

Supaloc Classic Targa Adelaide : formerly the Classic Adelaide Tarmac Rally

Before I escaped from the UK, I investigated what events were run for classic cars hoping to find something that resembled HRCR type regularity events that I had been competing in as a navigator for Charlie Harrison. One of the events, well, the only one really that came up was the Classic Adelaide tarmac Rally but upon more detailed investigation it seemed to be a real speed event for prepared rally/race cars. Not what I was after and so discounted, but not forgotten.

Since that time, I have become part owner of a fully prepared rally car and completed some real tarmac rally events, so interest was raised as Octagon, the organisers of Targa Tasmania had taken over the now renamed Supaloc Classic Targa Adelaide.

And, so here we are about to compete in that previously discounted event, and in the Charade of course! The Charade is not yet a Classic yet but we are allowed to run in the event under the Early Modern section and because we will be a Classic Car before too long. At the time of writing which is 12th September and on our way to Adelaide we thought that there were to be only 2 entrants in this category so as long as we finished, we were guaranteed at least 2nd place in our class! But Alas no, the others withdrew and so we were amalgamated with the contemporary classics making about 10 in that particular class. A bit more of a challenge for us.

But in order to compete we had to have a car in the first place.

Yes, all is not well with the Charade. Having a severely developed 'race' engine it needs lots of care and a frequent re-build and having competed in 2 Targa Tasmania's, 1 Targa High Country and numerous hillclimbs and sprints, the engine is not in the best of conditions. In fact it is down on compression/power and goes through oil like the Greeks go through money.

We were of 2 minds as to whether we should change the engine to a Detomaso unit at 1600cc, overhaul the current unit or ignore the problems and keep pouring in the oil.

However, the decision was made for us.

On one of the Autosprints at Willowbank in early August, I had a minor spin and had to reverse to get back onto the correct line (cross the line of cones and you get penalties – that was why I had to reverse). So having reversed (bearing in mind there are 3 cars on the track at any one time), I was unable to get the car out of reverse gear – even switching the engine off had no effect. The result was an impressive high speed reverse to the pits and wait for a trailer to take the car home. So that is what comes of competing and keeping up with WRX's and other 4wd's!

Although I did manage to get forward gears eventually we had to know what the problems were, so the box had to be removed and stripped down. A few enquiries were made with JHH racing, our engine builder, and they confirmed that there was time for them to strip the engine, check out the cause of the oil consumption – rings? - and put it all back together for us with plenty of time to spare. All we had to do was supply them the stripped down engine. So out came the engine and gearbox, split them and strip the engine of all ancillaries. The gearbox stayed with us and the block went to JHH,

Easy to find why the box jammed in reverse – the 3 synchromesh pawls for fifth gear had fallen out of location and were in free fall in the top end of the gearbox. Luckily there was no damage to them, other gears or the casing. But why had they come loose in the first place. After a number of very unlikely summations at my expense, Ian noticed that there was only a single wire clip holding them in place whereas there should be 2. The 'missing' wire clip was not on the work bench, floor or gearbox, and the only conclusion is that the box was put back with only 1 clip in place. Amazing really that it has gone so long without falling apart.

With one week to go before we set off for Adelaide – a solid 24 hours of driving, We had a clutch, a gearbox, no tyres and fairly importantly no engine!

When Will of JHH pulled the unit apart, he found that the valves had been hitting the pistons and 2 valve springs fell apart. Result? we needed new pistons, new valves and new springs. And then he

discovered that the Rally Cam was badly damaged/scored indicating that it had not been correctly hardened. So that went back to the original suppliers. And with 5 working days left until we depart, everything is waiting on the cam.

Luckily, the cam was replaced and returned to JHH with 4 working days to go, and by the 4th day, the re-build was completed and the car ready for dyno tuning (despite the new cam belt being shredded 30 km from Brisbane by a loose (untightened) bolt – Ian is able to explain that one!!!).

The Classic Adelaide Rally was run for several years on closed public and tarmac roads. But about 2 years ago the organisers went bankrupt and the event died until this year when Octagon, the organisers of the Targa Tasmania decided to resurrect it and run it as the Supaloc Classic Targa Adelaide. Unlike the Targa Tasmania and Targa High country which have between 200 – 300 entrants, the Targa Classic Adelaide had only about 100 entrants; hence they stretched it to include Early Modern cars such as us.

