



2019 AGL Heartland Rally

WORDS MIKE FORESHEW PHOTOS : JOHN DOUTCH

Above: Stuart Bowes and Mark Nelson on their way to victory in the beautiful Mercedes 450SLC

The first weekend in June saw the third running of the AGL Rally of the Heartland. Set once again the stunning backdrop of the area around Burra, South Australia, Ivar Stanelis and his crew put together another fantastic route to test crews and cars. Over 2 days, competitors would pit themselves against 445 competitive kilometers. As a blind event it is one of, we know what to expect but at the same time it is always different. We know there will be the access roads through the wind turbines but the weather this year made them even harder to read. We know there will be the foot to the floor roads, but they blend in with their surroundings making them hard to see. This year was no different. In the end only 12 of the 26 starters finished.

Of the 26 crews that entered, 9 were entirely Victorian with 1 having a Victorian driver and the other a Victorian co-driver. The first Victorian car was the Datsun Stanza of Darryn Snooks and Michael ForesheW, lining up for their third attempt. Hopes were high following a fantastic 9th outright in Rally Otago. Next

was Brett Ross and Jason Hague in the Holden Commodore Ute which just looked the part in semi-outback Australia. HRA President David McKenzie and Terry Brain were next in the unmistakable Chrysler Galant. HRA stalwarts Graham Wallis and Brian Ward bought their Peugeot 309 back again. Right behind him was the pairing of Nicola Testa and Nigel Walters in the fantastic looking 240RS. Having their first attempt at the event was the crew of John Carney and Tracey Dewhurst in the Subaru RS. Right behind them was terrific Terry and Donna Trewern in the Toyota Levin. The "reliable as a wood burning stove" crew of Hillary Evans and Doug Fernie was next in the venerable Datsun 1600. Next was Brian Thomas co driving for Brian Catt in the first of three Hyundai Excels. Geoff Holloway and Rick Hood were next in their 1996 Excel with the pairing of Rose North and Jarryd Sweeney the final Victorian crew in their 1998 Excel. As you can see, the Victorians bought an eclectic mix of cars which is only part of the field that included a Mercedes Benz 450 SLC, Saab 99 EMS, Mercedes Benz 280S, Leyland P76 and a Mitsubishi Pajero.



Above: Darryn Snooks and Mike Foreshew were on it from the get go

The first stage is a 25.56 km loosener-upper. The first 15km is across the tops of the ridgeline through the AGL wind turbines and a reverse to a stage from last year. The remaining 10 kms was all new. First on Victorians on the road were Darryn Snooks and Mike Foreshew but right off the bat, they encountered a problem. The car was initially sluggish and then part way through the stage the throttle became stuck wide open, making for some very hairy moments. After posting the 7th fastest time, it was identified that one of the air filter socks was stuck in the carburetor. Fastest Victorians through were Brett Ross and Jason Hague in the Commodore. Hilary Evans and Doug Fernie were then in next setting the 13th fastest time. The reliable Wallis/Ward pairing came in 15th just barely 1 second ahead of John Carney and Tracey Dewhurst. Nicola Testa and Nigel Walters set the 18th fastest time, coming just 5.2 seconds ahead of McKenzie/Brain. The first of the Excels was Holloway/Hood coming in 22nd and leading a Victorian

train of Trewern/Trewern, Catt/Thomas and North/Sweeney. These four crews were spread over an interval of just 32 seconds.

Stage 2 was a short 5.73 km blast with just two calls for the co-driver along roads reminiscent of the Bega shire roads. Snooks/Foreshew overcame their first stage issues to post the second fastest time. Ross/Hague continued their strong start posting the fourth fastest stage. Evans/Fernie improved and posted the 11th fastest time with Wallis/Ward coming in 16th. Just behind them by only two seconds was Carney/Dewhurst with Testa/Walters just a further 2,9 seconds behind. Next was Trewern/Trewern coming in 21st with McKenzie/Brain right on their tail just one second adrift. The Excel train was being lead by Holloway/Hood, with Catt/Thomas and North/Sweeney. Highlighting the closeness of the Excel crews, the spread across them was a mere three seconds.



