

The Little Red Race Car #905 – Ken Garlick

There I was on the Sunday of Whittakers just doing a bit of spectating in the AROC hospitality suite when Wendy Metcalfe (the Trofeo series chairman) sweetly suggests it might be my turn to contribute something to the magazine. As she's just finished telling me what she threatened to do to the Manawatu hamburger cook who tried to insist on putting cheese on her burger, I decide I'd better obey. There are some Alfa women that one shouldn't mess with!

Round 1 16/17 September Pukekohe

A short weekend for us as we drive up from Marton mid-day Friday, do the two points races and then head back home Saturday afternoon. Two class wins to start the season keeps the team (Ken Garlick and Pete Cousins) happy. An excellent turn-out of cars with Simon Mills and me the quickest of the Trofeo class cars present. The Little Red Race Car starts the season at 191,214kms and adds another 1,095kms over the weekend. None of your pampering on a trailer for the LRRC.

Round 2 7/8 October Taupo

Another good turn-out of Alfas. Two Trofeo class guys are there without cars; Ray Shanks is still looking for some over-size 1700 pistons and David Frith hasn't been well. I chat to Simon about the merits of wearing a HANS device.

Practice. Second-fastest in class, Simon fastest, but there are cars between us.

Race 1. Good start, round the first corner, Simon just ahead, he loses it and spins off to the left, I keep on the gas, don't expect to see him again until we return to the pits. Wrong! I t-bone an out-of-control Sud just behind the driver's door as it shoots across the track in front of me. Simon and I are parked on the grass and Chris Browne takes the class win. Simon feels confident enough to get back in his car and run the last lap or two, but I don't. The angle of the bonnet makes me think the car's badly damaged in the front, but it turns out to be not as bad as I first believe. The Crash Rescue guys (the same team as we use those years we actually get around to holding a May Madness) pull the left guard away from the wheel so I can drive the car back to the pits. Pete reckons there's no mechanical damage and the alignment's still OK and attacks the car with a hammer while I go in search of a large roll of race tape as it's best not to stay and look. Ever the nice guy, Keith Howie provides the tape and I promise to replace the roll and shout him a beer at the next opportunity. Pete and Eddie Beresford try to persuade me to go out in race two, I resist, but they win. Interestingly, although I have to get the scrutineer to approve Pete's hammering and taping, there's no entry made in my logbook to check the car at the next meeting.

Race 2. I go to the grid expecting to be at the back alongside Simon, but find myself about the middle with Simon a few cars in front and Chris behind me. I've no idea how the grid positions were arrived at, but I'm not about to demand I'm moved to the back. Sorry Chris! Car feels OK on the warm-up lap, so Pete's right again about nothing being out of alignment. Another good start and I'm almost up to Simon as we come out of the first corner when Keith spins off to the left. Not again! I lift off, Keith stays off the track and Simon gets a break on me. Chris chases me hard to the chequered flag, but can't get close enough to try a pass. We

leave immediately after the race so we can get the one-eyed LRRC home before it's dark. Fortunately, we don't attract the attention of any of Helen's tax collectors. Another 464kms on the clock.

Test day 3 November Manfeild

Pete completes everything but the last of the painting and decal applications the night before the last test day before Whittakers. Other than the actual panel-beating, Pete's done most of the work (at least 50 hours) and the LRRC now sports a bumper, left-hand guard and lights from the spares car which is starting to look like a stripped out wreck. Everything seems to work OK and I finish up running the last session at consistent mid 1:29 laps which we feel should make us very competitive the next weekend. The RX7 racer in the pit-bay next to ours is wearing a HANS device and makes the point that, as he's self-employed, it doesn't even take many work hours lost at a physio to cover the \$1200 cost. Food for thought.

Tuesday 7 November

Robyn's brought something nasty home from school and I wake up with a sore throat, headache and aching all over and stay like it for a week. It's no consolation that she's got it also.

Thursday 9 November

David Frith arrives for the weekend and looks awful as he's got infections in both eyes. He says he can see to drive OK, and, as I'll be racing with him, I hope he's right.

Round 3 10/11/12 November Manfield

Friday. I drive from Palmerston to Marton to collect the LRRC. We bleed the brakes and then I head to Manfeild for documentation and scrutineering, bedding in the new pads and rotors as I go. Lots of Alfas around, although there only appear to be four Trofeo class cars, but it's good to see that Simon's made it. I see he's wearing a HANS device which he says is comfortable, but does restrict your head rotation and, hence, peripheral vision. Although an audit's not due until the next meeting, I ask to be scrutineered as the car's been in an accident. I guess there must be a reason why MSNZ don't do this, but we both feel it's a worthwhile exercise. As always, the scrutineers can't fault Pete's standard of preparation and sign the car off. Pete's suggested I should give the new brakes a shakedown as the car may feel a bit different from the test day. That's the last thing I feel like doing, but I spend my \$80 to do 8 laps and the pedal goes very long. Back to Marton and 4 hours later Pete's diagnosed the problem and the spares car has donated some rear brake parts. I arrange to meet Pete and the LRRC at Manfeild at 7:15 the next morning and head back to Palmerston North for an early night. As I'm driving home I see a number of the other Trofeo guys walking off to dinner. Party hard, guys!

Saturday.

