

Autocross Round 2 - 23 April 2023

A reasonable field of 31 turned out for Round 2 of the Autocross, plus a special General meeting to vote on some minor changes to the constitution, to keep the club abreast of recent changes and best practice.

A lot of the usual protagonists with Ant Bonnici notably only bringing the Mirage out, with Tracy doing some other event with way less horsepower 😊 Wayne Poulie arrived with his white WRX STI, after a stint away from the club, and noticing Ant's plight, kindly offered him a drive. Having driven Wayne's car a few years ago myself, it was going to be hard to say no, so accepted (Mirage versus STI...hmmm). With no other 4WDs, it made Wayne's life interesting.

Another driver who was back after a bit of an absence was Hayden Michel in his Excel, bringing along grandfather Neil (who drives a pretty 2 door LA Lancer – Code Name Lucy).

Ron King bought out his lovely old school ex Hugh Bell Pedder's DAZDA, albeit the car has been an L series again for a no of years. Always nice to see some cool old rally cars. Jeff Kilbride swapped the Levin from last meeting for his usual steed, the 2.6 GB Galant and shared with daughter Holly for the day. Again, a nicely presented old style car.

Robert Clark had his 2.3 MK1 Escort, also bringing back those old forest rally memories.

D class had the most entries, with 7, followed by A and B with 6 each.

Bondy also bought out his 400HP tarmac 2 door 510, which raised some interest, but it was always going to be a tough ask to get power down.

The sighting lap showed the track OK, but a bit loose in places. So into Run 1, and Car 1, Kevin Parkes was the early pacesetter in the mighty Pulsar. As the run progressed no one had a complete shocker, but surprisingly Wayne Poulie and Ant Bonnici in the 4WD STI did not better the early times of Parkesy, Allen Coles (Peugot) and Time Crase (Mazda 3 MPS). One to the 2WDS.....

Run 2 and Parkesy started off with a witches hat (+5 Sec), and other 2WD drivers also fell foul including Jeff Kilbride (GB Galant) and Robert Clark (Escort MK1), but the best was from club president, Greg Woodbridge who had on off on the second last corner on both laps, almost identically. By this stage most had been out, and it was Poulie from Allen Coles, Bonnici, Ric Ganderton (Excel 2.0) and Bondy appeared to be kind of taming the 510 in 5th.

Into run 3, and the track wasn't improving a lot, and Ant got the better of Wayne with a 1:41.79 to a 1:42.08. with Parkes (1:44.29) just bettering Tim Crase (1:44.76) and Ric Ganderton (1:44.90) So very close between A, D and B class. Ruining a fast run was Allen Coles, with a 1:42.57 but +5 secs for a hat. Nathan Suchting also had a shocker with a slow time and penalty, but it happens when trying 😊

After 3 runs it was Poulie, Bonnici, Allen Coles, Parkesy at the front with A Class having Parkes, Suchting (despite run 3) and Hayden Michel in the rally Excel. B Class had Allen Coles, Ric Ganderton and Stuart McLeod in the blue Lancer Coupe. C Class was at three car affair, with Jeff Kilbride holding station by a second, ahead of Robert Clark and Bruce Dan in the BMW. D Class had Bondy taming the 510, to be ahead of Tim Crase, who had an average run 2, and daughter Emma in 3rd, also in the family Mazda 3 MPS. Often front runner Lloyd Robertson (BMW) was a couple of seconds back in 4th.

Juniors saw Alex Niven a couple of seconds ahead of James Bonnici (Mirage), Harrison Gray (Charade) and Sam Niven in 4th after an average 2nd run. Ladies was being headed by the experienced Holly Kilbride (Galant) who would be placing 3rd in C Class at this point, with Patricia McLeod (Swift) and Nancy Stricklen (Proton Jumbuck) putting in steady and improving runs.

Run 4 Saw Allen Coles pull a 1:41 out early, and it took Poulier (1:39.41) and Bonnici (1:41.4) to better him. Next came Clarke, Kilbride, Ganderton, Parkes and Robertson, but the big casualty was an impressive final straight spin by Bondy, backing the Datsun 510 over the line and not recording a time, thus taking slowest time in class plus 5 secs. Alex Niven was an impressive 11th, and best Junior on this run.

