

WESTWORDS

VOLUME 16

JULY 2013

ISSUE: 1



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA (WA DIVISION) Inc

Leyland P76

LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA (WA DIVISION) Inc.

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General Meetings are held on the last Monday evening of every month at 7.30 PM (unless otherwise notified). The Meetings are held at the Kenwick Community Hall

The AGM is held in July. For dates of club meetings and events, refer to the Coming Events section of this Newsletter.

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

As you have probably guessed, this month's *WestWords* has been delayed by two weeks to allow inclusion of reports on two major events for the Club as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations: the Forrest Place Display on Wednesday 26 June and the unforgettable Canberra Weekend 28-30 June. At the time of writing this editorial these events were still firmly ensconced in the future, so check out the articles for the superlatives.

As compensation for the delay, this issue has been bumped out to a massive 16 pages! The next big event for this very special year in the life of our All-Aussie icon will be the combined AGM and Annual Dinner on Sunday 28 July, so well put together by Dave Bryan who, with some judicious arm-twisting and knee-work, firmly persuaded the management of the Kalamunda Hotel to modify their policy to accommodate the average club member's budget. Dave's email message to members is included (slightly edited) in this issue of *WestWords* for the benefit of those who rely solely on Australia Post for their copy of the club mag.

Some of our current regular features, such as *The Lighter Side*, *Strange Vehicles*, and *P76 Movies*, have had to be left out of this issue to make room for the special articles covering the 40th Anniversary. Hopefully they will return in the August issue.

Finally, although painfully absent from the major Aussie media outlets, the UK *Telegraph* and the BBC have given great coverage to the winning role played by the Crown & Bryson P76 in the Peking to Paris Enduro Rally. If we can find a way to congratulate these two stalwarts on let's do it! At 81 year of age, Gerry Crown is a towering example of the Aussie spirit.

One cannot help wondering what the Aussie media reaction would be if the Holden or Ford has finished up there with the leaders . . .and why the difference? , We can all be justly proud of what Gerry and Matt have achieved in putting the big Leyland up on the world stage.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Sam

The car on the cover page was in BMX Bandits I love Google ha-ha.

Have a great day.

Kind regards,

Kirsty Carr 27/05/2013

(Well done, Kirsty. The movie was released in 1983 and starred David Argue, John Ley, Nicole Kidman, and Angelo D'Angelo.-Ed)

Attention Sam,

Can you please notify the club members of a change of date of our combined run of the Austin/Leyland P76 Clubs has to be put back one week to the 22nd September 2013 due to unforeseen event that has come up. Meeting spot and times remain unchanged.

Late comers (i.e Andy M) can also catch up with us at either the Lakes or York. Bring a BYO BBQ lunch as there will be a BBQ and a toilet at our final destination of the Viechts Farm and then head off to an old Farm Grave Yard (old cars) for a look at what's there. Sorry for any inconvenience

Terry Johnson, Social coordinator AMVC WA

Hi Sam,

Here's a picture you can include in the next edition of *WestWords*. It's called "Busted by your local Constabulary", out to ruin my weekend. I guess the word is out that the P76 is a force to be reckoned with when the Boys in Blue won't let a P76 out of a speeding fine. Cheers, Adrian Carr. 17/06/2013.



Adrian's car snapped at 88kph in a 80kph zone on Toodyay Road at Redhill.

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The Crown & Bryson P76 kicks up a dust cloud at Belgerod racing circuit in Russia.

WA Club Parts List

Andy Mentiplay has prepared the following parts list for interested Members:

Targa Hubcaps – set	-	-	-	\$100.00
Rear Speaker Grills	-	-	-	10.00
Steering Column Bushes	-	-	-	10.00
Short handbrake cables	-	-	-	5.00
7” Headlight Surrounds	-	-	-	5.00
Strut-top Bushes	-	-	-	50.00pr
V8 Air Filter elements (Genuine Ryco A259)				35.00
Lower Front Guard Rust Repair Sections	-			80.00pr
Timing Cover Seal	-	-	-	45.00
V8 Oil Filters	-	-	-	24.00ea

Contact Andy on 93932428 or 0457038877 to place an order.



