

# CLUB TORQUE



## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RMDC

In this issue:

**REX WEBB IN THE NEWS!**

**BATHURST OR BUST**

**MOT TESTING**

**GRAND DAY OUT**

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Quarter 2 2020

## WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

We might not be out of the woods quite yet with COVID-19 however with the sun shining and restrictions slowly relaxing at least we can get back onto our bikes for a social ride from somewhere to somewhere as opposed to a single run to and from work.

That said given the length of time since some of us have ridden any decent distance and as the traffic levels rise its worth remembering that getting back on a bike and riding instinctively takes a while. I've found that the advice I was given by a wise old rider holds true when you have been out of the saddle for a period of time.

*"Remember lad you need to get used to the old girl again, take it slow at first, stay focused and concentrate. Eventually everything will become second nature again and you will ride instinctively once more."*

It's not just keeping safe whilst out on two wheels either. Remember no kissing or hugging you don't know where they may have been, keep a safe social distance

## A SAD LOSS OF A YOUNG TALENT

22 June 2020: British superbike rider Ben Godfrey has tragically died aged 25 after a crash at Donington Park.

Our condolences to his family.



## REX WEBB IN THE NEWS!

Jasper

At the end of May, there was an article on the BBC Look East TV news about a young boy from Huntingdon who had raised some money in memory of his younger brother who sadly died from cancer earlier this year. The article finished up with a still photo of the very ill child pictured with Rex who was in his Santa outfit.

You may recall from an earlier edition of Club Torque that we had run to Milton Children's Hospice on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, where we were made very welcome and met some of the children in their care at the hospice and their families and of course, Santa Rex was a hit as ever. A reminder of a couple of the photo's from the very memorable visit to the hospice:



In the same week, in the June edition of 'Jampot' – the magazine for the AJS and Matchless Owners Club - there was a short article about the diesel Matchless, mentioning Rex! Rex has confirmed to me the picture shown is indeed his machine.



### **Diesel Matchless**

It's possible that many members in the club these days have never seen a Diesel Matchless or maybe wasn't aware of such a machine. I took this photo some years ago at one of the Rally's, pretty sure it belonged to Rex Webb and was created by Ernie Dorsett who made several Diesel Engines bikes including if I remember rightly a twin version badged as JAWA.

**Kevin O'B**

*You used to see these at numerous rallies and I am sure Rex has many stories he could share with us.*

**Les**



*For those of you who are familiar with our guest correspondent here is another light hearted look at life from down under Ed.*

## **BATHURST OR BUST**

**by Greg Evans**

*The crowd was just as interesting as the racing.*

My Dad was a Holden man. It wasn't that he didn't like Fords, he just regarded Fords as American cars, whereas Holdens were Australian cars.

I did point out several times that Holden was General Motors, but this would produce a change of subject or Dad would point out that Fords were re-badged American product and Holdens weren't. If one of Dad's mechanics pointed out that the Australian Ford GT series were not only all-Australian, they were world beaters and almost all Holdens were re-badged GM products, Dad would start pointing out flaws in several runs of Australian Ford production series. A run of diff failures in these, rust-prone A-pillars in those. He was a hard man to argue with.

In our house the Bathurst race weekend was always a solid Sunday of TV. We would all be up early to watch the pre-race build up, the replay of practice sessions, interviews with Harry Firth and Brocky. Allan Moffatt would appear and we would all jeer at the TV while he spoke, his Canadian accent confirming every prejudice Dad carried about Fords. By 1974, though, it was possible for us to go to Bathurst to see the race. It was a fabulous year to go and see it. The new Ford XB Falcons were in play with the Ford Dealer Team and a number of privateer teams were using XA models, while Holden had fielded the SLR5000 L34 Toranas as well as a number of GTR XU-1s.

The XA and XB GT cars were magnificent race cars but I kept my admiration of the Fords to myself. I didn't want to have to walk home.

