

Targa Tasmania 2014 Leg Five: Strahan - Hobart

Leg Five, the final push to Hobart, started off with a 33km stage out from Strahan heading over to Queenstown. Good rain overnight meant the roads were nicely wet, albeit a bit slippery in places. From overnight we were holding a solid 2nd place in the Handicap competition, with a six minute gap to the Ulrich's Jensen in 1st and over three minutes ahead of the Freestone's Holden in 3rd. On Outright (non-Handicap) time, we were sitting in 13th. The car was in good shape, the tyres barely worn from the previous day given the heavy wet weather. The wet weather could be expected to hold through the first two stages, Strahan and Queenstown, and to dry out towards the end of the third stage, Mt Arrowsmith. As we headed further south and inland towards Hobart, dry roads were anticipated hence we needed to keep an eye on the Freestone's FX that would be chased relentlessly by the Stuart's Anglia.

The Strahan stage went well and we caught and overtook two cars, posting an equal 4th to the Woodward Monaro 350 GTS. 1st / 2nd / 3rd were the Ulrichs, Miedecke and the Steuarts. On Outright time we were 15th on the stage.

On to Queenstown, the "100 bends" climb up to the top of the West Coast ridge, we worked hard but not overly so, catching and passing the Gulf-liveried Porsche just over the top of the ridge. Our elapsed time placed us in 2nd, just two seconds off of the Ulrichs and opened up our gap to the Freestones to over seven minutes. However, on the stage in Outright time we were 3rd fastest (!!), four seconds off of the Miedecke Perana and two seconds faster than Outright contenders Barry Faux and Theresa Mihajlovic in their Mazda RX-7.



Queenstown's 100 bends

With our 2nd in Handicap position relatively "safe" we headed in to the mighty 58km long Mt Arrowsmith stage with a close eye on the Outright position having missed 10th place last year by just six seconds. With the stage almost an event unto itself, and us being quite practised at this juncture in calling and receiving the Pace Note information, we set off with high confidence of improving our standing. We were beginning to notice a few problems with our overdrive once again (a seemingly perennial problem) where it had trouble keeping up with our rapid gear changes in at the 180km/h mark, the changes being more frequent as we were limited to about 6,300rpm in 4th gear due to the misfire. This and the stubborn misfire limited our top end pace somewhat. All a minor tragedy really however, for as we progressed through the stage a Porsche-hunting theme for the day evolved, adding the Taylor/Harper Carrera to our list at the 8km mark,

then a third later model Porsche 911 about 5kms later, and a fourth 944 shortly after that. Just as we were about to get a bit big-headed, the McClintock/Skinner Mazda RX-7 running in 3rd place Outright rounded us up at the end of some long straights and overtook us. However a few kilometres later they'd not pulled away and we began monsterring them as the road tightened up again. They let us through, and we quickly pulled away, only to have them catch us and overtake again as the road opened up again at the top of the ridge. Thrilling stuff, and the racing along this section of road just about worth the price of admission on its own. Our time placed us 3rd in Handicap behind the Stuart's screaming little Anglia, with Meidecke in the Perana showing his stuff in 1st place. Our Outright time on the stage of 9th overall pulled us up to 10th outright. With 2nd in Handicap sorted, and now 10th Outright achieved, albeit by just eight seconds, we pushed on the Tarraleah, grabbing some extra fuel along the way.

The Tarraleah stage was changed from last year, and a new Base Time set – relatively high (long) which meant the five top teams (the Perana, the Monaro, the Freestone Holden, the Anglia and us) all “cleaned” the stage; no advantage lost or gained relative to each other. Our lead over the Freestones stood at five minutes, but the Stuart's and their Anglia had closed to just ten seconds off the Freestones in 4th place. Unbeknownst to us at that time was that the Ulrich's Jensen had fallen off the road just before the end of the Mt Arrowsmith stage. This moved us up to 1st in Classic Handicap, and the Steuarts into 3rd !!

Ellendale was the penultimate stage, last used ten years ago when Ashley and Andy first teamed up in the “old” ex-works Volvo. On that stage that year, having just achieved an overall 10th in Classic handicap after a strong result on Mt Arrowsmith, the sensor for the navigator's trip meter unwrapped itself from the driveshaft mid stage, with a sound akin to a buzz-saw cutting through the floor pan of the car. Not thrilling stuff. Well, Ellendale now seems to have a knack of throwing us a curve ball right at the end of an innings: about a third of the way through the stage, our exhaust note began to change, and then, powering through a long uphill lefthander, a massive bang and shudder preceded an almost sonic boom as the exhaust pipe separated from the headers – the %&£\$! exhaust had broken off at a similar place to last year, fumes filled the cabin and communication between driver and navigator required hand signals. We kept up the pace as best we could and made the stage time, also set with a High Base, “clean” (no penalty, plus other contenders not gaining advantage).