LEYLAND P76 OWNERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA (WA Division) Inc. **GENERAL MEETING 27 MAY 2013**

Meeting opened 7.40pm

Apologies: Geoff Smith, Adam Woodward, Adrian Carr,

Previous meeting minutes read by James. Moved by D.Bryan; seconded Ken Domeyer.

Correspondence:

Treasurer's report: As per statement. Moved by Gary as correct, Seconded by Paul B.

General Business: New member Jim Taylor, welcomed to the Club.

Spare parts officer position to be created at next AGM

P76 40th Anniversary display: 26 June Forrest Place need rego numbers from show cars

James talked about arrangements for the 40th including media coverage before and after.

Cars to meet in Kings Park before going to Forrest Place.

Club inspections at Andy's: all cars passed. New change to be made at future inspections, less detail will be required in future.

Recent events: Collie trip started at Pioneer village. met Geoff at the Brewery, viewed West Coast Motor museum in Mandurah. A successful event enjoyed by all participants.

Attended by the bum gang (or Jim's Buddies), James, Paul, Dave B, Dave N, Gary, and Mick.

Drive in event attended by Paul and Ken (accompanied by Paul's canine duo, Hound-Dog and Waggs) in two Leylands. Barrie Nelson from Triumph club also attended. It was decided to organise another event in future.

Westwords: July issue to be delayed by two weeks so Forest Place and Canberra events can be included.

Thanks to Kirsty and Adrian re their efforts to find a venue for AGM. Dave suggested Kalamunda hotel. Cost is \$100 inc bar staff member. Thanks to Dave for these arrangements. AGM 6-7pm, John Parker, guest speaker from 7-7.30, then dinner. The meeting discussed pros and cons of the hotel requiring pre order and pre-payment of meals. Dave to clarify with the hotel management.

Rece

Coming events: Austin club meeting in September

State meeting in Gin Gin 24th - 25th August. Dave B has organised visit to Falcon GT museum Gidgegannup for Sunday \$10 per head. Could visit New Norcia arts centre on the Saturday.

Model release: Trax has released Targa Florio rally car models to be released in June \$42.50 each

Meeting closed at 9:17 pm

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ANNUAL DINNER SUNDAY 28 JULY 2013

5.30pm

At The Kalamunda Hotel
43 Railway Road, Kalamunda
(see Dave Bryan's message below)

The State Meeting. Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 August with an overnight in Gingin, a suggested visit to New Norcia Arts Centre on Saturday, and a tour of the GT Falcon Museum on Sunday on Toodyay Rd, Bailup. .

Joint Club Run. Sunday 22 September. Meet with Austin Club members at Centrepoint Shopping Centre, Midland, 9.30am for 10.00am departure heading towards York for a BBQ Lunch and visit to a P76 "graveyard" property. (See Terry Johnston's letter, p3.)

Club Country Drive. Gidgegannup. October. Visit to Tony's Autos. Details to be advised.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER

Hello Everyone

This message is to advise that a venue has been set for our Annual General Meeting and Dinner. It will be held on **Sunday, July 28th, 2013** at the Kalamunda Hotel in the "Dome Room" (upstairs). The address is 43 Railway Rd, Kalamunda, 6076. Phone:9257 1084. This allows us to have our own function room with bar and toilet facilities, separate to the rest of the hotel (Remember, we've seen how untidy some of you can get after a shandy).

Entry is via the hotel's main entrance, then turn left up the stairs (past the sign that says "Staff Only Beyond This Point").

Street parking is available plus there is plenty of additional parking in the car park at the rear of the hotel for those who can't parallel park or who feel like a short walk.

Our guest speaker this year will be John Parker, a WA-based journalist, author and noted car historian and we are fortunate to have secured his attendance at our annual dinner.

The timeline is as follows:

5.00 - 5.15 pm: Arrive; 5.30 pm: AGM; 6.00 pm: Dinner; 7.30 pm: Guest Speaker.

