

Early History of the Bega Valley Rally (to 1980)

The Bega Valley Rally ('BVR') is one of the icons of Australian rallying and ranks with the Southern Cross International, Castrol and Alpine Rallies as the best known such events in the country.

The BVR (in 1973) succeeded the Snowy Mountains Rally, and prior to that it was known as the Southern Mountains Trial, which started in 1960.



Always conducted over the June long weekend, which allowed the event to cover massive distances, it travelled far and wide around southern New South Wales for more than a 1000 kilometres, passing through towns such as Cooma, Dalgety, Bombala, Eden, Bega, Moruya, Batemans Bay and Ulladulla, and many other smaller locations.

It was finally based in Bega and became the Bega Valley Rally from 1973 when Bob Moore, as Rally Director, decided to run it in a series of loops from the town, although those loops were fairly long. For many years the event started at 3pm on Saturday and finished 3am Sunday; then restarted 3pm Sunday to finish at 3am Monday.

The centre of the rally from the seventies was the **Bega RSL Club**, and that name invokes all sorts of emotions from the competitors, service crews and officials who were involved in that era, for it was the centre for all on the long weekend, with breakfast being served from 3pm and dinner, and associated beverages, from 3am!!

The event was considered by many as the 'senior' round of the Australian Rally Championship throughout the seventies.

The format of the event in its early years based at Bega was that it was conducted over the long weekend in June, split into two nightly divisions of some 300 MILES (in excess of 500kilometres) each. The rally took in open public and forestry roads, and being conducted at night eliminated what was becoming dangerous daylight running. Increasingly roads for competition were being officially closed as public traffic increased.

Competitors gathered at Bega on Friday, and the first division started at 2pm on Saturday allowing for a great social night at the Bega RSL. The first crew arrived back in Bega around 2 or 3am, and everyone gathered again at the Bega RSL and told stories – tall and true. Then off to bed (sometimes quite late!) and up again for a 3pm start on Sunday, with a repeat 3am finish Monday, followed by more stories and a presentation around 8 or 9am, and then everyone headed for home.

The event wandered over what today is a vast area:

- North - to Bermagui, Narooma, Moruya and Batemans Bay
- West - to Bombala
- South - through Eden to below the below the Victoria border
- West - well, no, the Tasman Sea didn't provide the right environment

JOHN KERAN



John Keran, who usually drove a Volvo, was one of the quickest rally drivers in the period 1966 to 1970. He won the 1968 Southern Cross Rally (with navigator Peter Meyer in a 142S) and was leading the 1970 Captain Cook Bicentenary Round Australia Trial with Roger Bonhomme until he bogged his Holden Monaro.

Keran became President of the Australian Sporting Car Club for the period 1971 to 1977 and during his reign the club developed the famous Southern Cross International Rally, the National Championship Bega Valley Rally and the Kevin Houley Memorial Novice Trial.

John Keran

All these events were supremely successful under his firm direction. This is a side of Keran that very few people realise, and much is owed to him for the development of rallying in the seventies.



BEGA RALLY
Senior Round of the Australian
Rally Championship
June

The Bega Valley Rally logo was adopted from a local schools competition to design a logo for the event.

It represented the different directions that the course took from Bega itself.

BEGA VALLEY RALLY AND THE AUSTRALIAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

THE SIXTIES ERA - 1960 to 1969

What about earlier years

The BVR (as the Snowy Rally) was a round in the inaugural Australian Rally Championship in 1968 and was won by Barry Ferguson/Dave Johnson in a Volkswagen. A young driver by the name of Colin Bond finished fifth in a Mitsubishi Colt and went on to dominate the event for years, with wins in 1971, 1972, 1975 and 1979; and being placed second in 1970 and 1973.