One more stage to go, with our biggest worry now being the Police noticing our completely unmuffled race exhaust being driven 70 kms on public roads over to the Grasstree Hill stage. Our Service Crew were set up at the roadside ahead, and with some bailing wire secured the remains of the broken exhaust, fuelled us



Freestone's Holden 48-215

up and set us on our way. Longtime sufferers of our little tale each year will recall Grasstree Hill also has some special memories for us: in 2011 we garnered 3rd place in by just eleven seconds, and in 2012 we lost 1st place by just one second time difference over the stage. Now this year we had to just keep it all together for our 2nd place in Handicap (we still didn't know that the Ulrich's Jensen was off), but keeping in the Top 10 Outright position looked a hard goal to achieve. Pulling up to the start line (and having rolled as quietly as possible past the Copper at the road closure barrier) we charged off up the 'Hill, frightening small children, clearing wildlife and shortening the years we'll have any sort of good hearing, with Ashley calling the corners in the brief moments between gear changes or when Andy was on the brakes (not ideal as it's best to call the corners BEFORE the brakes are needing to be applied!). Our time was still good enough for 4th on Handicap on the stage, but, even better, our times overall, and the Jensen's failing, put us into **8th Outright and 1st in Classic Handicap!!!** Ten years ago 10th, ten years later 1st! All quite beyond our most ambitious expectations!!



Competition winners after at the finish

Targa Tasmania for 2014 was done – the car largely in one piece (well, mostly!), and now finally a top tier of the podium. The Freestone's Holden took 2nd and the Stuart's Anglia 3rd, just nine seconds behind! Champagne shower again. We were greeted at the finish line by a growing number of local fans who had followed our progress through the week – and again Rhys Filbee bringing with him again his 1:24 scale model of our car that he had made into a Scalectrix race car!

Lessons learned from this year areheck, bugger that, we'll get to that sometime later. We'll bask in our own glory for a little while now.



Getting to this point though has not been an overnight success – it has taken us ten years to develop the car and an approach and a support system to better some very high caliber teams. To achieve a win in the Handicap Competition is a fantastic feeling, and achieving 8th Outright has taken us to a whole new level of credibility. Our capability in the wet, something we've always touted as our strength, has been soundly

demonstrated. It's both humbling and flattering to receive flattering comments and encouragement from the top tier teams. For me, Ashley (the primary author of these little daily diatribes), it has been absolutely awesome to be sitting in the front row for one of the most thrilling experiences to be imagined – and the high of keeping up with and overtaking the RX-7 on the Mt Arrowsmith stage this year took the experience to a whole new level.

Targa Tasmania 2014 - Classic Outright - FINAL					
Pos	No	Crew	Vehicle	Total	Gap to Prev / First
1	607	Faux Mihajlovic	Mazda RX-7	56:43:00	
2	511	Paterson Geue	Porsche 911 Carrera RS	01:00:47	04:04 04:04
3	616	McClintock Skinner	Mazda RX-7	01:01:14	00:27 04:31
4	449	Woodward Gibson	Holden Monaro GTS	01:09:15	08:01 12:32
5	626	Hammond Lennox	Jaguar XJS	01:09:31	00:16 12:48
6	215	Freestone Freestone	Holden 215	01:09:49	00:18 13:06
7	611	McAuley Etienne	Porsche 911 Carrera	01:11:29	01:40 14:46
8	222	White Yelds	Volvo 122S	01:13:40	02:11 16:57
9	440	Gainer St George	Datsun 240Z	01:13:54	00:14 17:11
10	439	Banks Douglas	Porsche 916	01:13:59	00:05 17:16

Targa Tasmania 2014 - Early Classic Handicap - FINAL					
Pos	No	Crew	Vehicle	Total	Gap to Prev / First
1	222	White Yelds	Volvo 122S	41:15:00	
2	215	Freestone Freestone	Holden 215	46:23:00	05:08 05:08
3	361	Steuart Steuart	Ford Anglia 105e	46:32:00	00:09 05:17
4	449	Woodward Gibson	Holden Monaro GTS	49:53:00	03:21 08:38
5	439	Banks Douglas	Porsche 916	58:38:00	08:45 17:23
6	440	Gainer St George	Datsun 240Z	59:18:00	00:40 18:03
7	255	Priddle Priddle	Ford Zephyr	01:00:26	01:08 19:11
8	403	Dermott Dermott	Holden Torana GTR XU-1	01:01:23	00:57 20:08
9	407	Goodwin Brookhouse	Datsun 240Z	01:13:26	12:03 32:11
10	486	Byrne Newbold	Alfa Romeo GTV 2000	01:13:26	32:11:00

Support from others both before and during the event has been invaluable, Andy's wife Sherrin and Ashley's wife Heather being the cornerstones for us to be able to run away and indulge in this boy's stuff each year. On the road, chasing us all over the state for six days with fuel, tools and spares have been Ashley's school mates Rick and Phil as well as Andy's long time mate Barry Brookes of TopPerformance with wife Barb supporting. Pacific Motors, Pymble and Toperformance Koni support is also much appreciated. Gary Comerford's VOLPRO race engines can claim another place on the mantlepiece.



Our team garnered some good coverage in the daily media releases (see here [for Leg Three](#) and [here for Leg Five](#) at about the 40 second mark) and we're hoping we might get some more in-stage footage from Ben Sale at OtherSide Productions as we did last year – for those who have five minutes with nothing better to do, have a look at [what Ben put together for us from Targa Tasmania 2013 here](#). 27,000+ hits has amazed us all!

Hope you all enjoyed our little adventure. Thanks to all, see you next year!

Regards,

Ashley and Andy



Stuart's Ford Anglia 105 E, 3rd in Classic Handicap



Monaro 350 GTS finished 4th



Aston Martin V8 Vantagealmost as quick as a 1961 Volvo



Priddle's 1961 Ford Zephyr finished 7th, ahead of the Dermott's GTR XU-1 in 8th