To best facilitate ordering of meals, etc, a set menu has been put in place (copy attached).

Choices of two entrées, three main meals and two desserts are available at a cost per meal of \$38.90. A kid's menu (for children up to age 12) is also available (copy attached). Cost per meal \$9.90. Drinks are available over the bar at regular prices.

Individual payments for meals and drinks are able to be made at the time of ordering, however, please note that it is **CASH ONLY** as **NO EFTPOS** facilities are available in the function room/upstairs bar area.

It is essential that we are able to provide numbers to the venue, therefore, could you please confirm your attendance via email (with the number of adults & children attending) to me ASAP at drbryan58@gmail.com but definitely **NO LATER THAN Wednesday, July 24th?** The earlier the better. Thank you. Dave BRYAN

MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO NOTE THAT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING INCLUDES THE NORMAL JULY CLUB MEETING. THIS MEANS THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING AT THE KENWICK HALL ON MONDAY 29 JULY.



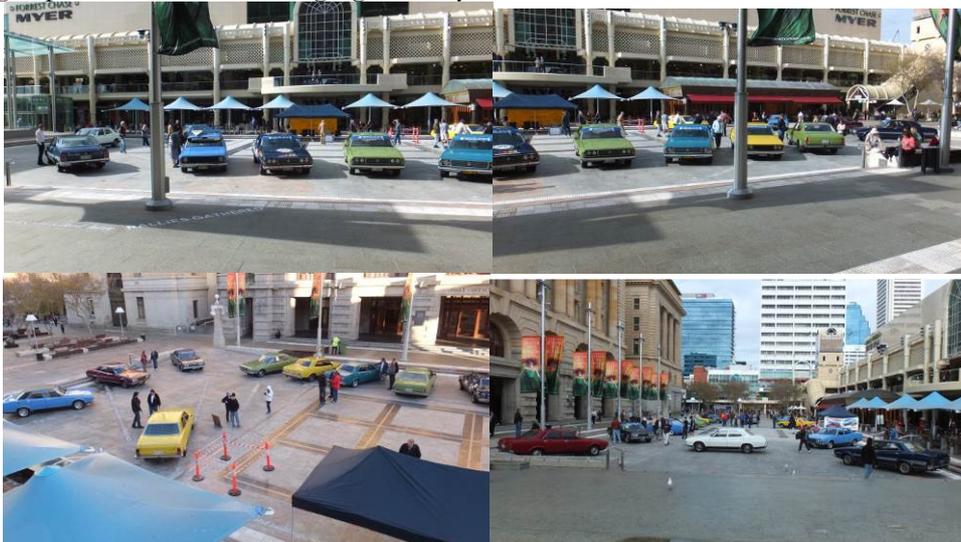
40TH ANNIVERSARY FORREST PLACE DISPLAY

In the inky-darkness of a cold mid-winter morning a group of club stalwarts and their cars assembled on Fraser Ave, in King's Park, on Wednesday 26 June, to descend upon the unsuspecting CBD of Perth's Forrest Place to present an array of fifteen P76s from around 7am until 5pm.

The cold start to the day slowly developed into a mildly pleasant and sunny late morning that brought many city-dwellers, tourists and workers into the very attractive plaza amidst the busy shopping precinct and opposite the Central Railway Station. By lunchtime, myriads of people enjoyed walking among the strategically placed cars and literally dozens of cameras snapped images of families and friends posing beside a favourite vehicle.

Riley and Lyn Bradley's "Bold as Brass" was almost constantly surrounded by a group of interested admirers, with Mick's Le Cocq's rally car being a favourite of the younger set. Dave Neuzerling's beautifully appointed "Crystal White" also proved to be a magnet for many visitors, especially when he opened the bonnet and gave the sweet V8 engine a demo run.

Of course, the scene was set for any number of passionate conversations between members and the visiting public, with the inevitable recall of folk remembering parents, grandparents and friends who once owned a P76, along with the adventures enjoyed during trips around the challenging country roads of the 1970s.



