

1968 London to Sydney Marathon

Despite competing against sophisticated engineered cars the winner, Andrew Cowan in his unheralded Hillman Hunter GT GLS took the honours, beating along the way the monster V8 factory cars, Monaro, Falcon, Porche, Lotus, Cortina and all the rest.

The 16,694 km (10,373 mi) from London to Sydney was a tough race across the world. Cars had to reach Bombay or miss the boat and a lot did and had to exit the rally at that point. Surfaces documented were tarmac and gravel but Australia definitely contributed marble - like pebble, sharp lime stone gravel, red earth, salt peat and lime grass bogs.

Andrew Cowan said that the section across the Great Southern Road in Australia was, in his opinion, 80% of the car trial marathon. Despite his controversial win Cowan had his own challenging moments. He slid off the road at one time but with the help of Evan Green got back on track. Slippery ball bearing like gravel caused many roll-overs.



Cowan's Hillman challenges the bogs

Many stories were invented to put some fear into first time travellers to Australia and the 'Blood sucking Kangaroo' was one of them. Never, ever run down a kangaroo because others will chase you and suck your blood!



Porsche 911S (Zasada/Wachowski)

One has to give credit to the Porche that had full roll cage armour fitted as a safety precaution.

Was that to keep the kangaroos from getting at the driver and navigator or a safety device against a roll over?



No 'Blood Sucking Kangaroos' were seen although there was one particular kill thought to be the one hit by Gelignite Jack Murray.

The final result being:

FIRST : Overall winner Andrew Cowan, Colin Malkin and Brian Coyle of Rootes Motor Group in a Hillman Hunter GT GLS.

SECOND : Paddy Hopkirk, Austin 1800.

THIRD : Ian Vaughn, engineer at Ford, in the big Aussie Ford V8.

Ninety-eight cars started. Fifty-six cars finished.