It stretches over 4 days from the Wednesday to Saturday with scrutineering taking place on the Tuesday.

The Wednesday consists of 2 prologue stages in the Barossa Valley (land of Vineyards etc – Jacobs Creek wine amongst others). The ensuing 3 days are to the south and east of Adelaide, in the Adelaide Hills region.

In fact we will be driving on several stages around the town from where I bought the car. James Rodda, the previous owner, and who won the South Australian P1 class in the charade in 2006 will be competing in the WRC round at Coffs Harbour while we start the long drive to Adelaide.

So it just goes to show what life can lead to when you start with a Charade!!!!

We left at 2 am Monday morning with the charade on a borrowed trailer towed by my 3.6 litre V6 Commodore Ute. Missing from the journey was a fuel tanker. The ute was getting about 14 mpg which on a 2000 km (1400miles) drive is rather of go-go juice!!



View out the rear window of the ute and then out the front – straight flat roads

But the route and the roads was something else. The road was well to the west of where I have previously run and went via Broken Hill – a mere 16 hours from Brisbane. Long long straights and a max speed of 110kmh or about 68mph, but very little traffic, plenty of kangaroos (well one less – the trailer scored a direct hit), goats and sheep. The landscape was flat and boring as well.

But there was one action of drivers which left me perplexed. Why is it that Aussie drivers wave to each on the road when in the outback? Yet 5km out of town it stops. And then this waving, well, it sort of consists of raising at the approaching vehicle's driver a finger or sometimes 2 fingers. Surely a recipe for a bit of road rage, I thought. But no. So what is the significance of 1 or 2 fingers apart from the obvious? Is there ancient native custom here? Perhaps back to Google to find out. I will let you know in due course.



About 1500km of the above views – really interesting especially with some hills or trees in the distance! Shame about all that blue sky.

And then 5 hours after we left Broken Hill in the morning, we arrived in Adelaide and set about preparing the car for scrutineering.

Running the Supaloc Targa Classic Adelaide Rally

Scrutineering and the parc ferme were combined in the Adelaide Exhibition Centre – well, one of the many halls in the new complex on the Tuesday. With car unloaded we went straight into the signing on and scrutineering area. All was going well until they came to check our clothing and checked for compliance against the new FIA standards. Ian's gloves were found to be an "out of date" FIA standard so were rejected. I don't wear gloves but my hands obviously were deemed to be FIA compliant and were acceptable. My shoes were also out of date so were not acceptable.

Result for both of us was a trip to a Sabelt merchandising stall set up for the event to get the necessary replacement apparel. About 20 pairs of race shoes were purchased that day not to mention other items. We were not happy bunnies at the sudden additional costs!

The moral of this is that your skin is FIA compliant whereas the clothing might not be.

So scrutineering completed, blood pressure reducing to normal, we socialised with fellow competitors (and whinged about the scrutineers) and then headed off to find our hotel, some food and wine. In that order as well, surprisingly.



A Leyland P76 V8 – an Australian icon, apparently



Some of the cars parked up inside the exhibition hall

During our chats with other competitors we found out a bit about the stages – very fast, some sharp corners and lots of gum trees right at the edge of the bitumen. In other words no room for error! But great roads.

Parked beside us in the Hall was a rare Leyland P76 V8 car – an Aussie icon and deemed to be a “would be” success if built by Ford or Holden and not Leyland. The design criteria were simple – it had to hold 4 excessively large Aussies in comfort and a 45 gallon drum in the boot (of XXXX?).

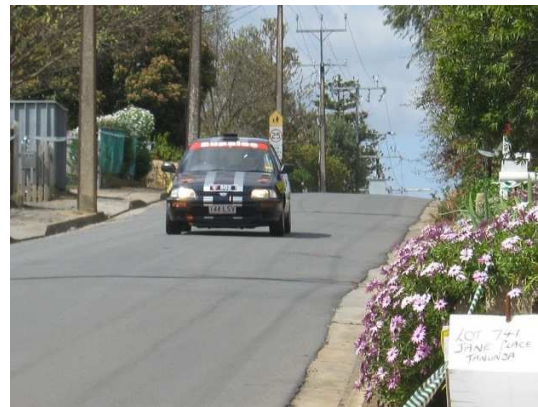
The build quality was questionable and they seemed to have a habit of catching fire, perhaps hence their rarity now. Did some of these not run in some of the world cup rallies or even the '68 London Sydney? Anyway, an interesting sized vehicle to throw around the narrow roads.