One very gracious lady turned out to be the widow of a long-departed club member from the 80s and she was effulgent in her praise of the "best and most luxurious car I ever drove".

Another passer-by, Jack, revealed that he had worked in Leyland Australia's design and development section on the electrical circuitry of the P76 for a period of 12 months around 1970-71. Jack had left the company some time before the release of the vehicle but was very pleased to know that the car had retained such a loyal and enthusiastic following.

Disappointingly, the promised attendances by the local TV channels 7, 9, 10, and the ABC, failed to eventuate (no doubt due to the political dramas being enacted in Canberra), but the community channel West TV were as good as their word and spent considerable time interviewing the club president, James Mentiplay, along with various members on the stories of their cars.

By the time the vehicles were being readied to leave for home, it was unanimously agreed that the event had been a most significant success with many positive responses from the public and enormous exposure of the big Leyland to the heart of the WA capital.

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY CANBERRA WEEKEND

It is next to impossible to do justice to this great event in the space afforded by a magazine article. For 13 WA Club members who attended, the weekend proved to be an absolute feast for the eyes and the emotions of those who had never before seen exotic versions of the P76 in the flesh.

It began with a delayed flight from Perth Airport at 1.15am on Friday 28 June, landing at Sydney around 7.30am (EST). From there we bundled into two maxi taxis and headed through the rain to Troy Green's place in Carinbah where we were invited to tuck into a hearty cooked breakfast before setting off in convoy for Canberra.

From a WA perspective this was a truly exciting experience as we whizzed along in a Force 7, a P76 wagon, and a Spanish Olive, with much of our baggage in a P76 utility appropriately named "Greenie".



The "Greenie" ute presents an electronics challenge.

All went well until the ute decided to play up by losing power intermittently due to gremlins in the electronics. After some repetitive starts and stops on the Hume Highway, and one close call with a large truck, it was finally decided to call in the NRMA and organise a tow to the nearest auto workshop. Leaving one vehicle with the stricken ute, the rest of the convoy, now joined by a Country Cream, motored on to Canberra. After some unintended circumnavigation of the nation's capital we eventually managed to locate Rydges Lakeside Hotel, where we checked in and crashed for an hour or two before preparing for the first celebratory event in the form of an informal dinner at the Ainslie Football Club premises. There we made many new acquaintances, renewed a number of old ones and enjoyed listening to the historic wisdom of three speakers, Alan Nicholson, Max Hamilton and Barry Anderson, all of whom played a significant role in the development and marketing of the P76.



Steve Maher presents tokens of appreciation to the Guest speakers at Ainslie.

Back at the hotel we managed to reunite with luggage caught up in the ute episode and were pleased to hear that the vehicle had been fixed and was ready to participate in the remainder of the weekend celebrations.



A rest-break on the Gundaroo Run.

Day 2 saw the participants gathered in a nearby car park to receive instructions for a replica of the original press run to Gundaroo. The convoluted route included refreshment stops at Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station and at Paddy's River, Tidbinbilla, before finishing at Gundaroo where we enjoyed some welcome repast thanks to the volunteers of the Gundaroo Rural Fire Service. From there participants made their own way back to Canberra to wash off the dust and have a siesta before preparing for the main event of the weekend: the Formal Dinner in the main function room at Rydges.



This proved to be an outstanding occasion with well over a hundred attendees enjoying a sumptuous meal accompanied by the collective wit, wisdom and historical experience of Will Hagon, Joe Torony and Noel Delforce. Laminated and illustrated place-mats along with souvenir booklets were issued to all participants. Door prizes were distributed by raffle and guest speakers were presented with appropriate mementos of the occasion.



All smiles from the WA "baker's dozen" after the formal Dinner at Rydges Lakeside Hotel, Canberra.

A high point of the evening came when Will Hagon made a formal announcement confirming that the Crown and Bryson P76 had just rolled into Paris as overall winner of the Peking to Paris Rally. This was greeted with a thunderous round of applause. With the formalities over people mingled and chatted into the late evening and many group photographs were taken in the foyer against the classical P76 dealer display board used in the original release ceremony in June 1973.