The old Valiant station wagon was loaded to the hilt with tent, vittles, table and chairs, drinks and camp beds and off we went as soon as work finished on Friday, arriving after what seemed a very long journey and making our way to the McPhillamy Park section of the circuit to pitch our tent. We were pretty late arrivals so our tent ended up a fair way back from the fence, but that didn't matter. We were on high level ground and in no time we had the tent up, the table and chairs all set, and the little portable stove was heating up chunky beef stew. It must have been 11 o'clock by the time we got dinner, but clearly there was not going to be a quiet sleepy time on top of the mountain. An endless parade of panel vans, utes, sedans and motor bikes was in constant motion, going up the mountain, then down the mountain, then up again on the dirt access tracks. This seemed to go on all night and we stayed up most of the night, wrapped in sleeping bags against the cold, drinking hot milo and watching the parade.

I vividly remember a group of four blokes arriving crammed into the bench seat of a purple HQ Holden ute, driving back and forth for a while and deciding to pitch camp near us. We watched as they set up two tiny pup tents, threw a couple of sleeping bags into each tent, then pulled back the tonneau cover of the ute to reveal cartons of beer. Lots of cartons of beer. In fact, the whole tray of the ute was full of beer.

Nice enough chaps when they were setting up camp, they had the first carton open before the pup tents were up and they finished that carton pronto that night, then just kept drinking.

As far as I could tell they didn't sleep, watch the racing, eat, or do anything at all other than drink, vomit and urinate on the gum tree next to their purple ute from Friday night until the time we left on Sunday night after the race.

I suppose they could have given some of it away or sold some, but as we packed up to leave I could see that they were down to the last couple of cartons. They were still steadily drinking and were no longer nice blokes.

Pissed to incoherence all Saturday, they amused themselves by wolf whistling and jeering at any woman or girl who came into view. This caused some trouble, of course, but by Sunday, race day, they were so incoherent that their capacity to offend had diminished considerably. They were literally too drunk to be obnoxious, reduced to vomiting copiously then pulling another ring pull off to start again.

But there were much more interesting things to see down at the fence. The great Brocky, the Saint of Mount Panorama, took pole during a blistering day of qualifying. The lithe, taut little L34 Toranas sat dead flat and howled over the top of the mountain through McPhillamy Park to disappear over the edge to our right, braking hard.

The gigantic XA Falcons bellowed through the same section with the suspensions working hard and a lick of flame from the exhausts as they were worked back through the cogs for the descent down from the mountain. To make our day, not only did Brocky take pole, Allan Moffatt had a miserable qualifying period, ending up well out of the top ten with the factory Ford XB Falcon GT clearly running poorly.

The top Ford was the light blue and black XA entry of John Goss and his co-driver Kevin Bartlett - Big Rev Kev. They qualified third in the XA Falcon and all the other top 8 qualifying positions were filled by L34 SLR 5000 Toranas with positions 9 and 10 going to GTR-XU1 Toranas which were still well-planted, great handling little race cars.

All was right with the world, with Brocky on pole, Colin Bond second, and only one Ford spoiling a complete Holden lockout of the top ten. We didn't mind that one Ford in there because we all thought Goss and Bartlett top blokes, and the dreaded Allan Moffatt couldn't even see the starter's flag from his grid position.

After listening to the announcements on the tannoy system, we trudged up the slope to our tent to make some dinner. Another two cans of thick beef stew saw to that and we settled down for another night of watching the mountain follies and drinking Milo.

I am told that when girls get drunk and go off to vomit in the ladies' toilets a girlfriend will accompany them to hold their hair out of the way. Our mates with the purple ute were clearly unaware of this beauty tip. I thought that spewing through your own long hair was a bit of a bad look, but it didn't seem to bother them. Pshht! Another ring pull joined the forest of similar discarded aluminium lying all around them and chug-a-lug, Bob's yer Uncle. 'Hair o' the dog, mate' said Vomit Hair as he hoisted another cold one.

We must eventually have slept because I remember waking on race day to the smell of steak and eggs being cooked for breakfast. It was a giant breakfast because the ice had almost given out in the esky and we were on a mission to eat everything which could spoil.