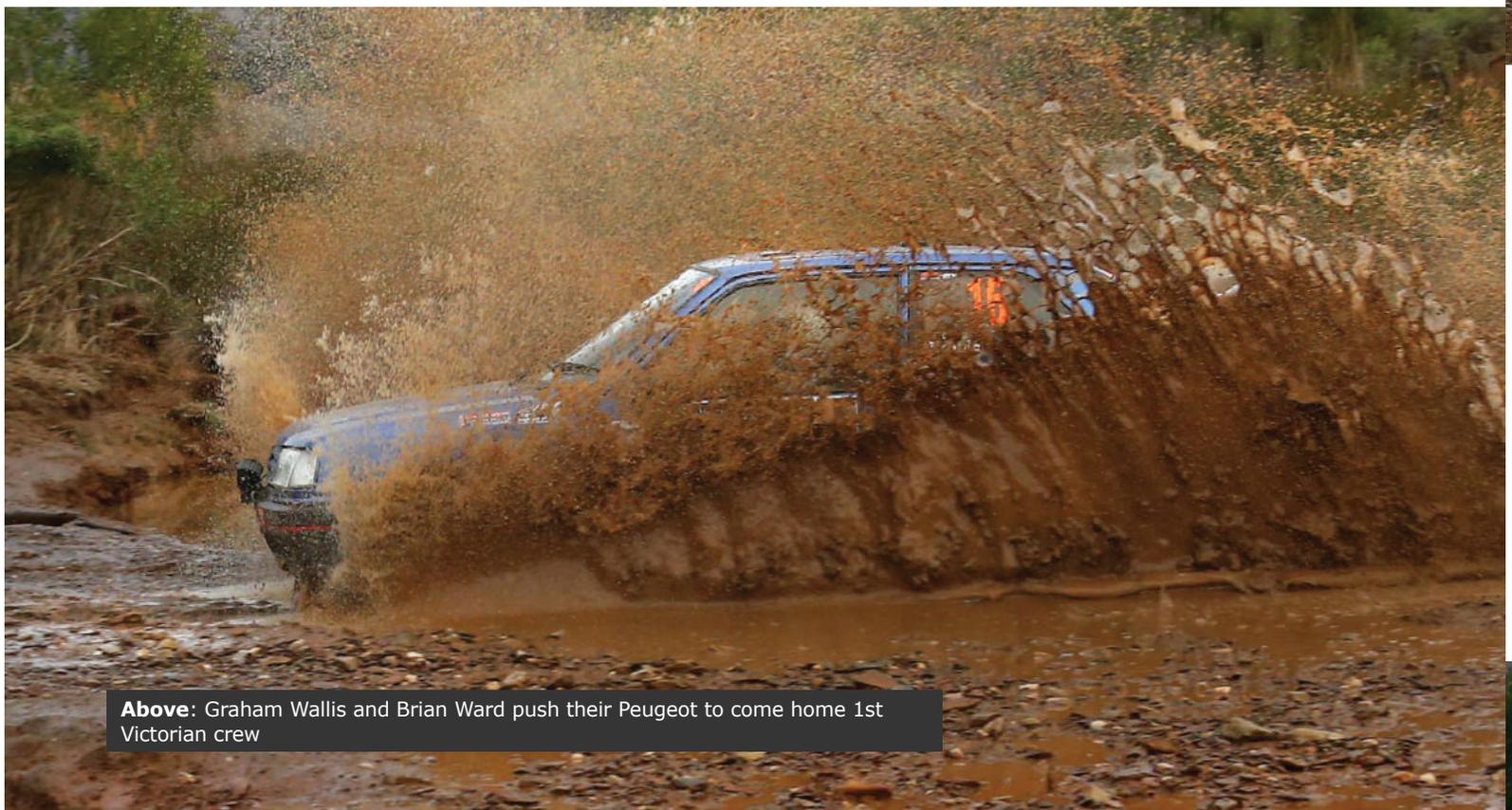
Left : John Carney and Tracey Dewhurst giving it plenty in their first attempt at the event