The final event of the weekend took the form of a grand concours in the grounds of Old Parliament House. The city came up with perfect crisp sunny weather that showed off the many splendid examples of the P76 in its myriad colours and unique configurations. Among these sat an Ami-blue stretch limo, the Greenie ute and the wagon, along with three Force 7s and Targas in blue, green and nutmeg, while right at the rear of the massive display, claiming their right to be there as part of the Leyland Australia stable, two excellent examples of the Marina coupe, a six and a four cylinder, nestled side by side.



The Targas in their three classical colours.

In view of the long haul back to Sydney in time to catch our return flight, the WA group set off around 2.00pm, an hour before the concours was due to finish. Once again Joe's orange Force 7, the wagon, the ute and Kevin's Country cream were called into service and we headed back up the Hume Highway. From Carinbah, we hailed the maxi taxis once again to deliver us to Sydney airport. The flight home, in contrast with our outward journey, was on time and, indeed, delivered us to Perth airport around 25 minutes earlier than the scheduled time.

There is little doubt that expanded and, indeed, more accurate and detailed accounts of this memorable occasion, will emerge over coming weeks and months. Nevertheless, nothing can detract from the fact that our P76 colleagues in NSW and Canberra, performed a sterling task in putting together a 40th anniversary weekend that will have a prominent perch within the annals of P76 history in years to come. – *Ed.*

PROJECT P.76

(This is the fifth in a series of articles submitted to WestWords by club member David Fox of Canberra.)

Chassis layout objectives and compromises (continued)

Basic Decisions

- 6 The fore and aft power unit disposition together with open propeller shaft and live axle were selected to allow
 - a. The range of transmission types to be supplied with little tooling cost, and
 - b. An existing final drive system to be employed.
- 7 The four link location for the rear axle was selected to good control of axle movement so that soft springing could be used without problems of axle hop due to spring windup. It was also felt that there was a trend towards this system in America and that it would probably be seen in Australia. Finally, our early studies indicated that a small cast saving could be expected.
- 8 Strut type suspension was selected at the front as this can be achieved with the minimum number of components which are peculiar to the model. Only 2 components, the lower arm and the swivel hub, need be made in the Unit Plant. The remaining parts are common to other vehicles.
- 9 Rack and Pinion steering was selected
 - a. As our earlier studies indicated it is the lowest cost steering system,
 - b. It will help produce the European character we are seeking, and
 - c. The components can carry over from existing models.

COMMENT

As per last month's comment the main considerations were cost savings and European character. The issue of commonality of parts has been of enormous benefit to me during the total restoration of my Executive. I took the rear axle assembly into the local differential service centre and was surprised to hear "A P76! I haven't done one in years but it is very easy as the parts were still used up to VN Commodores."



CLUB WEEKEND RUN TO COLLIE

Based on notes and pictures by Dave Bryan

Six cars (with nine club members) went on a bit of a drive the weekend of 25–26 May. We met at 0730 hours on Saturday at Armadale and then travelled in convoy down to Pinjarra where we tucked in to breakfast. With the inner man fully serviced we continued on to Collie in the State's south-west and booked in at the Collie Ridge Motel.

On the way down most of us got flashed by one of the State's automatic revenue collectors, despite being extremely careful, so if we do receive infringements we are thinking that it can't be for much more than 104/105 in a 100 km/h speed zone but if we've done the wrong thing we're all more than happy to financially support our state government who are doing it tough.

(Ed's Note: The WA Police tolerance is 1km over the limit. Sorry guys!)

After check-in, we headed off to the beautiful Ferguson Valley and had lunch (and a drink or two) at the Wild Bull Brewery

Then we headed in the general direction of Collie and visited the Collie Motorplex where the Formula Fords and Holden HQ's were practising for race day on Sunday. Finding all this rather thirsty work we dropped the cars off back at the motel and walked (or rather crawled) to each of the local watering holes.

Then back to the motel for some sleep before getting up Sunday morning to a beautiful, home-cooked breakfast at the local Mackers.