1968 Rothmans Snowy Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|--------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Barry Ferguson | NSW | Dave Johnson | NSW | Volkswagen | 85 |
| 2 | Greg Garard | ACT | Nigel Collier | NSW | Holden 186S | 95 |
| 3 | John Garard | ACT | Brian Waldron | NSW | Holden 186S | 99 |
| 4 | Bruce Collier | NSW | Steve Halloran | NSW | Renault R8 Gordini | 102 |
| 5 | Colin Bond | NSW | Brian Hope | NSW | Mitsubishi Colt Fastback | 120 |
| 6 | Bob Watson | VIC | Jim McAuliffe | VIC | Holden Kingswood HK | 122 |

1968 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Classic (VIC)

Snowy Mountains (NSW)

Walkerville 500 (SA)

Canberra 500 (ACT)

Warana (QLD)

Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

1: Harry Firth (VIC)

2: Frank Kilfoyle (VIC)

3: John Keran (NSW)

4: Bob Watson (VIC)

5: Ian Vaughan (VIC)

6: Barry Ferguson (NSW)

Navigators:

1: Graham Hoinville (VIC)

2: Peter Meyer (NSW)

1969 Rothmans Snowy Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|--------------------|--------|
| 1 | Evan Green | NSW | Roy Denny | NSW | Austin 1800 | 153 |
| =2 | John Keran | NSW | Peter Meyer | NSW | Volvo 142S | 173 |
| =2 | Colin Bond | NSW | Brian Hope | NSW | Mitsubishi Colt SS | 173 |
| 4 | Ian Vaughan | VIC | Bob Forsyth | VIC | Ford Cortina-Lotus | 180 |
| 5 | Bruce Collier | NSW | Steve Halloran | NSW | Renault Gordini | 243 |
| 6 | Richard Harris | NSW | John Bryson | NSW | Mazda1200 Coupe | 285 |

1969 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Classic (VIC)

Snowy Mountains (NSW)

John Martin 500 (SA)

Warana (QLD)

Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

1: Frank Kilfoyle (VIC)

2: John Keran (NSW)

3: Tony Roberts (VIC)

4: Ian Vaughan (VIC)

5: Evan Green (NSW)

6: Adrian Callary (SA)

Navigators:

1: Doug Rutherford (VIC)

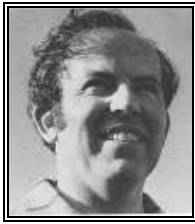
2: Peter Meyer (NSW)

3: Brian Hope (NSW)

4: Bob Forsythe (VIC)

5: Roy Denny (NSW)

6: Garry Chapman (SA)



Barry Ferguson



Harry Firth



Frank Kilfoyle

THE SEVENTIES ERA - 1970 to 1980

The early seventies saw the dominance of the Holden Torana XU'Is of Colin Bond and Peter Lang, taking over from the Renaults, by convincingly winning the BVR in 1971, 1972 and 1973 by taking out first and second in all years. By the end of 1973 the rally fraternity wondered if the XUI could be beaten.

In the years 1974 to 1976 however, the Datsun 240Z/260Z started to take on and eventually beat the XUI, with a win in the BVR in 1974 by Stewart McLeod; then Ross Dunkerton started to dominate with the with the marquee in '75, '76, and early '77. He turned to the Datsun 710 later in '77.

The mid-to-late seventies saw great tussles in the Australian Rally Championship, with the BVR notoriously providing much contention between competitors for the winners' title.

Thus began the famous annual battles between Datsun (710s then Stanzas) and Ford Escorts (RS1800 and 2000); Ross Dunkerton and George Fury versus Colin Bond and Greg Carr. Those who experienced these years consider them to be the unforgettable 'Golden Era' of rallying.

Dunkerton won the Bega event in 1976, Carr in 1977 & 1978 and Bond in 1979, with one or the other finishing second or third each year.

The era ended when both Datsun and Ford withdraw from the sport in 1980, along with Holden and its Gemini project.

The seventies was also a technical nightmare which wasn't finally resolved until the end of the eighties! But this is a subject all of its own and will be tackled under the Group A v Group G document to be produced in the Eighties Era.