Boborowie was stage 3 and at 16.30 km was again on farm, access and shire roads. Snooks/Foreshew were again back in the groove posting the second fastest stage time. The crew of Ross/Hague had to stop part way through the stage as they had fallen foul of multiple flat tyres, resulting in them posting the 26th fastest time. Continuing their consistent run was Evans/Fernie posting their first top 10 stage time, coming in 9th. Wallis/Ward were having their own private battle with Carney/Dewhurst, posting the 15th fastest time, by just 1.3 seconds from the Subaru. Testa/Walters continued their good start and posted the 17th fastest time. Trewern/Trewern and McKenzie/Brain continued their own tussle with the former coming out by just one second. The Excel procession continued with another close stage. Holloway/Hood maintained their position with Catt/Thomas and North/Sweeney close behind.

It was into the first service and crews started to review what the first stages of the day had brought about. Snooks/Foreshew noticed that the left rear panel was pushed in but had no idea as to what had caused it. Whilst performing a spanner check,

it was identified that the pinion bearing had failed in the differential. This was quickly replaced and the crew off to start stage 4, just in front of the Sweep car. Evans and Fernie also had sustained damage with the leading Mercedes of Bowes/Nelson reportedly having bent rear suspension arms.

Stage 4 was Ketchowla and was forbidding stage at 75.66kms long across rural roads. Snooks/Foreshew were maintaining their good speed and posted the 3rd fastest time and with a drivetrain that protesting for the last 15 kilometers. Ross/Hague were back in the game and posted the seventh fastest time. Evans/Fernie continued their good form and posted the 12th fastest stage time. Wallis/Ward came out in front of Carney/Dewhurst in their private battle posting 14th and 16th fastest times respectively. McKenzie/Brain had a great run through the stage and were able to get in front of both Testa/Walters and Trewern/Trewern. Holloway/Hood maintained their position over Catt/Thomas with the crew of North/Sweeney losing touch being off the pace by approximately 5 minutes.



Above: Graham Wallis and Brian Ward push their Peugeot to come home 1st Victorian crew

An intercept service in the streets of Hallett saw the Snooks Motorsport support crew change what appeared to be a failing gearbox. A subsequent test drive also identified the replacement differential had also failed. Further investigation found the left rear chassis rail bent (hence the dented rear panels) as well as the axle housing. The cause was an awkward landing over an innocuous looking crest. The decision was made to retire the car. Evans/Fernie also had similar damage to the Snooks Stanza but had the added complication of a smashed windscreen on the co-driver side, of course. They also chose to retire.

Stage 5, Ulooloo, was a 35.36 km stage over roads similar to the previous stage. Ross/Hague took the mantle of fastest Victorians and posted the 5th fastest time. Carney/Dewhurst were starting to stretch their legs and posted the 11th fastest time, just 4.1 seconds of Wallis/Ward. McKenzie/Brain continued their good pace and were rewarded with 16th fastest time, beating home Testa/Walters by 43 seconds.

Trewern/Trewern dropped back a little posting the 20th fastest time to be surrounded by the Excels. Catt/Thomas maintained their position posting the 19th fastest time, with Holloway/Hood adrift by 42 seconds and North/Sweeney a further 26 seconds behind.

Stage 6 was a repeat of stage 1 through the AGL wind farm. Ross/Hague continued to fly the Victorian flag and posted the 5th fastest time, albeit slower than their first run through. The quiet achievers in Carney/Dewhurst came in second Victorian crew with the 12th fastest time, a full minute faster than their first run through. Wallis/Ward came in 14th fastest, a good 40 seconds faster than first time. The Excel of Holloway/Hood made light work of the stage and posted the 17th fastest time, some 58 seconds than previously. Testa/Walters beat home Trewern/Trewern to post the 18th fastest time by 4.4 seconds. Catt/Thomas maintained their consistency and were rewarded with 20th fastest time, 18.1 seconds ahead of North/Sweeney.

“Evans/Fernie continued their good form ...”



