

Driver Profile

Dennis "Herby" Burgess



"Herby" is another product from the motor sport nursery originating in the Huon Valley. I was born in 1947 at Franklin and attended preschool and Grade one with the one and only Darryl Wilcox. I first attended motor sport in the late 1960's where the usual fare during a day spectating on the hill overlooking the track was a Cascade longneck and a mutton bird!

After the purchase of a MGA 1600 in early 1968 I joined the MG Car Club and as a result was conned by a mate into attending a race meeting as a flag marshal. This turned my life around and motor sport has been my passion ever since. At Baskerville I worked trackside for over 30 years including carrying out the role of Chief Flag Marshall at Baskerville for over twenty five years (about five years as Chief Flag at Symmons Plains) and later as Clerk of Course intermittently for about 10 years. It's amusing to note now that one of my first actions as Chief Flag Marshall was to ban the drinking of alcohol at flag points – This got me offside with a number of mates but changing times made the action appropriate. Also interesting to note, given problems with getting enough volunteers these days that I had a strict rule limiting the maximum number of officials in a flag point to four, any others had to sit out events away from the flag points.

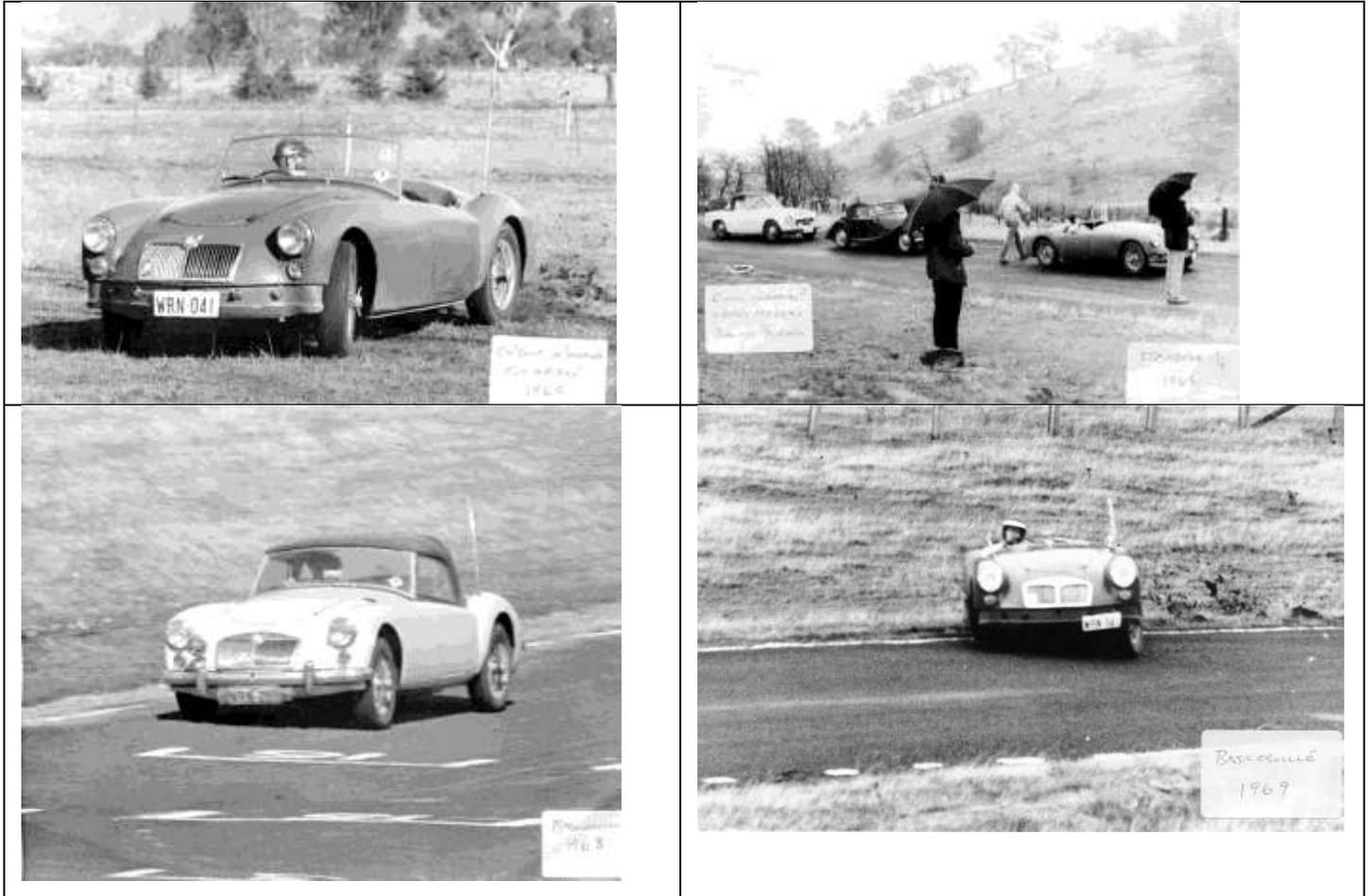
Motor sport officiating has been my life and there have been a number of highlights:

