



THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE NECC

THE GOOD OIL

JANUARY 2024

VALE: JEFF WHITTEN



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2024 NECC EXEC.



President Peter Whitten
0409 236469

Vice President Chris Aggenbach

Secretary TBA

Treasurer / Jodi Mann
Membership 0409 235 550
Committee

Luke Whitten
John Bell
Jodi Mann
Paul Kent
Steve Roman
Kurt Kazenwadel
Ged Blum
Jason Lennane

Pointscorer Stuart Lister

Khanacross Scott Mann

Club Permits Ron Woodward

Club scrutineer Laurie Weston

Good Oil Peter Whitten

The North Eastern Car Club meet at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month, except January, at the NECC Clubrooms, Nolan Lane, Tarrawingee.

WORKING BEE



SAT, FEB 3RD
SEE PAGE 9 FOR
DETAILS

Keep up to date with club news via our website or on our Facebook page.

JEFF WHITTEN
1943 - 2023

The club lost a giant in December with the passing of club legend, Jeff Whitten

RallySport Magazine founder, Jeff Whitten, is being remembered as a visionary who changed the face of how rallying was reported in Australia.

After passing away on December 6 at the age of 81, the family has received hundreds of messages from friends and acquaintances, heralding his life and accomplishments.

Born in the New South Wales border town of Corowa in 1942, Jeff Whitten became involved in motorsport in the early 1960s, originally attending race meetings in Wangaratta and Tarrawingee organised by the North Eastern Car Club (NECC).

Along with his wife of 58 years, Betty, the club became the backbone of his life. Such was his involvement in the NECC, he was made a life member as early as 1970.

Over the next 50-plus years he was a competitor, organiser and promoter of motorsport, specifically, rallying. He was an accredited course checker, steward and senior official.

Although he began rallying in a Mini Deluxe, Jeff soon became a Ford man through and through. His rally cars



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were a long list of some of the Blue Oval's most popular 'small Fords': Anglias, Cortina Mk1s and Mk2s and, of course, Escort Mk1s and Mk2s.

As a guiding light in his beloved NECC, he organised nearly 100 motorsport events, including the Forest Classic Rally, which he ran 18 times.



JEFF WHITTEN 1943 - 2023

Never one to let the grass grow under his feet, he was president of the NECC five times, secretary 13 times, and was awarded the 'Club Champion' trophy 11 times.

However, in rallying terms, Jeff is best known as the co-founder of Australian Rallysport News in September 1989, a launch that coincided with the first round of the World Rally Championship on home soil.

Along with his son and co-founder, Peter, over 200 issues of the tabloid newspaper were printed between 1989 and 2005, giving rallying a voice in Australia that it had never before been provided with.

The newspaper evolved into the



Jeff down in his final years, he remained passionate about rallying and took a keen interest in everything that was happening, even if he was unable

to travel to events or become as involved as he once was.

Working with Peter on a project they both loved dearly gave him great joy, as did the involvement of grandsons, Luke and Matt, who are helping to continue the RallySport Magazine legacy today.

Jeff Whitten will certainly be remembered as the man who gave Australian rallying its voice, but for his many friends in rallying, it will also be his humble, welcoming nature that will stick with them for years to come. As was said more than once in the aftermath of his sad passing, "he was one of life's gentlemen".

Jeff is survived by wife Betty, children Carolyn and Peter, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



glossy A4 RallySport Magazine in January 2005, before technology forced the publication online at the end of 2006.

Never one to blow his own trumpet or to seek recognition of his achievements, Jeff was acknowledged in 2000 with the presentation of the Australian Sports Medal to commemorate his achievements in the sporting world.

National recognition for services to rallying In March of 2015, he was inducted into the Victorian Rallying Halling of Fame, followed in May 2015 with inclusion into the Australian Rally Hall of Fame, achievements that he was immensely proud of.

While Parkinson's Disease slowed



New Victorian forest legislation nears

Huge areas of natural forest used by rallying in Victoria could soon be classified as National Park under a proposal by the Victorian government.