A quick re-fuel (for the cars, this time) then a pleasant drive to The West Coast Motor Museum at Stakehill, just outside Mandurah. Here, we were joined by a few more club members who motored down from Perth and together we enjoyed a wander round a treasure-trove of automotive memorabilia and took some pics (*see next page*).



The Museum is set up to reflect the 50s era as can be seen from the frontage and the diner complete with jukebox.

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A LEYLAND LEGEND: The Rise of a P76 Phoenix

Part Two

By Ryan Ford

First job, replace the fried wires and get that engine running! This turned out to be a remarkably uneventful task. The Deluxe wiring was perfect, cut it off, soldered it up, installed a coil and within the week this hideous wreck spluttered into life! It was probably the first time ever I got the ignition leads on the right spark plug first time! She didn't sound pretty and the started motor cranked like rusty gears. It was deafening and it didn't take long for the starter to cease. This in itself was not a huge issue, there was heaps of work that needed to get this car in to any sort of state to be worthy of the roads besides the starter. In time we managed to cobble a starter together from an old Lucas Starter we acquired and she was turning again. My water pump turned out to be a dud and leaked, the auto only went in reverse, the brakes clearly did not work, none of the switches, lights or dials worked, and this was all in a car I knew virtually nothing about. This was my first of many "What have I got myself into" moments.

With the help of family and friends at the time, we picked the stuff we needed off the Deluxe, which included 2 doors, wires, master cylinder, brakes lines, torsion bars, boot latch and I'm sure million other little clips and extras. To my delight I found out that the front radiator support panel had been modified to accept a Ford cross flow radiator which was a huge plus and I managed to pick up a triple core unit on eBay for \$20! No one at any stage has ever recommended I go back to the Leyland radiators. We also picked up at good second hand Bosch alternator. Things were going well, the Super was coming back together nicely. We had sold the Deluxe to another enthusiast who advised he wanted to restore her, we hope to see her on the road again soon, but now all the generic parts had been used. I needed to find some proper Leyland parts and the local wreckers hadn't stocked P76's in decades. This was my second "What have I got myself into" moment, but there was a light at the end of the tunnel. She was starting to look like a car again. Through the Victorian club I managed to make contact with Martyn Hayes who for a very generous price and some bartering, hooked us up with a replacement Auto, and old water pump and some glass that was missing. These were the big parts, these pieces would allow the old P76 to move and run. So a few weeks later, she was up on stands and we pulled the old auto out, and fitted the replacement!

This was a big day and I could not wait to get the transmission in and see if she would move! But the weather had different plans and some of the old transmission hose clips broke, we were 95% of the way there, but we had to push her back into the garage this day. My enthusiasm ensured that this would be fixed ASAP. The next day at work I got the last of the clips and hoses to hook her up. Full of excitement, I jacked the car up, clipped up the hoses, topped up the auto and with butterflies running like wild in my stomach, started her, selected D, the car gave the standard shunt forward as if to say "I'm ready to go!" and on 2 flat tires, she moved under her own steam for the first time in over 10 years! I was over the moon!

In the weeks that passed we worked on fine tuning her as best we could. We knew we had a runner but just how good was she? She had spent a hell of a lot of time up the back of a barn, there were still question marks and with limited knowledge and resources it was going to be difficult.

Then one day about 4 months before the rally was due to start I got a phone call from a number I didn't recognize. He asked me if I was doing up the P76 on the Shitbox Rally page and introduced himself as Rick Perceval. I recalled trying to contact him at some stage and we may have spoken briefly at the time, but he lived only 15 minutes from my place and invited me over. I was warmly welcomed by Rick, plus 4 P76's, and a shed full parts. It didn't take him long to tell me that he thought I was one of the maddest people that he had ever met after seeing my car, and the rally but offered his assistance in getting the old P76 up to a workable and reliable standard.

