other here while most cleaned. The Coghlan/Davidson Gemini was struggling with fuel problems even at this early stage and the clutch in the Mk 1 Cortina of Taylor/Laidlay cried enough on this section.

Crews then transported 70 km through the Shire of Avon where only bitumen roads were available, to a refuel at the Billabong Roadhouse and then to a short 12.5km 75kph average speed section south of Lindenow. All cars were at least 3 minutes late to a passage located only after 5 km which was obviously very tight and slippery! Grealy/Byron broke a tie-rod on a hidden stump in this first leg.

A transport through Bairnsdale and Bruthen followed where two meaty 60km mountainous forst sections awaited. The first-Project Aquarius contained some superb roads with forays into the maze of unmapped roads within the 2000 hectare fire project area where a lot of culverts had been washed away completely negating the need for Wrong Way signs, but providing a few scares for drivers on the wrong track! A patch of porridge with a thin skin on Scotts Tk help up 13 cars bogged for a while. Through all this, Grealy/Byron recovered from their earlier breakdown to drop 5, to Wall/Boyd 6, Mitchell/Matheson 8, and McKenzie/Maude, Johnston/Maniatakis 9.

Most crews were fortunate enough to make the descent from Mt.Tara, on the last stage of the division, along the Mottle Range, at or just after dawn with splendid views to the north over the fog filled valley of the lower reaches of the Snowy River. The new rule which requires competitors to stop at the M board and enter on time if early on a navigation section caused problems for 5 crews. Wall/Boyd and Chirnside/Browne (making up for a multitude of earlier transgressions) got it right to clean. Kaitler/Wilson ran low on petrol and McLaughlan/Kelly developed a noisy diff. forcing both crews to cut and run to the Division end at the Newmerella Showgrounds, where the first arrivals were greeted by a flock of kangarros grazing on the oval. While scores were calculated crews tucked into a cooked breakfast put on by the Orbost Apex Club.

<u>Scores:</u>	Wall/Boyd	10
	Mitchell/Matheson	17 (1st Clubman)
	Officer/McKenzie/Officer	19
	Johnston/Maniatakis	21
	Gale/Blandford	22
	De Vaus/Wright	24

Division 2 - Orbost to Cann River

Some chose motels, otherstents, and a few discovered the Newmerella Hilton - a timber shed complete with penthouse, for their few hours sleep. 25 crews faced the midday re-start under glorious sunny conditions, with six stages in front of them. The first, 23 km in length in the forest north of Orbost commenced with a fast cresty ridge road then very fast sandy roads. Seven crews cleaned. Stage two, 24km in the area north of Cabbage Tree started with a rugged sandy track along a powerline for 6 km, but then improved onto quick twisty roads. Welsh/James destroyed the Lancer motor here. Quickest was Wall  $\frac{1}{2}$ , to Grealy  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and Devenish, Chirnside  $1\frac{1}{4}$ .

18km of narrow tracks south of Bellbird followed, and saw Officer scorch the Galant through for 3 minutes late, to Grealy 4, and Wall  $4\frac{1}{4}$ . A similar section of 13km along Patrol Track saw Wall quickest again on  $\frac{3}{4}$ , to Grealy 1, and Officer, Gale, Chirnside  $1\frac{1}{4}$ . Simon Brown located at the end of this stage wanted to know how many different coloured wildflowers they had seen? - answers ranged from '52' to 'I am colourblind', and how wide was the hole in the middle of the bridge? - as it was actually five foot six inches, some answers were unprintable.

Crews transported through Bemm River township to a 38km stage of real drivers roads. The pattern continued with Wall, Grealy, clean and Officer, Gale, Chirnside  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Ashton/Nixon fired off and were unable to winch back on. The last stage, 23km along what was once a major road but now overgrown saw the same first four crews clean plus Devenish. Brown/Harris retired with a defunct fuel pump here.

Grealy, Devenish and Chirnside made big advances up the leaderboard over the daylight stages.

<u>Scores:</u>	Wall/Boyd	15.5	
	Officer/McKenzie/Officer	26	
	Mitchell/Matheson	28.5	(1st Clubman)
	Grealy/Byron	30.75	
	Gale/Blandford	31.75	(one and only Recognised)
	Johnston/Maniatakis	33.5	

### Division 3 - Cann River to Orbost (via Delegate)

The first two night sections which took crews into N.S.W. were in areas devastated by the 1983 bushfires. On the first section a short slippery climb to an information caused hold ups with cars stuck. Nine crews elected to miss the info, which could have been obtained after a 100m stroll. Ashton/Nixon, Browne/Chirnside and Coghlan/Davidson retired to the Cann River Pub at this early juncture. Wall/Boyd dropped 6 to Officer/McKenzie/Officer 12, and Mitchell/Matheson 14.