As we ate, the tannoy screeched and squawked into life with 'Welcome racing fans to the great race, the Hardie Ferodo 1000, one thousand kilometres of stirring V-8 action on the toughest track on earth, Mount Panorama!'

We believed it too, knowing nothing of Nurburgring or the Isle of Mann or half a hundred others which could probably lay claim to that title. The announcers worked the crowd into quite a pitch, pitting Ford fans against Holden fans, interviewing Brocky, Colin Bond and various enemy identities like Allan Moffatt to cheers and jeers according to tribal loyalties. By the time the race got underway the crowd was quite still up on the mountain and we actually heard the engines roar at the start, listening intently to the commentators describe a good start by John Goss and Saint Peter Brock himself leading the field up Mountain Straight.

Sure enough, the familiar red and white Holden Dealer Team car crested the rise in the lead and swept through the top of the mountain with a host of Toranas - and one light blue and black XA Falcon - in hot pursuit. The race order stayed that way for most of the race, too, with Brock pulling away steadily and Goss/Bartlett staying firmly in second place. Then, everything changed. Brock's previously totally reliable L34 Torana suddenly expired and the heavens opened in a torrent - but only on the top of the mountain where we were.

Goss was one of the first to arrive at a suddenly sodden McPhillamy Park and I watched as his eyes widened behind his visor and the big blue Ford aquaplaned off into the drainage ditch on the outside of the corner. There was a loud 'whump' as the right rear wheel clouted a drain pipe and the wounded Ford limped off towards Forrest's Elbow with an obviously flat right rear tyre. We all strained to see if he would appear on Conrod Straight and sure enough, there he went, with the disintegrating right rear Aunger mag wheel dragging through the grass off the right side of the track.



It seemed a sad end to a gallant run, but as it turned out he made it into the pits, the damage was manageable and quickly rectified, and because of numerous other incidents around the track as the rain came down his pursuers lost almost as much time as him and then had to come in for rain tyres anyway. Goss exited the pits having lost the lead, but had it back by the end of the next lap as rivals pitted and the Number 5 car went on to win, KB finishing the race in fine style. They looked very happy during their victory lap on the back of the retrieval truck with the Rothmans models. As one would.

Soaked, covered in mud, with one of my desert boots lost in the mud never to be seen again, we trudged up to our camp and contemplated getting our gear back into the Valiant because we had to get home that night. The drenched tent was bundled into a pile with our bedding inside, the table and chairs were hoisted in on top as were the eskies and Dad pronounced 'You two can sort this lot out tomorrow', looking at my brother and me.

We had one last meeting with the Purple Ute Drunkards. We were in the car ready to drive off when Dad noticed something as he looked over his shoulder to back out of our parking spot. He opened his door and realised that Vomit Hair had collapsed, pitching forward to land with his head under the car just behind the rear wheel. He was completely comatose and could easily have been killed if we had backed out without noticing him. Dad and I got him up, took him back to his equally blinded mates, and propped him up with them.

I wonder what became of them. This being 1974, they probably drove home to Sydney that night.

## **MOT TESTING**

### **New Member - Guy**

It struck me recently that getting an MoT has become a right faff. They do it properly these days. Frame number checks, computer links to the DVLA, they even get their hands dirty. I ask you!

Not like the old days. We used to use a small garage somewhere in the depths of Kent and for the record m'lud I shall refrain from identifying said premises just in case it's still operating although I'm fairly sure it was a Barretts housing estate the last time I drove past.

At M\*\*\*\*\*'s, you could turn up in the rain, park the bike with the number plate facing the office window and it was job done. As long as the bike had the requisite number of wheels a certificate would be issued without the old boy even having to get out of his chair and get wet.

In the 70s I had a pal dealing in personal number plates. This was well before the DVLA realised it was sitting on a potential goldmine and those of an entrepreneurial spirit could buy up a 'barn find' for a few coppers and then achieve an excellent return by flogging off the number and scrapping the car. For a few years weekend entertainment consisted of driving deep into the countryside, haggling for a wreck of 50's or early 60's vintage with muggins then driving it back to base.

