

Memories of Friday Night Runs from the Wickham St. Club Rooms

by Bruce Ibbotson. Cartoons supplied by John Campbell

Way back in the 60's it was not 'what to do' on Friday Night, it was to go down to the MGCC at the corner of Wickham St. and Knapp St. and see what was on tonight.

Often it was just a Noggin and Natter accompanied by 16mm films from Castrol, Shell, BP, etc. of motorsport events at home and overseas. But regularly one would find a local Navigation exercise around the suburbs with all sorts of silly bloody things to find or identify. I seem to remember one of the things that had to be collected was "tram tickets" of a certain value and bottle tops etc.

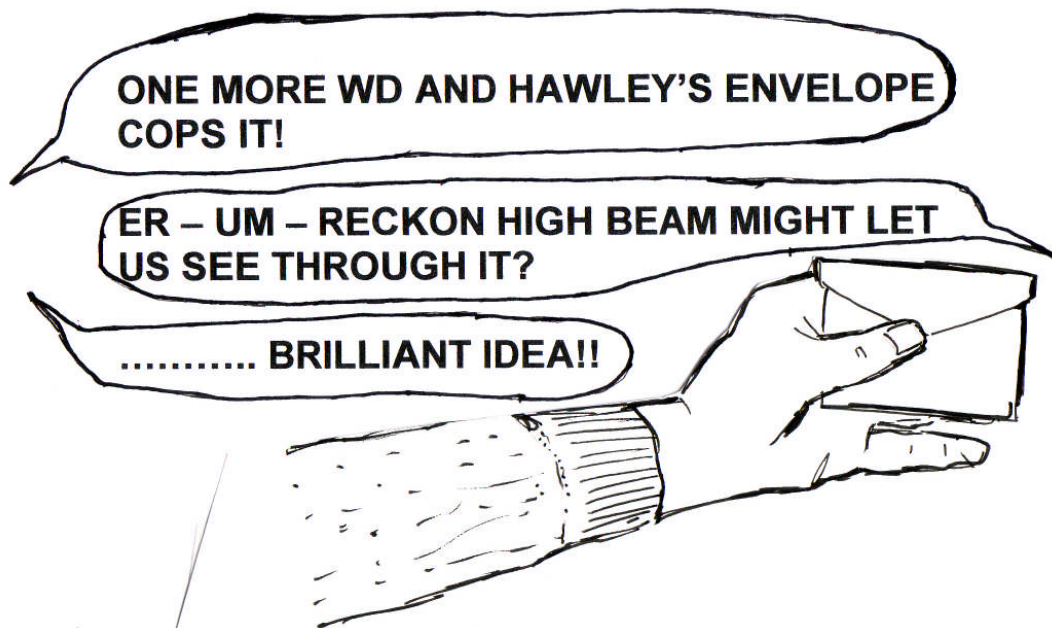
On other occasions "All Night Navigation" events were planned by various "cunning bastards" to see if anybody could actually make it to the planned Breakfast Barbeque.

I have hazy recollections of one of these events which I will try to describe as it turned out to be hilarious, with only 3 cars arriving at the breakfast meeting point.

We left the clubrooms about 7.30 with instructions that led us heading towards Samford. After following the route instructions we eventually ended up at a set of traffic lights (this turned out to be at Strathpine when we looked it up after the event) and turned left not quite knowing where we were. At about this time the rain started and we were heading up the Bruce Highway, which in those days went through Strathpine, Petrie etc. We tried to follow the navigation notes (my navigator was Jon McCarthy, designer of the Mt. Cotton Hill Climb) and continued up the Bruce Highway; so far so good and from memory we were ahead at the first checkpoint.

The rain got much heavier and visibility much worse as we tried to work out where we should be. We kept coming up to railway crossing gates and, being after midnight, we

found them closed. We assumed that our President (Geoff Hawley) when working out this run had done it in daylight and this was why all the crossings were closed. We drove a huge number of miles back and forth up and down the Highway trying to find a way over the rail line.



At one stage while we were going north a TF driven by Mort Shearer approached us heading south with no lights; he thought we were lost and that he knew where he was going and didn't expect us to see him (this was on the Bruce Hwy.) Later we observed Mort executing a very good Hand Brake turn (again in the middle of the Hwy) and then following us. We came across Will Charlton somewhere further up the road around Nambour from memory when we were refuelling at a BP station after covering about 200 miles.

We soldiered on for some time until we realised we were way off the track and decided to call it an early morning and go home which we reached after covering at least 300 miles.

The instructions included a small brown envelope with emergency instructions (as a last resort); if opened this excluded the participants from the result. Some "much smarter than us" entrants discovered that if the same small brown envelope was held in front of high beam headlights the destination could be read.

Geoff and Kay Hawley were all set up at the "Spit" at Somerset Dam with a Barbeque Breakfast all ready to go, waiting for the horde to arrive and waiting and waiting. Apparently three cars turned up for breakfast. (Nobody admitted to reading the

emergency instructions). The rest of us arrived home very tired and very bloody cold at about 8 am, in our case after covering about 300 miles. This was a winter run, cold and very wet.



The reason for the article is this: Could anyone imagine doing this today? Handbrake turns on the Bruce Highway, driving without lights so other MG drivers wouldn't see you etc. Well we are all still here and wouldn't dream of trying this today, but then we don't have all night navigation runs now as, with today's traffic conditions, it would be impossible to even think of organising such an event and we at this age would be far too sensible to run in one anyway. But at the time (about 40 years ago) it was terrific fun.

My memory is fairly dim about these events and the actual routes taken etc. I remember a couple of interesting things that did occur on other all night runs, possibly during the same event. The first was finding Peter Rayment somewhere around the Obi Obi ranges in pouring rain where he put his driving gloves on his feet because they were so cold with all the water coming thru the "TC's" floorboards. (On this occasion his winter thongs failed to perform as expected).

On another run McCarthy and I were trying to make time up Mt.Mee, again in the rain, when we came up behind a "Valiant-Safari Wagon" driven by Ann Thompson. As we drew closer Ann decided that no MGB was going to get past her and we had to pull back and watch this "Bloody huge Tank" wag its tail all over the then single lane of bitumen, hurling rocks at us from both sides of the road. Ann drove very enthusiastically way back then, to attempt to pass would have cost at least the lights and possibly the windscreen. These were the "Good old Days", almost no traffic at all late at night. It reminds me why I so enjoy our Mid Week runs, now that I am retired.