The next section started with an 18km thrash up a rocky but major logging road into the N.S.W. pine plantations. This became a pattern for the night - section starting and finishing on wide superb roads, but with heaps of work for the navigators in between. Kilfoyle/Osborne retired at Rockton with lack of brakes. Maintaining the pace were Wall/Boyd 5, to Devenish/Wylie, Johnston/Maniatiakis 7.

A loop east of the Cann Valley Highway into and out of the small Nalbaugh plantation saw five crews not bother with an information. Quickest were Wall/Boyd, Grealy/Byron 5 to Officer/McKenzie/Officer, De Vaus/Wright 7.

Then it was back into the Bondi Pines for four slippery comeditives on end totalling 80km. On the first Wall/Boyd (16) went exploring, allowing Officer/McKenzie/Officer to creep closer, down 6, to Devenish/Wylie 11, and Rawson/Wilkinson 12. At one point on the next 9km loop crews were confronted with a wall of wattle fire regrowth over the correct route, hence the section name 'No Query Road' which also alluded to Query Road which was to be avoided. Quickest were Officer/McKenzie/Officer, Grealy/Byron, and Rawson/Wilkinson all down 3.

The tracks became more slippery and the maze of roads more intense so that a 20 metre overshoot in many cases meant getting out to push or winch on the Jackson Bog section to a control manned by Ian Long and his dog. He did'nt inadvertently swap his control card for a road card this time, but Stewie Lister had to wake him up to o.k. Stewies 'self-timing'.

On the following 16km section, the tracks were grassy and even more slippery. Dinta, now just in front of Wall on the road went straight on at a T-Junction through a fence 30m into a ploughed paddock, much to the amusement of Wall/Boyd who saw it all. While the leaders were having fun Mitchell/Matheson were quickest through the seven gates for a loss of 7, followed by DeVaus/Wright 8.

From Mila on the north end of Bondi crews headed into Delegate for a well deserved break, where the pub was overflowing into the street hence local advice to service crews and competitors was freely available if not appreciated. A number of crews had begun to cut and run because of over-consumption of late time. Kaitler/Wilson repaired a burst brake line here and rejoined the fray. On the transport out of town crews passed a small cheering band of locals clustered around a fire. They had been told the wrong night of the event so they had a long wait since the night before. Not much else to do in Delegate but you could be worse off and live in Bendoc where the next section headed to over the Cottonwood Range along narrow slippery tracks lined by tall timber and across the infamous Delegate River crossing where the bridge was under water! Officer lost any hope of pegging back Wall when all occupants had to alight into the alpine waters and extract their stalled car. Four crews WDeD the end of this section while cutting and running down the Bonang Highway to the finish. One of these crews Gale/Blandford came to the rescue of Ross and Chris Runnalls stopped on the Bonang, both sound asleep unable to drive another inch. Niclolas/Wallis retired at Bendoc due to driver sickness.

The penultimate section, 77km across the Errinundra Plateau gave navigators very little to do except fall asleep. Kaitler/Wilson attempted this section, but missed the only information because Rob Wilson was asleep! Wall was quickest on 14, to Officer 16, Mitchell 18, and Rawson 19. This was the only section where the lowest points loss exceeded double figures.

The final section of 24km of generally nice smooth roads saw Chris Wall slow down as Trevor Boyd was suffering from sickness - a brave but well rewarded effort. Fritz Suendermann manned the final control with the strains of opera permeating the night air on his new car stereo.

The top four places did not alter over the division although the hot and cold Grealy/Byron combination drifted out to seventh at one point. Big advances on the division were made by Devenish/Wylie 11th to 7th, Fulton/Fulton 20th to 12th, and Uzunoglu/Hains 21st to 14th.

<u>Final Scores:</u>	Wall/Boyd	98.5	
	Officer/McKenzie/Officer	139	
	Mitchell/Matheson	151½	(1st Clubman)
	Grealy/Bryon	180.75	
	De Vaus/Wright	186.75	
	Johnston/Maniatakis	209.5	