Through much of the seventies, the eligibility regulations were for virtually standard vehicles with no engine modifications or strengthening of body or suspensions. Nor did it allow for cars with specially homologated rally components such as the Mitsubishi Galant, Mitsubishi Lancer GSR, or Datsun 180B Coupe which all appeared in the Southern Cross International Rally.

In fact, some of these cars did contest some rounds of the ARC, but the crews were not eligible to score championship points. Hence, some events list a different winner to that of the official ARC records!! For example, in 1976 George Fury, driving a Datsun 710, won three rounds ahead of the ultimate ARC Champion, Ross Dunkerton.

The 710 was used in ARC rounds to prepare it for the 1976 Southern Cross Rally, which Fury led for the first three legs until the car had differential failure on the last leg, thus letting Andrew Cowan driving the Mitsubishi Lancer through for this sixth win in the 'Cross.

For 1977, the vehicle eligibility changed. There were few restrictions as **Group G** was introduced, thus allowing leading privateer entries to take it up to the factory-based teams. But it also meant that the latter could make modifications too, and thus the scene was set for the ding-dong battle between Datsun and Ford, which simply didn't let the privateers in for a look.

The Manufacturer's Championship was cancelled for the period 1978 to 1987, and the winning marquee was not recognised. So the Group G battle began!! More later!!!!

FORMAT OF THE EVENT

1970 Cibie Snowy Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Bob Watson | VIC | Jim McAuliffe | VIC | Renault Gordini | 16 |
| 2 | Colin Bond | NSW | Brian Hope | NSW | Holden Monaro 350 | 17 |
| 3 | Max Winkless | NSW | Peter Meyer | NSW | Volvo 142S | 21 |
| 4 | Bruce Collier | NSW | Peter Haas | VIC | Renault Gordini | 31 |
| 5 | Peter Houghton | NSW | Mick Nielson | NSW | Peugeot 404 | 36 |
| 6 | Mal McPherson | VIC | Roger Bonhomme | VIC | Renault Gordini | 38 |

The event ventured into the Snowy Mountains (from whence it received its name), and was organised by Australian Sporting Car Club committee men Allan Lawson and Dr David White.

The Holden Dealer Team (HDT) suffered a severe setback when the Barry Ferguson/Dave Johnson Torana GTR (which won the Southern Cross Rally later in the year) blew a head gasket before the start, and on the first competitive stage Tony Roberts/Mike Osborne rolled the second GTR. This left the team's hope of victory in the hands of Colin Bond/Brian hope, driving a Monaro.

The early leader was Max Winkless/Peter Meyer driving a Volvo 142S, with Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe (Renault Gordini) and Bond chasing them. At the end of the first night it was Winkless to Bond to Watson.

All through the second night Bond and Watson desperately tried to peg back Winkless which, little by little, they did until the last competitive stage, by which time Watson had taken the lead, followed by Bond and Winkless on equal time. The Volvo then has electrical problems and so in the end Watson won comfortably, followed by Bond, with Winkless limping into third place.



Bob Watson



Renault Gordini 8



Holden Monaro GTS 350

1970 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Eureka (VIC)
 Blue Ribbon (VIC)
 Snowy Mountains (NSW)
 Cambridge Toyota (SA)
 Warana (Qld)

Drivers:

1: Bob Watson (VIC)
 2: Colin Bond (NSW)
 3: Mal McPherson (VIC)
 4: Tony Roberts (VIC)
 5: Stewart McLeod (SA)
 6: Peter Robertson

Navigators:

1: Jim McAuliffe (VIC)
 2: Brian Hope (NSW)
 3: Robin Sharpley (VIC)
 4: Mike Osborne (VIC)
 5: John Lock (SA)
 6: Roger Bonhomme (VIC)

The 1970 championship was dominated by Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe in a Renault Gordini. The pair convincingly won four out of the five rounds, and was second in the other!! This was the year that the Holden Monaro was swung into rallying, being used in the 1970 Captain Cook

Bicentennial Round Australia Trial, driven by Colin Bond and John Keran. In the Championship, Bond finished second, driving the big Monaro GTS350.