The car was just about to head into my mates (Darth by Design) workshop in his backyard shed. In getting the permits I found out 2 things, my chassis number was not on the Vic Roads database, and the Engine was last in a registered car in 1983! John Ernst who knew the previous owner advised me that the engine had been changed and used to belong to another owner in the La Trobe valley. But the car was given the royal treatment and came out looking a million bucks! With the rally only a few months away and car really not being road tested yet really put the heat on Rick and myself to try and repair, or recognize any potential problems before we hit the road. Any car can die on the side of the road for a million reasons and leaving cars behind to die on the rally is just another day in the office, but the P76 was getting to me. I couldn't bare the thought of leaving her in the red centre, I was seriously starting to contemplate keeping her and driving her back from Perth afterwards. So not only did she have to get me there, she had to get me home, and plenty of cars in this rally limp to the finishing line in a cloud of smoke, firing on 2 cylinders, we had to see that this didn't happen as best we could.

We threw the rotten old Holley out for a stock carb, we replaced all the radiator hoses, re-bushed some of the suspension, steering arms, brake booster and got all the gauges working. We installed an offset starter that quietened down a bit from the old one. As a test run I drove a bunch of mates to Airey Inlet and back on the great ocean road, by the time I got home, vapour lock had presented as a big issue and a lot of the gauges had stopped working, but these were bad earths and a short circuit. With a relocation of the electric fuel pump and some WD40 on the earths, she was alive again. Mechanically she did not miss a beat.

Before we knew it, the rally was here! We left home Adelaide bound not knowing if the old girl would ever see home again. She performed perfectly on the trip over and besides getting a little warm in the peak hour traffic going through Adelaide CBD, it was an event free trip.

Day 1 of the Rally was Adelaide to Coober Pedy, a lazy 850km through some of the harshest lands imaginable. Luckily the roads are sealed all the way so the P76 did this trip without incident and actually checked in 8th out of a rally of 200! Bearing in mind it is not a race, but this is indicative of a good average speed, and no mechanical issues. On the first night about 10 cars needed towing, there were overheating issues, a blown oil seal, head gasket replacement, but all the cars survived day 1! The P76 got a well-deserved rest and day 2 we headed to Ayers Rock! Day 2, again an event less trip, she tore up the roads and again did great time to Yulara. I would love to be able to write more about this but the car went flawlessly and besides Ayers rock, there is not much to see! But the old P was starting to get noticed, 2 nights and not once got sent to the mechanics bay. Day 2 saw the death of 2 cars, a Transmission died and a water pump ceased. We got some sensational snaps of the car and the Rock too!



Day 3 and things started to get a little bit nastier on the roads, we were headed to the Great Central Road which meant 4 days of dirt road driving and this was really going to start to separate the men from the boys. The roads were unkind, corrugated, the red dust found its way everywhere. There were times you almost could not see the end of the bonnet. The cars were battered, seriously hard to the point where you were going only about 40kph as she was shaking so badly. The Jag in the picture here had constant fuel and electrical issues due to the harsh conditions, but the P76 carried on and again we were one of the first teams in. The first problem presented itself here, we had sprung a fuel leak from the return line at the tank. Not a serious one but enough to leave a puddle under the car. We attempted to patch it with "Knead It" but the rough roads saw that this kept failing.



Day 4 & 5 was very similar to day 3, rough unforgiving roads. The P76 continued to defy the odds and performed like a hero, with the exception of a smashed headlamp due to the stones, she was still running without fault. This road saw the demise of an Alfa which had ruined its engine, and a Lada which broke its axle in fine form.

Day 6 was the real test as on this night it bucketed rain and saw us taking the dirt roads from Laverton to Kalgoorlie. This was by far and away the most challenging day. The roads started off kindly, but turned nasty quickly. The local authorities recommended we not use this road, but these warnings were ignored. It started off with a very muddy patch where you needed to keep the speeds up but avoid spinning the tires or spin out. This was fun, and I was a little disappointed when we were through it, but little did I know how much worse was ahead! Deep puddles, muddy roads, parts that were over a foot deep and behind the wheel, you can only guess the best way, and I did get it wrong once or twice. At a few points water was entering the car through the worn door seals, the bow wave was clearly visible above the bonnet at points and all I'm thinking is "please don't stall!" Over a period of about 2 hours of bashing through the mud, and puddles, she only stalled twice and that was due to a worn cap on the coil allowing water to drip down it.

