

Targa Tasmania 2014 Leg Four: Strahan - Burnie - Strahan

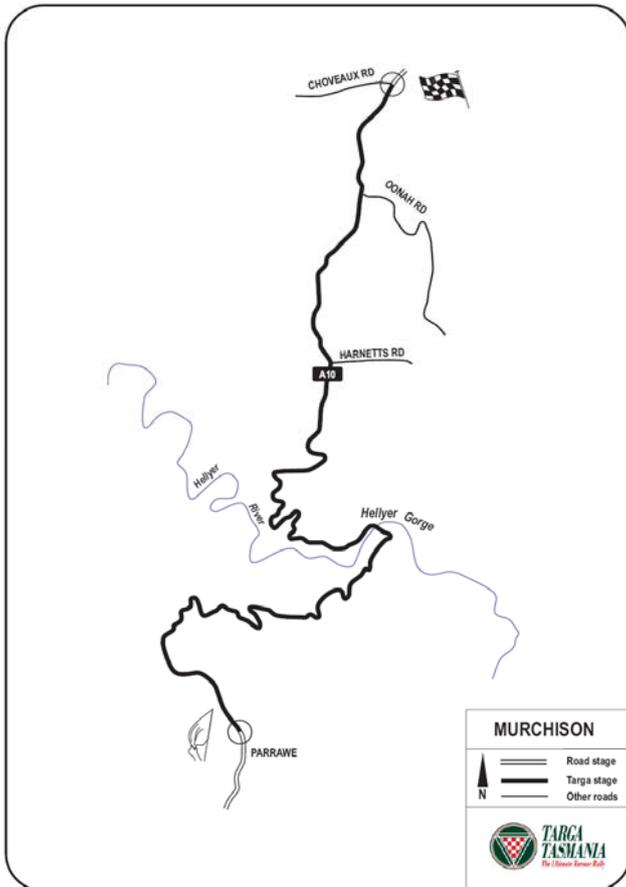
Well what a difference the rain makes.....after a good overnight soaking, the roads were primed to shake up the competitive order of the event so far. A pre-dawn start had us heading north from Strahan in the darkness up to the 25km long Reece Dam stage. Our lightweight heater/demister didn't seem like such a strategically clever idea anymore as we shivered our way up to the start line, mopping the windows to clear them of condensation.

The Stuart's little 1962 Ford Anglia took first place on Handicap on the first stage, with the Ulrich's Jensen CV8 just two seconds behind. Five seconds back were us in the Volvo, and over half a minute behind that were the Monaro GTS and the Banks/Douglas Porsche 914/6. The Freestone's Holden was another one second back, some 16 seconds up on the Miedecke Perana. Nipping in to the Top 10 were the Priddles in their 1961 Ford Zephyr. Our performance moved us up to 2nd place in the Handicap competition, but also fielded us a 12th place in the non-handicap Outright Classic competition.