The end of native forest logging in many areas of the state has the government pushing for a new 'Great Forest National Park' that would lock up 300,000 hectares of forest currently used by everyone from hunters, firewood collectors, campers, 4WD'ers, trail bike riders and rallying.

The area in Victoria's Central Highlands covers a huge area to the east and northeast of Melbourne, areas that are currently used by several rounds of the Victorian Rally Championship.

The Ada River Rally, Valley Stages and Akademos Rally are three events likely to be affected, as well as the new Southern Classic Rally.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) has recommended that 77 per cent of the Central Highlands' state forest be turned into national parks.

The Great Forest National Park website says that key features of the plan include fire, water and climate safety, species resilience, a science program and job creation.

Not surprisingly though, the move is already attracting objections from several user groups, including the Sporting Shooters Association.

"You have to wonder what this public land is being protected from. Is it the public?" spokesman Barry Howlett told The Weekly Times.

"For hundreds of thousands of working Victorians, camping with the family, including the family dog, is the only affordable holiday option. If you turn these areas into national parks and lock their dogs out, where are they going to go?" Howlett added.

National park campaigner, Jordan Crook, wasn't so sure, however.

"We know national parks are very popular with the public. You will see more people going out to these areas, now they're released from logging," he said.

Australian rallying Hall of Fame member, Ross Runnalls, told RallySport



Reprinted from www.rallysportmag.com.au

Magazine that the plan was Labour Party policy.

"History shows that when they want a park, they get a park. It's a losing battle, and it's a new challenge that rallying will have to face. It will have to look to other areas to run events," Runnalls said.

New Victorian Rally Panel chairman, Darryn Snooks, said that the forest issue was one of several major issues for the sport moving forward.

"We need to ensure we have a clear plan for the future of the sport over the next 20 years, otherwise we may not have a sport," Snooks said.

"This is a major challenge for us, just as the pine forest ban was for us in the early 2000s."

It's now over 20 years since a ban on the use of softwood pine plantations in Victoria came into effect.

In 2001, the then-Liberal government leased the pine forests to Hancocks Victorian Plantations (HVP), who abruptly banned rallying in the forests – a ban that shows no signs of being eased.

The Great Forest National Park legislation is another hurdle that rallying now needs to work around, providing a most unwanted challenge for the sport.

CLUB PERMIT REGISTRATIONS UPDATE

The following members have their club permit registration due on the dates below. Please remember that if you are not a financial member of the NECC, your registration is not valid.

Geoffrey Riddock	12953 H	3/02/2024
Robert Porpora	13047 H	15/02/2024
Eric Ramsay	33800 H	19/02/2024
Sherwin Williams	56244 H	13/02/2024
Craig Cations	64819 H	28/02/2024
Tony Dalton	66987 H	25/02/2024
Evan Sanderson	74846 H	23/02/2024
Michael White	56007 H	22/02/2024
Darryn Bechaz	99581 H	21/02/2024
James Perkins	4626 H3	26/02/2024

OVERDUE

Michael White	64795 H	21/12/2023
Michael White	5722 H9	29/11/2023



NORTHEASTERN CAR CLUB.COM.AU

SHOW US YOUR WHEELS NIGHT

\$10 PER
VEHICLE
ENTRY

Our 10th Annual Display



WEDNESDAY 7TH FEB 2024

classic cars / daily driver /
ute / motorcycle /
motorsport car

NECC CLUB

muscle car / street rod /
sports car / vintage car /
Sunday drive car

ROOMS

NOLANS LANE, TARRAWINGEE

FREE KIDS
ACTIVITIES

GOLD COIN
SPECTATOR
ENTRY

FOOD &
DRINK



BROUGHT TO YOU BY
5.30PM START



SHARE THE PASSION



When buying a cheap car, it's often a case of 'right place, right time' and for me, this was definitely the case for my Mazda rally car.

The Mazda Familia GTX, as it was called in Japan, was never sold to the Australian domestic market, but many were imported to the country as car enthusiasts turned them into rally cars, or simply kept them for use on the road. As they came to Australia, they were added to the 323 range.