Bruce Collier/Peter Haas – Renault Gordini

Bruce Collier was the Renault King of Sydney and prepared his own and many other cars for competitors. He was exceptionally quick but not quite able to bridge the gap to the factory backed teams of Watson and McPherson. He had a fine record in the BVR – 4th in 1968, 5th in 1969, 4th in 1970 and 3rd in 1971, and then the Gordinis were overtaken by the Holden XU1s.

1971 Snowy Mountains Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------------|--------|
| 1 | Colin Bond | NSW | George Shephard | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 36 |
| 2 | Barry Ferguson | NSW | David Johnson | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 59 |
| 3 | Bruce Collier | NSW | Lindsay Adcock | NSW | Renault Gordini | 60 |
| 4 | Stewart McLeod | SA | Jack Lock | SA | Holden Torana XU1 | 68 |
| 5 | Bob Watson | VIC | Andy Chapman | VIC | Renault Gordini | 82 |
| 6 | Peter Haughton | NSW | Jim Faulkner | NSW | Mitsubishi Colt 1100 | 83 |

1971 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Classic (VIC),
 Bunbury-Curran (NSW)
 Snowy Mountains (NSW)
 Uniroyal Southern (SA)
 Warana (Qld)

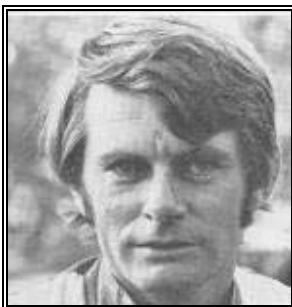
Drivers:

1: Colin Bond (NSW)
 2: Bob Watson (VIC)
 3: Frank Kilfoyle (VIC)
 =4: Stewart McLeod (SA)
 =4: Barry Ferguson (NSW)
 =4: Mal McPherson (VIC)

Navigators:

1: George Shephard (NSW)
 2: Andy Chapman (VIC)
 3: Mike Osborne (VIC)
 =4: David Johnson (NSW)
 =4: Jeff Beaumont (Vic)
 6: Jack Lock (SA)

This was the year of the introduction of the Torana GTR XU1 to the championship, following Barry Ferguson's win in the 1970 Southern Cross Rally driving a Torana GTR. Bond/Shephard won three rounds, starting a long chain of great success for the car. The previous champion, Renault Gordini, took off the other two events in the series and this was the last year of any dominance by the French made car.



Colin Bond



Holden Torana XU1



Reg Lunn/John Hall - Ford Capri V8

The Mitsubishi Galants which competed in the Southern Cross Rally were little more than private entries, under Doug Stewart's direction. Chrysler had taken over Mitsubishi but did not actively participate in any form of motor sport at this time. The Galants were basically loaned to the drivers, and backed by only minor financial and technical services – the Southern Cross Rally entries were, of course, full blown Mitsubishi Japan entries. The cars were beset by numerous minor mechanical difficulties and, when they looked like giving the Holdens a good run for their money (Holden's!!) so often than not, they fell by the wayside.

But the Holdens, with Harry Firth leading the Holden Dealer Team, were really simply too fast, too reliable, too well driven, too well navigated and too well organised to give anyone else a chance in these years.