As soon as we arrived and before the car was even unloaded we were getting comments about the Charade with people recognising it as James Rodda’s old car. So after 2 years since buying the car from James and bringing it to Queensland from Adelaide, it is still being recognised, despite the different advertising. James obviously built up quite a reputation in the car so it was up to us maintain it.

The Wednesday saw the rally begin with 2 prologue stages in the Barossa valley to the north of Adelaide and home to many fine South Australian wines. I was down to drive the first of these stages and the one that was around the town of Tanunda, which is the home of Jacobs Creek wine (many a hazy night had with Jacobs Creek wine). The stage consisted of mainly 3 rights and 3 lefts and a few nasty drains, described as “dips” in the notes but certainly more than that jarring the car and us. Our time was good and we cleaned that stage (as did everyone).



Car 0 – the Superloc Lamborghini. Sounded pretty good



MA at the wheel on the Tanunda stage (going really fast)



Just some of the vineyards at Tanunda

The second stage was a bit longer, straighter and faster. This was used to determine our start order for the following morning. With Ian driving we also cleaned it. (OK, I will own up and confirm that everyone cleaned that stage, as well!). And then it was back into the centre of Tanunda, to park the car in the main street and have our lunch before heading back to the Exhibition centre.

Thursday saw the rally start properly. We were very pleased to see us starting behind a Peugeot 205 GTI (the slowest cars go first) which was our only real competition in the event being a 2 litre against our measly 1.3 litres but was also in the same category/class as us.

The 8 stages for this day took us in a loop to the south and east of Adelaide, partly into the Adelaide hills area. The stages were relatively fast, and yes, we did notice that those gum trees were quite close to the edge of the road. Compared to the GTi, our times were better so things were looking good.

Well that is until the 5th stage of the day. A “very long 10 left and then 3 right - comes up quick”. And yes doing about 150kmh, that 3 right did come up quick. Luckily for us we were on the main road and should have turned into a side road, so with all wheels locked up we went straight through the yellow tape, and more, for what seemed like 100's of metres. Once stationary Ian 'gently' put the car into reverse, back out past the now broken tape and then take that 3 right. Except the car was stuck in reverse, again!

No alternative but to push the car back through the tape, which the marshal had just tied together and phone up for the rally rescue to come for us and take us back to Adelaide.

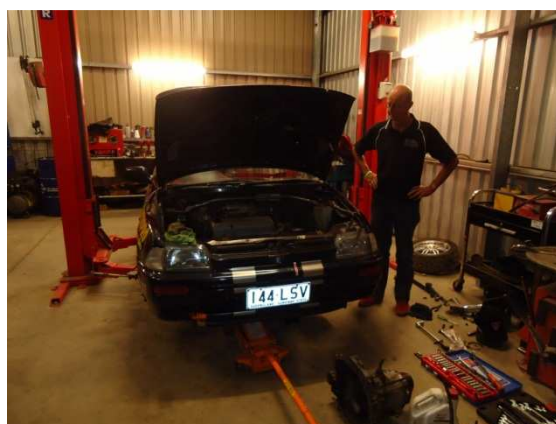
With just 4 stages from 24 completed, I was not going to roll over and spend the rest of the weekend spectating, and so despite not really being equipped with tools for a gearbox removal, I knew that we could easily pull the box out and sort things but had to convince Ian that he **would** do it, well, that did take a bit of work. One of the joys of rallying – working all night on repairs to keep the car in the event.

Just after we had parked the car, a Datsun 240Z came through the tape sounding very rough, clunky and terminal (Marshall getting really annoyed now having to yet again re-tie the tape). Coincidentally, their service crew had been watching at that corner so immediately began investigating with words like “sounds like a broken cam shaft or crank shaft”. The car was also put on the transporter back to Adelaide and the problem later diagnosed as a faulty distributor!