Tyre conservation coming off of Mt Roland

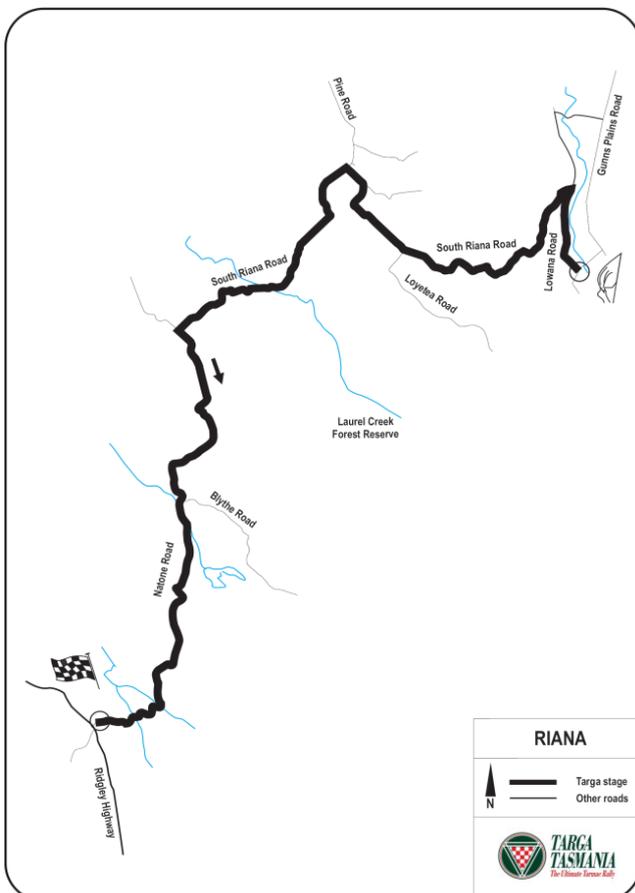
Next was Pieman, which saw us 3rd again as the Stuarts placed 2nd just six seconds off of the Jensen. The Jensen / Volvo / Anglia battle for 1/2/3 would continue throughout the day. The Priddles in their Ford Zephyr put in an amazing performance equaling the Woodward/Gibson Monaro in 6th place. The Caudo/Copeland Datsun 1200 fell off and was stuffed tightly into thick bushes at the roadside.



Murchison saw us drop three seconds to the Steuarts who took 1st place in their Anglia. This moved them up in the Classic Handicap to 4th overall, and opened our lead on the Freestone Holden to 2 min's 18 sec's. Seven seconds back from us in 3rd place was the Jensen. This was also our best ever Outright time, placing 7th out of all the Classic competitors, just four seconds slower than the Miedecke Perana and five seconds quicker than the Monaro GTS. Rain is our friend.



Freestone's Holden 48-215



The wet and slippery conditions continued through the early afternoon. On Natone we took our first Stage win – well, kinda: we were equal in time to the Jensen with just ONE second back to the equally timed Steuarts in their Anglia and the Freestones in their Holden. A further six seconds back in 5th place was the Monaro. The Priddles in their unassuming Zephyr continued to apply the heat bettering the Dermott's Torana XU-1 by seven seconds.

The Riana stage was a scene of significant carnage – we lost count of how many teams had slipped or spun off the twisty roads. Most of those in the bushes appeared to be later model Porsches and Nissans and suchlike. The Jensen posted another stage win over us by just one second, the Steuarts six seconds back and the Monaro a further five seconds from them. This moved us up to 13th in the Outright competition. Two more stages to go for the day – Mt Black and Roseberry. Finishing order on Mt Black was Jensen / Volvo / Holden / Anglia, with just eleven seconds separating those placings. However, our 10th Outright on Mt Black kept us in 13th place overall on Outright times, just one second back from our "cousins" Cook/Cooper in the Gulf-liveried Porsche Carrera RS. On the last stage of the day, Roseberry, the Steuarts bettered us by one second to take 2nd behind the Ulrichs.

In Outright (non-Handicap) times for the event so far, we've moved up to 13th, 20 seconds up on the 14th placed Cook/Cooper Porsche Carrera RS and 20 seconds away from one of the Datsun 240Z's in 12th.

Day's end servicing involved a general check for under body damage and stresses. Our tyres had an easy day given the wet and slippery conditions, so we'll leave them as is, with low pressures, for the final six stages tomorrow.

Leg Five, the final push to Hobart will kick off with the 33km Strahan stage. It's raining now and we hope it will continue overnight; regardless, it will be a wet start and to our advantage. Trick will be to get as much ground as early as we can on the Monaro. It's likely going to be dryer as we head south, and the very long and fast high speed sections of Mt Arrowsmith will allow them to gain significant time over us, especially as our almost weeklong top-end misfire is still with us.

Current standings in Classis Handicap are the Jensen in 1st, us in 2nd, the Freestones in 3rd, the yellow Monaro 4th and the Stuart's Anglia in 5th.



Stuart's 1962 Ford Anglia