It's an unpleasant day when we arrive at Manfeild; cold, windy and occasional showers. My daughter, Victoria, arrives to take some shots of the weekend and you can see these at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/anthrovik/sets/72157594375667582/>. Pete changes the LRRC to its damp settings, but leaves the tyre pressures at full dry. We head

off to the driver's briefing where it's made quite clear that the Alfas will always go off in the second group in all the split-grid races. We check the track as we leave the briefing and see that it's now completely dry, so the Manawatu's wind isn't always a bad thing. Pete goes back to full dry settings.

Practice. I mistakenly think I'm going to go inside Tina Glennie into Dunlop on the last lap and only succeed in both of us recording slow laps. Later, in the pits, I apologize to Tina. During one of the races on Saturday there's a dead duck in the middle of Dunlop and I later learn that Tina hit it, so I guess I learnt the hard way not to steal Tina's line. Another Alfa woman that one shouldn't mess with! Glen 'The Burglar' Watson is quickest in our race group, then Simon, me and Peter Wildbore. I'm a second slower than on the test day in similar conditions. The car's set-up the same, the brakes are better, so I'll have to put it down to the driver's state of health. Serious drivers always have a vast array of excuses! If anybody doubts how close and competitive Trofeo racing is, consider this: Simon's best lap was 2/100ths of a second quicker than mine which is about 33 centimetres at the start/finish line.

Race 1. I'm given grid position 33 and Glen gets 31 as we try to line-up on the dummy grid. That seems correct and I expect us to be ushered out at the front of the second group as we move out onto the track, but the marshals hold us back and we finish up in about the middle of the group. Glen and I move forward some places, but as we come to a halt there are other cars in our slots. Goodness knows why, but the two cars immediately in front of Glen are a 1950s Jowett Jupiter open sports car and a Humber 80 which are probably 20-30 seconds a lap slower than us. I hope that the guys behind us can see the slow stuff, otherwise there may be some carnage. I get a good start, Glen goes left of the Jowett and I go right and then pass the Humber 80 with 2 wheels on the grass and come out of the first corner in second place. I can't see either Glen or Simon. A couple of laps later I see Simon parked and ease off as there are no other Trofeo cars near me. Apparently Glen and Simon had a coming together on the exit to Higgins which dented the leading edge of Glen's left guard and removed the valve from Simon's right rear tyre. First in class for me, second for David and, I think, third for Warwick. A win's a win, but I'd rather have fought it out with Simon. By now the Manawatu's turning on a nice sunny day.

Race 2. Not a Trofeo points race, which, as it turns out, is just as well. I'm allocated to the inside of the second row, but the car in front appears to have a problem and slows down and signals me past as we round Dunlop. So I'm sitting on the front of the second half of the grid watching the first group start, waiting for our start, when the grid marshals frantically wave me and the 145 alongside to go. Didn't these guys go to the briefing or don't they recognize an Alfa when they see one? With no points at stake I don't argue and go off after the first group. I eventually finish up about 13th which I guess must mean I passed about half the field. As Pete says afterwards, at least I got much more practice at passing other cars than I usually do.

Race 3. This is our second points race and is billed as a 'Continental Challenge' with all the Alfas, Fiats, Lancias and various German cars. I go to the dummy grid leaving Pete to push-start David's car. At the grid I'm told to 'just take any slot' which is a pretty unusual approach. I spot an empty slot in front of Simon and behind a Porsche 924, which suits me just fine. Pete appears at my window

muttering that he's 'getting too old to do this' and then tells me that he also had to push-start Keith Elliott's car. Pete passes on a message that we should try to re-organise to 'where we think we should be', so I get in front of the Porsche on the way to the grid as I know I'm faster. I get a good start and then get passed by Keith Howie and somebody else on the pit straight at the end of the first lap. When I'm half-way around the next corner I come across Keith spinning right in front of me and go left while a Fiat goes right. Half a lap later the race is red-flagged and we all sit on the grid trying to see who's missing. At least there doesn't appear to be an ambulance on track. After a while we see the unwelcome sight of Keith's, Simon's and a Lancia driver's damaged cars coming back on trailers. Apparently, the results of Simon arriving unsighted to find Keith stopped facing him in the middle of the track and, with nowhere to go he hit him head-on, and was then hit up the back by the Lancia who also had nowhere to go. With Simon out and the other two Trofeo cars back in the field I take it easy on the restart, have a little harmless battle with Pete Wildbore and take another class win. As with the first one, there's little satisfaction in winning this way. Back in the pits the two damaged Alfas look a sorry sight. Hopefully, Simon will be able to have his car repaired to race-worthy condition for Taupo, but it looks as if it's going to be a much longer job for Keith to get his back to its usual pristine condition. Jeanette Howie says that's it for Keith, but I hope that's not the case. After all, I still owe Keith a beer and a roll of tape. I'm a bit curious as to whether Simon noticed any difference with the HANS device, but now isn't the time to ask. A quick team meeting and we decide that we won't bother to run on Sunday, so Pete drives the LRRC back to Marton and puts it in the workshop with 193,354kms on the odometer; 2,140kms for the season so far and seven meetings still to go.

Sunday. Back to wet and horrible and I'm glad I'm not out in it. David has also packed his car away. No doubt somebody else will go into more detail as to how Willie Oxley found the Manfeild front straight can bite in the wet, although it was more of nip than a bite. I give up at mid-day and go home to watch motorsport on TV in the dry and warm. Roll on Taupo!