Above: Hilary Evans and Doug Fernie push hard before mechanical issues got the better of them

The next stage was a repeat of the short 5.7km stage that was stage 2. Ross/Hague set the 9th fastest stage time maintain their status as the quickest Victorians. Wallis/Ward then came in next with the 11th fastest time, just 1 second ahead of Carney/Dewhurst with the 12th fastest time. McKenzie/Brain just keep on going and claimed 17th fastest time, just 2 seconds ahead of Trewern/Trewern who themselves were just 0.7 seconds ahead of Testa/Walters. The Excel train was next with Holloway/Hood 3.4 seconds faster than Catt/Thomas who were in turn 6 seconds faster than North/Sweeney.

Booborowie 2 was a repeat of stage 3 from earlier in the day. The Commodore of Ross/Hague maintained its consistency and posted the 9th fastest stage time. Carney/Dewhurst wound up the Subaru and posted the 12th fastest time, just 4.7 seconds ahead of Wallis/Ward. McKenzie/Brain maintained their consistency and came in with the 16th fastest time. Trewern/Trewern were able to outpace the fastest Excel in

the stage (Holloway/Hood) by exactly 10 seconds and post the 18th fastest time. Catt/Thomas came in 20th fastest, 26 seconds ahead of North/Sweeney. Testa/Walters had there own issues finishing the stage but a 1.28 minutes behind the Excel of North/Sweeney.

Aptly titled the, stage 9 was known as Long Stage and at 82.54km long, Ivar wasn't messing about. To make it even more interesting, this stage was run at night. This stage was not compulsory for some competitors who were running in different sub-events. First Victorian crew was Wallis/Ward and posted the 8th fastest time. Right behind them with the 9th fastest time was McKenzie/Brain, just 18 seconds adrift. Trewern/Trewern were next with the 13th fastest time, a comfortable 1.16 minutes ahead of Carney/Dewhurst. Test/Walters rounded out the Victorian crews with the 15th fastest time.

Below: Nicola Testa and Nigel Walters completed the event on their first attempt.



At the end of the first day and after all penalties had been applied, it was the crew of Graham Wallis and Brian Ward the leading Victorian team sitting in 8th outright. Sitting second Victorian and 9th outright was John Carney and Tracey Dewhurst in the Subaru. Proving that consistency and reliability pay off, David McKenzie and Terry Brain were 11th outright in the Galant. Right behind them was Nicola Testa and Nigel Walters in the 240 RS. Earlier issues had relegated the Commodore of Ross/Hague to 16th, with the Excel of Catt/Thomas in 17th. In 18th was the Excel of Holloway/Hood with the Corolla of Trewern/Trewern in 21st.

Pale and Steep was the first stage of Day 2. At 27.40km long, it was a repeat of a stage from last year, with a slightly different finish. Ross/Hague set the way with the 2nd fastest stage time. Carney/Dewhurst were next, claiming the 9th fastest time with Wallis/Ward clocking 13th fastest time. McKenzie/Brain made a cautious start but brought the Galant home with

the 17th fastest time, 20 seconds ahead of Testa/Walters with 18th. Trewern/Trewern lead home the Excels of Catt/Thomas and Holloway/Hood.

Stage 11 was the (in)famous Turbine Row. Apparently, this stage offers magnificent views but crews have no time to look as they are all action across what is fast becoming a signature stage for the event. Ross/Hague maintained their position leading the Victorian contingent, posting 5th fastest time. Wallis/Ward came in next with the 11th fastest time maintaining the upper hand in their own battle with Carney/Dewhurst by just 10 seconds. McKenzie/Brain kept their momentum going and were rewarded with 16th fastest. Testa/Walters came in with 18th fastest, leading the Excels of Catt/Thomas and Holloway/Hood. Trewern/Trewern were keeping up their dogged efforts and came home with 21st fastest.



Left: The Excel of Geoff Holloway and Rick Hood looking nice through a corner

North to South was stage 12 and just short of 13kms long of farm access roads – wide and firm. Ross/Hague continued their strong performance and posted the 7th fastest time. Carney/Dewhurst reversed things in their battle with Wallis/Ward to come home with the 12th fastest time, 14.6 seconds ahead of their fellow Victorians. McKenzie/Brain brought the Galant home 15th fastest, just 8.8 seconds in front of Testa/Walters. Trewern/Trewern came in 19th fastest leading home the Excels of Catt/Thomas (20th) and Holloway/Wood (21st).