1972 Snowy Mountains Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Colin Bond | NSW | George Shephard | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 58 |
| 2 | Frank Kilfoyle | VIC | Roger Bonhomme | VIC | Holden Torana XU1 | 60 |
| =3 | Stewart McLeod | SA | Adrian Mortimer | SA | Holden Torana XU1 | 65 |
| =3 | Doug Chivas | NSW | Peter Meyer | NSW | Mitsubishi Galant 1600 | 65 |
| 5 | Doug Stewart | NSW | Dave Johnson | NSW | Mitsubishi Galant 1600 | 70 |
| 6 | Peter Lang | ACT | Ed O'Clery | ACT | Datsun 1600 | 71 |

1972 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Bunbury Curran (NSW)
 Akademos (Vic)
 Snowy Mountains (NSW),
 Warana (Qld)
 Walkerville 500 (SA)
 Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

1: Colin Bond (NSW)
 2: Frank Kilfoyle (Vic)
 3: Doug Stewart (NSW)
 4: John Taylor (SA)
 5: Stewart McLeod (SA)

Navigators:

1: George Shephard (NSW)
 2: David Johnson (NSW)
 3: Roger Bonhomme (Vic)
 4: Graham West (SA)
 =5: Peter Myer (NSW)
 =5: Rob Hunt (SA)

Colin Bond and George Shephard took out their second successive championship win with the Torana XU1. They won five of the six rounds – Bond won three and Kilfoyle two.



Colin Bond



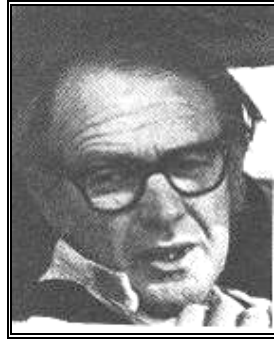
Holden Torana XU1

They were chased by a pack of Mitsubishi Galants, the car which have gave the XU1 such a chase in the 1971 Southern Cross rally and which, with its cousin the Lancer, would dominate

that event from 1971 to 1976. Much was expected of the Galants but they seemed to suffer from the lack of servicing by their Japanese service crews throughout the year – something that was rectified thereafter!!



Doug Chivas



Doug Stewart



Mitsubishi Galant GSR (Chivas at the wheel)

1973 Club Autosport Bega Valley Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------------------|--------|
| 1 | Peter Lang | ACT | Warwick Smith | VIC | Holden Torana XU1 | 79 |
| 2 | Colin Bond | NSW | George Shephard | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 84 |
| 3 | Ed Mulligan | NSW | Mike Batten | NSW | Mazda RX2 Coupe | 85 |
| 4 | Stewart McLeod | SA | Adrian Mortimer | SA | Holden Torana XU1 | 97 |
| 5 | Tony Roberts | VIC | Jeff Beaumont | VIC | SAAB | 103 |
| 6 | Roy Denny | NSW | Richard Denny | NSW | Triumph 2.5 Pi | 181 |

1973 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Uniroyal Southern (SA)
 Classic (VIC)
 Bunbury Curran (NSW)
 Bega Valley (NSW)
 Warana (QLD)
 Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

1: Peter Lang (ACT)
 2: Colin Bond (NSW)
 3: Stewart McLeod (SA)
 4: Frank Kilfoyle (VIC)
 5: Ed Mulligan (NSW)
 6: Tony Roberts (VIC)

Navigators:

1: Warwick Smith (VIC)
 2: George Shephard (NSW)
 3: Adrian Mortimer (SA)
 4: Mike Osborne (VIC)
 5: Mike Batten (NSW)
 6: Jeff Beaumont (VIC)

The Torana XU1 won all six rounds in 1973, with wins by Stewart McLeod, Colin Bond (2), Peter Lang (2) and Frank Kilfoyle (1). Lang, with Warwick Smith, took off the Bega Valley Rally, and managed high placings in most of the other events to take out the championship.