Run 5 was going to be after lunch, but a change of plans saw it before lunch. Poulier and Bonnici continued their battle with a 1:38.2 just better than a 1:38.3, Wayne up and setting what ended up as the fastest lap of the day a 0:47.05. Allen Coles continued his impressive run with a 1:40.7, with Ric Ganderton and Kevin Parkes in the high 42's. Then Tim Crase in the 43s, and then Alex Niven in 7th with a 1:45.49 ahead of Bondy in the 510 (who had the electronic throttle default to 0%, and had to reset the ECU mid run). Next was Nathan Suchting in the Lanos and Ian McGuire in the big V8 Commodore, spectacular as usual. Unfortunately for Nathan, he had commitments elsewhere so his runs 6 and 7 were the slowest in class + 5 secs. Run 5 saw Lyndon Mechielsen in the very well engineered Subaru BRZ, resplendent with a Harrop Supercharger on top of the built flat 4, plus AP brakes, do his best with a 1:52.

The lunch break also saw the club meeting, with Secretary Tony Niven giving an overview of the changes, which really just bring the club into line with current standards for incorporated clubs. After some discussion, it was passed unanimously and will be sent to the Office of Fair Trading to be recorded.

After the break there were just two runs for people to make a move, and hopefully put their best foot forward. Early on and Parkesy layed down a 1:42.62, Ganderton a 1:42.69 (turned out to be his best run), Clarke a 1:43.2 but Allen Coles did a 1:39.86 to be the front runner until Wayne did a 1:38.69, with Ant a little slower on a 1:40.6. After Clark came Bond, Kilbride, Alex Niven and Emma Crase with just a second covering them. Harrison Gray did his best run in the little Charade, with a 2:02.95, and had been improving pretty much every run. Sam Niven also had his best, a 1:51.43. Patricia McLeod also did her best run in the Swift with a 1:54.95, again improving and dropping 10 seconds from the days start. Unfortunately she would have a less successful run 7, but you have to have a crack, and we have all tried a bit to hard at least once 😊

For the final run there was one notable shocker, by leading driver Wayne Poulier in the STI, but would it make a difference? Allen Coles again was fast, with a 1:40.35 just pipping Kevin Parkes in the A Class Pulsar 1600, with a 1:40.57. Tim Crase (1:42.57), Robert Clark (1:42.61) and Jeff Kilbride (1:42.94) were close, with Ric Ganderton, Alex Niven, Ant Bonnici and Rick Baggaley (Escort MK2 and having only a second run in a number of years) rounding out the top 10. But the fastest, and finally getting some HP to the ground was Bondy in the 510, with a 1:37.78 to take the fastest run of the day (no trophy for that) and the fastest 2WD lap of a 47.27, which was just behind Wayne Poulriers' 47.05 in the STI.

So for the classes – A Class and Kevin Parkes had a great win, and 4th Outright in the “not an SR” N14 Pulsar, from Nathan Suchting (Lanos) who just pipped Hayden Michel (Excel) with Steven Maller (Gemini) doing his best run in run 7, and Russell Stricklen (Jumbuck), who did his last three runs in 1:51.something, so was consistent and Dylan Perera (Suzuki Alto) improving all day with a final 1:51 also.

B Class (1600-200cc) saw Allen Coles with the win and a brilliant 2nd OR, with Ric Ganderton next and Rick Baggarley taking 3rd. Then it was John Coles, Ron King and Stuart McLeod.

C Class was easy to determine the trophy takers, just not the order. In the end Robert Clark overcame a penalty to take the win from Jeff Kilbride, but they swapped best times, and there was never more than 1.5 seconds per run in it (apart from the penalty), so some great competition there. Third was Bruce Dan who put in a solid day but didn't quite have the pace of the other two.

The big bangers, D Class, saw Bondy overcome the spin and other issue to take the win by a scant 0.3 secs from Tim Crase in the pretty stock Mazda 3 MPS, with evergreen Lloyd Robertson taking 3rd. Emma Crase was next, 1.3 secs back, and put in the last two runs quicker than Lloyd, so was reeling him in. Then came the v8 Commodores of Greg Woodbridge and Ian McGuire.

Juniors saw Alex Niven drive a near perfect day, ending up in 10th OR, with times dropping from a 1:52 to a 1:43. Brother Sam was next who dropped from a 1:58 to a 1:51, with just an average run 2. James Bonnici was next and improved from a 2:02 to a 1:53 (on runs 6 and 7) with Harrison Gray rounding them out, also improving from a 2:12 to a 2:02, and like the others just had one run where he pushed a bit hard, but that is why we are on the track.

For the Ladies, Holly Kilbride was the fastest, and took the win, from Patricia McLeod and Nancy Stricklen. Similar to the Juniors, all the ladies dropped their times dramatically during the day.

So E class was a one car affair, with owner Wayne Poulter taking the win, despite a tragic last run, from Ant Bonnici. Wayne commented after the event that he was pretty sure that he had a hat (or two) that were not counted and insisted that it was really Ants win. Either way the STI took 1st and 3rd OR with Allen Coles the best of the 2WDs in an excellent second.

As always thanks to all the officials and organisers.