As we arrived in Kalgoorlie, we were a mess, but I don't think that we were prepared as to how bad to car was! The sills were full of dirt, inches deep, you could turn the headlights on but there would be no point as they were covered, the engine was a muddy mess. The mechanics bay was a busy place that night, many cars got water in to their electrics that didn't come back, but despite all of this, the mighty P76 made it through and only needed an oil top up. A remarkable effort.

Day 7 was just a 700km cruise in to Perth, but it turned out to be a little more eventful than I would have hoped. As we were coming into Perth we opted for a driver change, but we noticed a strong oil smell and a cloud coming up under the bonnet. There was an apparent oil leak from the rocker covers that was dripping on the exhaust. Just wanting to get there we carried on until about 10 km down the road the oil lamp flashed at me. DAMN! Why now in Perth, we pulled over and topped her up. The skies opened up and the rain struck as I was filling up the oil. The carby has appeared to have some junk in her as she kept wanting to stall. Regardless, we carried on in to Fremantle. We had made it and at the award presentation ceremony got voted in Top 10 Rally Cars.

I was greeted at the finish line by James Mentiplay who has been following the rally and restoration from early on. He congratulated us, loved the story behind the car and the rally. He kindly invited me to bring the car around to the WA Club the next day so that we could give her a little TLC and see that she would make her way home to Melbourne without any issues. After changing the rocker cover gasket to stop the leak, the Fuel Filter which was orange, and running a can of Carby Cleaner through the junked up carb, she was running well again and on Sunday morning, we turned around and drove home!

We planned a 4 day \ 3 night trip, Norseman on day 1, Ceduna then Taillem Bend for a short skip home on day 4. On the road in to Norseman it was dark, very dark and having 1 of my high beams smashed probably did not help. But it was on the trip home that the desert dust started to make a nuisance of itself. Occasionally, when we would turn on the high beams, the lights would all go off, and we were driving in darkness!!! Luckily this only happened once or twice and only for a split second, but still enough to give you a fright!

The next day was a 1200 km trek to Ceduna across the Nullabor and with the exception of a more desert dust interfering with the electric fuel pump connection (and a speeding ticket) the day went without incident. But day 3 coming up through Adelaide and heading out of town, I noticed the volt meter gauge was sitting at 12V. Please no, not now only 1 day from home! Darkness was falling and we were running on battery power. We went as far as we could and made Murray Bridge. Exhausted and crossing all my fingers and toes that it was a simple fix, we cleaned out the alternator and put her back in, 12 volts still. As a last resort I pierced the alternator line with my Amp Meter, 13V was coming out. So a simple cut of the wire and ran it direct to the battery and we were back! Again, that desert dust broke a contact somewhere (maybe I'll try and find it one day), but the next morning we hit the road early and charged home! What else can I say that what an exceptional car the P76 has been. From its sorry beginnings sitting in the back of a shed to conquering Australia, I don't think many cars cobbled together from countless different sources, none new or reconditioned, could pull off with the P76 has achieved. I was subject to some slander by other rally goers and others in general for my choice of car, but as we all know, he who laughs last, laughs the hardest. We went places together that I'm sure the designers never intended her to go and it is a true testament to how little the public knows about this car and how much Leyland Australia got it right with the P76. Time has vindicated the car, and the smiles, compliments, and commiserations the car got far exceeded the criticisms. Many people asked me if she was going up for auction at the end, but, after the amazing journey we have had and to the disappointment of many, I could not bear to part with her, so she has come home and has truly earned her spot in the garage. Some still ignorantly refer to the P76 as the Aussie Lemon, I would say Aussie Legend. What a car!



Ryan's pose says it all: The P76 is a car you can lean on when the going gets tough.

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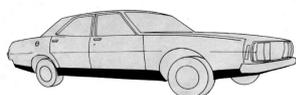
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