Stage 13 was Mt Bryan East and 51.31 km long of forest road. Issues for Ross/Hague saw them only post the 20th fastest time. This elevated Carney/Dewhurst to the leading Victorian crew posting the 11th fastest time. Wallis/Ward came in second Victorian crew with the 14th fastest time, just 45 seconds ahead of McKenzie/Brain at 16th fastest. The Excel of Holloway/Hood got the better of Trewern/Trewern but just 0.5 of a second to post 17th and 18th respectively. Catt/Thomas continued their progress with the 19th fastest time, ahead of Testa/Walters with the 21st fastest time.

Johnny Green is a short, 2.45km blast through an old mine site right in the heart of Burra. As a natural amphitheater, spectators were aplenty. Ross/Hague rose to the challenge and had the V8 putting on a show to record equal 2nd fastest. Wallis/Ward brought the Peugeot home with the 9th fastest time just 0.1 of a second ahead of Carney/Dewhurst! McKenzie/Brain continued their solid progress and came home with 15th fastest and just 1.1 seconds ahead of Holloway/Hood. Testa/Walters were able to beat home Trewern/Trewern with 17th and 18th respectively. The Excel of Catt/Thomas maintained came home with 19th fastest.

Stage 15 was a re-run of the first stage of the day, Pale and Steep. Ross/Hague maintained their position as fastest Victorians on the stage with the 4th fastest time. Wallis/Ward maintained their momentum to record 9th fastest time, ahead of Carney/Dewhurst with 10th fastest. A picture of consistency was McKenzie/Brain with an 11th fastest stage time. Holloway/Hood posted the 13th fastest time to lead home Catt/Thomas (15th fastest) and Testa/Walters (16th fastest). Issues saw Trewern/Trewern bring home 18th fastest.

Next stage was a repeat of Turbine Row. At just short of 10km long, it always a challenge. The crew of McKenzie/Brain put in an absolute belter of stage to come home fastest Victorian and post the 6th fastest time, just 0.9 seconds ahead of Ross/Hague in the Commodore. Wallis/Ward and Carney/Dewhurst continued their battle with the former coming in 13th fastest, ahead by 5 seconds, over the latter with the 14th fastest time. Holloway/Hood in the Excel were 15th fastest, only 0.9 seconds. Catt/Thomas then lead the rest of the Victorians with 15th fastest, Testa/Walters (16th fastest) and Trewern/Trewern (18th fastest).

Stage 17 was a repeat of stage 12, North to South. Ross/Hague regained their position as fastest Victorians, posting 4th fastest times. Wallis/Ward made a decisive move in their battle with Carney/Dewhurst to post the 9th fastest time, 53 seconds than their rivals with 10 fastest. McKenzie/Brain also made their intentions known and posted 11th fastest time, just 11 seconds off. Holloway/Hood maintained their position as leading Excel to come home with 12th fastest, just 1.1 seconds from 13th fastest Catt/Thomas. Testa/Walters upheld their consistent approach and were rewarded with 14th fastest time. Issues saw the Corolla of Trewern/Trewern retire within sight of of the event finish.

“... brought the Peugeot home ... just 0.1 of a second ahead ...”

Below: Graham Wallis and Brian Ward powering through to lead the Victorians home



The final stage of the event, stage 18, was a repeat of the short blast in Burra, Johnny Green. Ross/Hague finished strongly with the 3rd fastest stage. Wallis/Ward brought the Peugeot home with a 7th fastest stage time. McKenzie/Brain finished also finished strongly with a 10th fastest stage time, just 0.9 seconds ahead of a fast charging Holloway/Hood. Next was Catt/Thomas with a 12th fastest time, and Carney/Dewhurst just 1.4 seconds behind with 13th fastest. Testa/Walters were the final Victorian crew home with a 14th fastest stage time.