Back to James Rodda. He lives in the Adelaide Hills area close to where we were incapacitated, and the car had been prepared in his local garage. So while waiting for the tow truck I contacted him and over the next hour or so arranged for us to have the use of his sponsors workshop (the local garage), to undertake the necessary repairs. But first the truck had to take us back to Adelaide where we loaded the car onto the trailer for the return to “where it all began”.



The 'corner'. Note knots in tape



Puzzled driver looking at car! Gearbox on floor

James in fact stayed all evening and helped us with the repairs – he had a good memory of the gearbox! It was a very quick fix in the end, and not what we suspected as being the same synchromesh problem as before. This time it was that one of the selector rods had moved out of position, and was 'locked' out. So after about 4 hours, all was sweet and car running again, so back onto the trailer and a return trip to Adelaide, the hotel and a glass or two of wine.

We do have to thank James and Matt of MJP automotive for their time and resources. James had actually just completed running in the WRC round at Coffs Harbour although his Subaru had been plagued with gearbox problems as well.



Air below n/s tyres - Navigator not heavy enough!



The twisty roads of South Adelaide

Friday morning we were back at parc ferme nice and early to present the car to the scrutineers and then to rejoin the rally. Even at this early hour, the local people knew that we had been at MJP automotive fixing the car – thanks to James and Facebook.

On this day we had 8 stages to complete ranging from 3km to 11km long. Much shorter stages than on previous Targa events. The route was again in and around the Adelaide Hills area but using different roads than the previous day. The pace was hotting up but we were only caught by a single car, a Porsche, which are ideal for these roads.

I had planned to drive a couple of stages on the Friday, but we had another close call with the pace notes, and this time on video, so was able to check later on the video. Yep, they were not accurate! So I stayed in the Nav seat all day apart from one short stage in the afternoon – only about 3km long.



The car parked at the Gouger street party and some of the racey talent strutting in front of the cars!

Friday night saw the usual street party for the Targa cars – basically we park in the closed off street, all the locals come and ooh, aaaah at the cars, while the crews occupy the local hostelry's. Unfortunately one of the crew has to drive the car back to parc ferme.

Saturday morning and I was getting brave again – I was going to drive one of the stages. This time the one selected was the penultimate stage; 10km of Norton Summit hairpins up hill, hard right at crossroads (and a pub) and then downhill. Nice and easy!

But first we had 6 other stages to go. No dramas.



Charade on full song with MA driving at the limit through a 3 right corner, the crowds were enjoying the spectacle!

Being a late entry for the event, we missed out on getting our usual set of Kumho tyres, which many people don't like but we find suit the car very well. Instead we had a set of Yokohama's. The tread looked the business, but there was too much roll for my liking. Even as the passenger I could feel it.

So driving the Norton Summit stage I really found what they were like. Horrible! The car shifted into each corner, so much that it felt as if it was about to understeer and oversteer each time. Benefit? Well, it kept my speed down, I think. Ian also found out the accuracy of the notes questionable.

Interestingly, he noticed that I wanted to know details up to 2 corners ahead whereas he is happy with the corner approaching. I wasn't aware of that but an interesting observation all the same.

My concern about driving in these events is that I would drive at 10/10ths and hence have a few moments if not outright crashes, but driving Norton summit I was definitely holding back. Those tyres not helping, of course. Although I was really impressive going into the crossroads at the pub. The front o/s wheel has almost got air, but the next corner about 50m round the corner was even better! And then it was stage 8 and the last stage of the day. All completed satisfactorily before a long drive back to Adelaide, the finishers ramp and then for a few light beers in the evening.

Ian has compiled the video of the event, and yes we certainly appear to be going pretty fast on some of the stages. A few times we did clock 175kph, but more often max'd just 150 kph on the stages with some averages exceeding 120kph. All not bad for a measly 1330cc car.

A very enjoyable rally and good value for money, but a long way to drive.

So we have now completed all of the major Tarmac Rallies in Australia, which all seem to be in the southern part of the country. This coming weekend (25th November) we start a new venture – forest rallying, in a State Forest 250km north of Brisbane. Ian has never driven in a stage rally nor has he had ambitions to do so. Handbrake turns? Left foot braking? A new experience for Ian but for me it will be partially fulfilling a life-long dream, with the ultimate being to drive an event. The rally will consist of around 130km of special stages starting in the afternoon and finishing well into the night.