Mazda's Familia GTX was their 4WD turbocharged rally monster - the BG chassis, which mine is, was a successor to the BF chassis. The BG got a 1.8 litre engine, upgraded from a 1.6, as well as many other upgrades.

In October 2022, I'd just returned from Rally New Zealand and was scrolling through Facebook Marketplace when this gem appeared, listed just 12 minutes ago. I was quick to message the guy and lock in my purchase, pending inspection.

Now, the car was rough. It was sitting out the back of a house in the weather, and looked like it needed a lot of love. It wasn't running; the ever present issue of weak gearboxes with this model had reared it's head and this one was toast. However, included in the purchase was the parts to repair the gearbox, which I



thought was a decent old deal.

Further, the Motorsport Australia approved roll cage and logbook was the telling factor. That alone made the purchase, at just \$2500, very worthwhile.

After agreeing to go and look at the car the following day, I needed a way to pick it up. Mum and Dad were still in New Zealand and knew nothing of my intended purchase the following day.

A quick call to good mate Jason Lennane, and he was more than happy to tow a trailer over and help me pick it up.

On arrival, everything in the photos was true, it was rough, it did need work, but I simply couldn't turn down the offer that was on the table.

Firstly, because of the value for money I was getting, and secondly, because Dad built and rallied the same shape car successfully in 1996 and 1997 - I've always loved the shape and always tried to purchase back Dad's old GTX, despite not being able to yet.

The deal was done and we towed it

Matt Whitten: Mazda 323 GTX

home - I parked it in front of the shed and decided that I had better tell Dad that I'd bought myself a rally car and needed to store it in his shed. He was, of course, excited by the fact I'd bought such a car.

The Mazda lay dormant for quite a few months - I didn't really know what my plan was. Steve Roman worked his magic on the gearbox for me, and rebuilt it to a refurbished condition.

I put the gearbox back in, and the engine fired up straight away - after six months sitting in my shed, as well as however long the previous owner had it sitting before he sold it. I was thrilled. The connecting of the gearbox I had help with, but apart from that, putting all the turbo and manifold and intercooler piping back on was something I did via trial and error, and it worked perfectly.

Unfortunately, on first drive a badly slipping clutch was diagnosed, and after much deliberation and attempted fixes, it was decided that the box would come out and a new clutch was ordered.

That's the difficulty with buying someone else's problems - you never know what you're getting. The owner told me that it was a brand new clutch, and it looked it, but upon investigation, it was the wrong type.

When I put the new heavy duty clutch in, and everything else back in, the slipping clutch was fixed, and the relief of knowing that it was a simple (but somewhat expensive) fix was something I was happy with.

I drove the car in the NECC Test Day in the Moyhu Forest in 2023 and was very tentative, learning the ropes, and making sure everything on the car worked as it should - there was no risk taken that day and I drove, admittedly, quite slowly all day.

With plans to compete in the final two khanacrosses in the car, the first one I didn't make as a rear brake issue became apparent. For the final event of the year the issue was still there, however, I decided that a khanacross was likely the safest and best way to diagnose and fix



the issue.

The issue was that the rear brakes were barely working, and the fronts would lock up in an instant with any hard brake pressure. It was soft braking for the whole day to combat this issue and I was able to drive cleanly and take my first ever khanacross win.

The car has sat in the one spot since that last khanacross, with other priorities taking centre stage over the Mazda, however, I think the issue should be

pretty easy to solve.

That's the up to date story of my Mazda Familia GTX, a car that I got a bargain deal on. Hopefully, throughout 2024, it will make more appearances at khanacrosses, have some exciting upgrades, and compete in its first rally or Rallysprint in my hands.

– Matt Whitten





Working Bee before our Show Us Your Wheels Night

When: Saturday, Feb 3rd

Time: 8.00 am - 11.30 am

Come along and help us get the grounds ready for our biggest social event of the year.

Bring your gardening and/or cleaning tools, and remember, many hands make light work.