After the dust had settled and the scorers had done their work, it was the Peugeot of Graham Wallis and Brian Ward that come home 1st Victorian (7th outright). Next Victorians was the Subaru of John Carney and Tracey Dewhurst in a fantastic 8th outright and their first attempt at the event. David McKenzie and Terry Brain in the Galant were rewarded with their

consistent performance to come home 3rd Victorians and 11th outright. The Datsun 240RS of Nicola Testa and Nigel Walters came home 12th outright and proved that you have first go to finish. The Commodore of Brett Ross and Jason Hague wasn't eligible for the overall Placings as they were in an invitational category. This was the same story with the Excels of Geoff Holloway / Rick Hood and Brian Catt / Brian Thomas that rounded out the Victorian contingent.

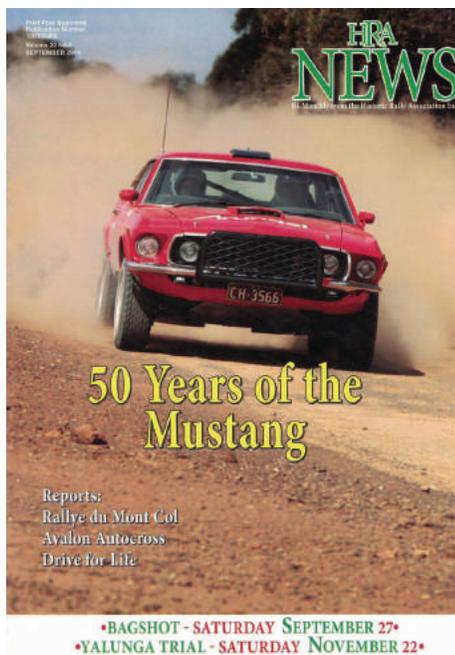
A post event celebration signaled the finish of the 2019 installment and yet another successful Rally of the Heartland. There were mixed fortunes across the whole field but every single competitor enjoyed the event. For the combination of roads and atmosphere for an event, you simply must do this event. It is rallying, straight from the heartland.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Courtesy of Tom Latta

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5 years ago



Cover Photo from John Douch of Mike Arundel's thundering 1969 Mustang, to celebrate 50 years of the Ford Mustang (released in April of 1964). A two page spread detailing the development of the Mustang – almost an afterthought - was based on the book "The Pony Car Revolution" by Michael W.R. Davis who worked in the P.R. team at the time of the Mustang's whirlwind development.

A revised layout for the "What's on" sections, now renamed "For Starters" and the introduction of "For More" section with book of DVD reviews and links to interesting rally related websites like "on the Dash" and "Hero Events". This was the work of Jeff Cameron who was now assisting Alan Baker in the production of HRA news.

4 pages on the Rallye Du Mont Col, run by George Davidson around Avoca. A very old fashioned rally where competitors could bring their own maps but with very easy plotting requiring minimal preparation time for the navigators. The event ended up being a very close battle between Graham Wallis/Ray Garrad, Steve and Ro Nixon. Harper/Snooks, Upton/Laidlay and Rawson/Smith. As the night wore on and navigation penalties accrued, it was Upton V Harper with the latter prevailing by 2 points, having started the last 20 km stage just 1 point ahead.

Peter Fraser wrote about the HRA run stage of the Australian Rally Championship around Ada River Road on the Friday afternoon, relishing an 11 am start rather than the usual 5:30 am!

A report on the Drive For Life event which had 2 components, the HRA winning both. Nick Wright/Mitch Garrad won the touring championship section while Mike Arundel, Cathy Arundel and the kids won the social tour.

Competition secretary Owen Polanski announced the cancellation of a couple of rallies but pushed the Yulunga Trial in the Annya forest in November. He also was glowing about the success of the Standard Car Series (as it was then known) in its first year. He also gave us a page of details on the impending changes to Classic Rally Car regulations for 2015 onwards, providing a framework for classic rally cars where none existed before, meaning such vehicles relied on organisers providing an 'all comers class' otherwise the cars would not fit in the regulations. Classes C1-C4 were announced. Owen thanked Alex Kovacevic for his work in representing the HRA in the advisory group to ARCOM.

Membership secretary Kate Officer reported 828 members with new members including Laurie Pelech.