- Winner of the Police Commissioners Trophy for Outstanding Achievement in Motor Sport twice, a rare honour shared with John Bowe and Barry Oliver. The award in 1990 was for my work in training and managing track side officials in Tasmania, The second Award in 2007 was for managing the early years of drifting in Tasmania when working completely outside my comfort zone I ran the first couple of years of the State Drift Series.
- Formula One flag marshal on over 20 occasions including the first modern Grand Prix in 1985 and on one occasion Senior Flag Marshall in charge of Flag Point 1 (just past start/finish line) and the Pit Exit Flag Point at Melbourne. I stopped going to the Grand Prix due to failing eyesight as it is understood that trackside officials at the Australian Grand Prix are the best in the world and that is the standard one must meet. I still consider the 1985 Australian Grand Prix as the greatest event that I ever participated in. After the event I even shook hands with Bob Hawke, something my nearest friends would find impossible to believe. The 1985 cars were mobile time bombs during qualification sessions with turbos screwed up as far as possible and tyres good for one qualifying lap only. Senna, Mansell, Prost, Piquet and Rosberg bouncing off the ripple strips and flying through the air – Absolutely sensational for people like us who had never seen them before, let alone at a distance of ten feet!
- I was Clerk of Course for several major events at Baskerville including the HSCC 50th Anniversary Race Meeting, The Track 50th Anniversary Meeting, The MGCCT 50th Anniversary Meeting and a Round of the Aussi Racing Cars Championship, the latter event causing me numerous grey hairs trying to keep up with the one and only Phil Ward.
- I was asked to run stages in the inaugural Targa Tasmania in 1993. With the help of literally hundreds of volunteers we were able to run the Domain and Grass Tree Hill stages successfully. As a result I was asked to take over the role of Area Coordinator for the 1994 event and picked up responsibility for 17 stages in the South of the State. With the other Area Coordinators, our Deputies and the Clerk of Course we developed road side protocols that enable an extremely complex event to take place. Procedures developed by our team are still fundamental to the running of these events. I stayed on as Area Coordinator for another three years.
- For 10 years I managed Practice Days for the Tasmanian round of the Australian Rally Championship. Each year, in the week leading up to the Tasmanian Round, my team would set up stages using roads similar to those in the actual event. Usually each practice day we would also put on a BBQ lunch and I have great memories of standing with the best Rally Drivers in Australia and their crews around huge fires talking the talk. For me the icing on the cake was that almost inevitably each year I would get a ride in one of the top

Australian Rally Cars at Rally Speed over my practice stages. Undoubtedly for me and my team of officials the practice days were the most enjoyable events we participated in each year.

- Many years as a Senior Steward including on two occasions as Chief Steward for Supporting Events at the Symmons Plains V8 Round. I was also the Tasmanian representative on the National Officials Panel for several years, a position I held up to my employment with CAMS.

Joining the MG Car Club also kindled my competition genes and I competed at MG Car Club events – standing 1/4s, club days, hill climbs and of course my lifelong love for motorkhanas. Most of my life my competition car has been my daily transport so competition was usually quite restricted. It is only in recent years that I have had vehicles especially for competition. Nonetheless I have always run motorkhanas often in totally inappropriate cars like EK and EH Holdens but more successfully in Mk I and II Escorts and as an outright contender in a number of Minis. The target to aim for was to beat the late Chris Ellis and I managed to do that a couple of times.



When I retired from my 'real' job, subsequent to four years with CAMS, I decided to buy another MG and build a club competition car, hence the short arsed Mini Special that I reckon for a couple of years was the most raced vehicle in Australia fronting up almost every second weekend for an event. I have one recollection of a Khanacross on the Saturday, Club Day on the Sunday, Hill Climb the next Saturday and a motorkhana the following Sunday – all in the same car but on different wheels and tyres.



The MG I brought is a 1974 MGB GT that passed through a conversation process with MG Engineering (Formerly the Costello Company) in England to have a Rover STI V8 motor and gearbox fitted. The V8 is a lovely car to drive on (and off) the track but is probably a bit too good to run in speed events. Solution was recently to buy an ex Tarmac Rally MGB Roadster which shortly after purchase had a massive engine failure during a Symmons Plains event. With a refurbished motor by Graeme Westwell the roadster will be run in the State Regularity Series during 2015.



Most of my life I have held positions on car club Committees, particularly the MG Car Club of Tasmania, Hobart Sporting Car Club and lately the Historic Racing Car Club of Tasmania. With the MG Car Club I held the positions of President, Vice President, Club Captain and Newsletter Editor. I was the Director for the first MG National Meeting held in Tasmania and more recently was again the Director for the last National Meeting held in Tasmania in 2012. Both events were hugely successful demonstrating that with a good team and good management Tasmania can run these events very well.

Away from motorsport I started my working career as a Survey Draftsman, later as a Cartographer drawing maps for the Lands and Mines Departments, and finishing my years in the Public Service as Registrar of Mines for a period of 25 years. As Registrar I managed the process to prepare and introduce the Mineral Resources Development Act 1995, the first major Tasmanian mining legislation in 76 years!

I developed a close relationship with Ogilvie High School firstly as Chairman of the Parents and Friends Association and then as Initial Chairman of The Ogilvie High School Council, a position I held for some 15 years. After my 'retirement' I had four very rewarding years with the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports as a Sport and Club Development Officer. I saw my role as dissemination of information to members and as a conduit for members seeking advice. This didn't always go down well with my masters. The highlight of my period with CAMS was the Fire and Rescue project which I implemented shortly after commencing with CAMS. With a successful \$20,000 grant from the State Government the project resulted in purchase and fitting out of two fire and rescue units, the construction of a trailer for trackside equipment and a trailer containing rescue gear to be stationed at Symmons Plains. Our current fire and rescue capacity meets all likely situations at race meetings up to and including the Tasmanian round of the V8 Series.

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