It used to be easy, just transfer the 'cherished' number onto a retention certificate and get rid of the car. No storage problems, no hassle. Then the rules changed. The registration number had to be kept on a fully road legal vehicle. Luckily a loophole in the law allowed for a car registration to be transferred to a motorcycle (but not vice versa) so the need for my pal to keep a field full of cars never quite materialised. He bought a trio of ex GPO Bantams for a couple of quid apiece instead. Transfer the number to a bike, stick the bike in the garden. Job done.

Trouble was only one of the bikes was half decent. None had valid MoTs and my pal didn't have a bike licence. No worries I thought, just use the good one. I'll stick a couple of number plates in a rucksack and head off to..... ah, nearly caught me there! The old boy was interested. 'Oh, a proper bike' he said, 'not like that modern stuff' and started firing off numerous questions. No doubt Jasper could have coped but I was lost. I knew, and know, nothing about Bantams except that they're slow and might stop if you're lucky, but the folly of youth triumphed (or should that be BSA'd?) and half an hour later I had the relevant paperwork.

In a layby half a mile down the road the plate was changed. Off to the second appointment of the morning. 'Bloody hell mate, that's a bit rough' said the nice man with the greasy overalls and proceeded to find fault after fault. Again luck was on my side and after pleading poverty, the need of the bike to get to work and promising to fix the worst of the problems I was on my way, certificate number two in my sweaty mitt.

After yet another layby off to tester number three. 'There's no way I'm passing that' laughed the not so nice man in the spotless branded workwear. 'Why on earth do you want to ride that piece of sh\*t?' Oops, my mistake, proper bike shop, he obviously wanted to sell me a new Honwayamazuki. Carefully omitting the previous two tests I came clean and admitted it would be only used to store a registration number pending its sale. The bike would then be scrapped. My nose grew at that point...

After solemn promises that the bike would never again be ridden on the road and I might well buy a GT SuperSprinter in the near future, I was on my way with certificate number three. Not a bad morning's work if I say so myself.

You'd never get away with it these days.

*Welcome Guy and thank you for your maiden article,*

*On a serious note if anyone wants a helpful and honest bike MoT I recommend Melbourne Garage.*

*If anybody wants a 1950 MoT then get your bike to NSW Australia. No rolling Road or brake test. I took mine to the NRMA shop up the road who are like the AA/RAC and service cars but can do bike pink slips as they call the MoT here. Parked the bike gave reception the key and said I was off for a coffee over the road. No sooner got my coffee when the phone rang and they told me "All done mate". When I got back to the workshop the bike was exactly where I had left it and I mean exactly. The receptionist told me as an NRMA member there was no charge as basically the bike test only consisted of lights and tyre checks!*

*If you are in Queensland they only require a pink when you sell the car or bike! You can drive or ride for years and never have to get your ride tested.*

*Ed.*

**GRAND DAY OUT – CRACKIN PICTURES GROMIT**



**Back in the saddle again- Holme Fen near Ramsey.**

**17<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Keith Barrell**



**There's more - Dunwich.**

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

**Jim Greig**



**Even more - Burnham on Crouch.**

29<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Simon Whybrow





## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From the Editors Email Box received anonymously

*Dear Sir*

*I think our club enforcer has gone soft! Given that our movements are pretty much restricted due to COVID-19 how hard is it for him to knock on a few doors and put the frighteners on people to pay their subs?*

*I've heard that there are some notable subscription absences from a few long standing members which our enforcer has not picked up on. Probably too busy banging something up in his shed!*

*We know who you are so please take this opportunity to pay your subs via Jim Greig. The alternative is we promote Brian Bully to enforcer and I can tell you it is not a pleasant experience meeting him down a dark alley brandishing a sawn off pocket watch.*

## FOR THE NEXT ISSUE



Remember it's your newsletter so it only works if you submit items.

The next quarterly issue is September 30 2020 so with your recent release from captivity out into the country you have no excuses not to submit pictures and articles of interest etc.