Laurie, Gail honoured as NECC Life Members

NECC stalwarts Laurie Weston and Gail Gourlay were recognised for their outstanding work for the club by being awarded Life Memberships in December

Laurie is a former president and rally champion and has, for more years that we care to remember, been the club's head scrutineer.

Gail, meanwhile, is a former treasurer and administrator and has been husband Gary's right hand lady over a lifetime of service to the NECC.

Gail joins Betty Whitten as the only other lady Life Member of the North Eastern Car Club.

Also at our successful presentation night, Luke Brough was awarded the inaugural Josh Dowel Memorial Trophy after a stellar year in the khandacross series.

The presentation night was our best attended in many years, and helps to set the club up for an even bigger 2024 year.

Photos from the night can be seen on the following pages.

2024 NORTH EASTERN CAR CLUB EVENT CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Feb.		
3	Working Bee	Tarrawingee
7	Show Us Your Wheels Night	Tarrawingee
17	Rally Retro Festival	Melbourne
21	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
March		
6	General meeting	Tarrawingee
16	Mitta Mountain Rally	Mitta Mitta
21	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
24	Khandacross Round 1	Carboor
24	Melbourne F1 Grand Prix	
April		
3	General meeting / Guest speaker	Tarrawingee
14	Khandacross Round 2	Carboor
17	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
May		
1	General meeting	Tarrawingee
4	Intro to Motorsport #1	Tarrawingee
11	NECC Rallysprint - Level 1	Whroo Forest
19	Khandacross Round 3	Carboor
22	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
June		
5	Private car collection tour	Wangaratta
16	Khandacross - spare date	Carboor
19	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
22	Nissan Nightmoves Rally	Heathcote

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
July		
3	General meeting	Tarrawingee
17	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
20	North Eastern Rallysprint	TBC
28	Khandacross - spare date	Carboor
Aug.		
7	Wangaratta Dyno tour	Wangaratta
18	Khandacross Round 4	Carboor
21	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
Sept.		
4	General meeting	Tarrawingee
7	Intro to Motorsport #2	Tarrawingee
15	Khandacross Round 5	Carboor
18	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
21	Valley Stages Rally - VRC	Yarra Valley
Oct.		
2	Social Night	TBA
12	TAFE Motorsport tour and drive	Wodonga
13	Bathurst 1000	Bathurst
16	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
20	Akademoss Rally	Alexandra
26	Bagshot Rallysprint	Bagshot
Nov.		
6	General meeting	Tarrawingee
20	Committee meeting	Tarrawingee
23	Southern Classic Rally	Marysville
Dec.		
4	Annual General Meeting	Tarrawingee
5	Presentation Dinner	Tarrawingee

2024 **5** 2024
RALLY RETRO FESTIVAL

Sat 17th Feb 2024

Est HRA 1992
HISTORIC RALLY
Association
30 YEARS - KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE

Rally Retro Festival



SHARE THE PASSION



Where rally history comes alive!

Jump aboard the NECC bus to the annual Rally Retro Festival in Melbourne.

Saturday, February 17.

Bus cost is \$40 per person, plus approx. \$10 entry into the Festival. BYO food and drinks for the bus, with refreshments available at the show.

RSVP to John Bell ASAP on 0400 863 334

Photo: B-Team Rally Media Layout: Dirt Team

2023 PRESENTATION DINNER



New Life Members Gail Gourlay and Laurie Weston



Lady Life Members Gail Gourlay and Betty Whitten



Rally Champs Michael Trucano and Heli Thaw with Jodi Mann



Gary Gourlay won the Club Championship award



Khanacross champion Graeme Cooper



Steve Crossthwaite and Ray Wingrave



Luke Brough won the Josh Dowell Memorial Award



Former rally champs Laurie Weston and Ron Lugg

2023 PRESENTATION DINNER



Paul Kent and Ray Wingrave



Steve Roman accepts a khanacross award



VP Chris Aggenbach kept us all entertained



Jodi Mann accepts the Clubperson award from the President



The night provided plenty of laughs and good times



Khanacross series sponsor Bruce Robertson



Troy, Kylie and Tamzyn Dowell (and Josh!)



The Kaitlers and the Harpers catch up