Peter Lang



Holden Torana XU1



Bruce Hodgson



Ford Falcon GT



Ed Mulligan/Mike Batten - Mazda RX2

1974 Bega Valley Rally - Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------|--------|
| 1 | Stewart McLeod | SA | Adrian Mortimer | SA | Datsun 260Z | 55 |
| 2 | Peter Lang | ACT | Fred Gocentas | ACT | Holden Torana XU1 | 56 |
| 3 | Ross Dunkerton | WA | John Large | WA | Datsun 240Z | 63 |
| 4 | Bill Evans | VIC | Mike Mitchell | VIC | Datsun 120Y | 85 |
| 5 | Bruce Cheesman | NSW | Graham Lockie | NSW | Datsun 1600 | 110 |
| 6 | Colin Bond | NSW | George Shepheard | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 116 |



Stewart McLeod



Holden Torana XU1

1974 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

Semperit 1600 (WA)
 Akademos (VIC)
 Bega Valley (NSW)
 Uniroyal Southern (SA)
 Warana (QLD)
 Bunbury-Currin (NSW)
 Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

1: Colin Bond (NSW)
 2: Stewart McLeod (SA)
 3: Ross Dunkerton (WA)
 4: Peter Lang (ACT)
 5: Dean Rainsford (SA)
 6: Bill Evans (Vic)

Navigators:

1: George Shepheard (NSW)
 2: Adrian Mortimer (SA)
 3: John Large (WA)
 4: Graham West (SA)
 5: Mike Mitchell (VIC)
 6: John Suominen (VIC)

Lang started off 1974 with a win in the XUI in the inaugural West Australia round of the championship, with Bond taking out the second to fifth events (and second in another) to win the championship once again.

A young Greg Carr, known in Canberra circles as a fearless driver, won the sixth round (Bunbury Curran at Ulladulla in NSW) from Bond, driving a Datsun 1600. However, the car was not eligible so the win went to Bond.

However, Stewart McLeod, having turned to the Datsun 260Z, won the BVR and was well placed on most other rounds and finished only a few points behind Bond.

This was the end of the XUI in top competition, with Bond turning to the Holden Torana L34 in 1975, but with limited success.



Colin Bond



Holden Torana XU1

1975 Bega Valley Rally – Round of ARC

| Pos | Driver | State | Navigator | State | Make/Model | Points |
|-----|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------|--------|
| 1 | Colin Bond | NSW | George Shepheard | NSW | Holden Torana L34 | 65 |
| 2 | Robert Jackson | NSW | Ross Jackson | NSW | Holden Torana XU1 | 77 |
| 3 | Ross Dunkerton | WA | John Large | WA | Datsun 240Z | 87 |
| 4 | Ed Mulligan | NSW | Fred Gocentas | ACT | Holden Torana L34 | 88 |
| 5 | David Jones | VIC | Ian Balcock | VIC | Mitsubishi Galant | 97 |
| 6 | Barry Dyer | NSW | Brian McGuirk | NSW | Subaru Coupe | 145 |

1975 Australian Rally Championship:

Rounds:

- Mazda House 1000 (NSW)
- Toms Tyres 1600 (WA)
- Akademos (VIC)
- Bega Valley (NSW)
- Warana (QLD)
- Walker Trophy (SA)
- Alpine (VIC)
- Alpine (VIC)

Drivers:

- 1: Ross Dunkerton (WA)
- 2: Stewart McLeod (SA)
- 3: George Fury (VIC)
- 4: Colin Bond (NSW)
- 5= Ed Mulligan (NSW)
- 5= Dean Rainsford (SA)
- 7: Bill Evans (VIC)

Navigators:

- 1: John Large (WA)
- 2: Adrian Mortimer (SA)
- 3: George Shepheard (NSW)
- 4= Fred Gocentas (ACT)
- 4= Graham West (SA)
- 6: Roger Bonhomme (VIC)



It was now the turn of Datsun to start to become prominent in the championship, and this year it was Ross Dunkerton/John Large who took it off, driving the Datsun 240Z, with three wins, two seconds, a third, and a famous DNF in the last event, the Alpine.



Ross Dunkerton



John Large



Datsun 240Z

Coming from West Australia, and with almost no support from Datsun Australia (certainly not in service assistance), Dunkerton's and Large's efforts were stupendous and their win was one of the more meritorious of the era.