

Super tourers



The pair of Super Touring Bathurst 1000 winning cars perhaps don't get documented in traditional Muscle Car history books, but they form an important part of Mount Panorama history and packed plenty of punch from their two-litre engines

OK, let's stop there and get this out of the way, shall we? Over here at *Australian Muscle Car* magazine we can already hear the grumbles and groans from a handful of people who believe these pages are reserved for V8-powered, Aussie-built racers.

To a degree they are, but they are also set aside for Australian motor racing history (in particular touring cars) to be documented for generations to come – a stance we've outlined in recent issues and will continue to hold firm on in the future.

So, with that in mind, our latest look at Bathurst 1000-winning cars takes us to the Super Touring, two-litre races in 1997 and 1998.

After V8 Supercars elected to leave the October long weekend event and create their own Mountain marathon, organisers of the 'traditional' race opted for an internationally-flavoured field of two-litre cars with which to contest their event.

Holding the race to Super Touring rules was logical given the explosive growth of the category internationally and its toe-hold in Australia. Super Touring's epicentre was the

British Touring Car Championship, with no fewer than 12 manufacturers entering factory-backed teams in the BTCC in the mid 1990s.

The two Super Touring Bathurst 1000s featured fields filled by imported factory squads (including from the BTCC), distributor-backed teams from the domestic series and a handful of privateer entries.

Given Volvo's stunning return to local tin-top competition in 2014, we thought it an appropriate time to track down the vehicle which gave the Swedish marque its previous high-water mark down under, in the 1998 AMP Bathurst 1000. The win came courtesy of Jim Richards and Swede Rickard Rydell, who held out the Nissan (!) Primera of Jim's son Steve and BTCC regular Matt Neal.

We also put the spotlight on the chassis that gave BMW a long-awaited Bathurst win via the Brabham boys the previous year.

These are the stories of the two cars that conquered the Mountain in those thrilling races and their whereabouts today.

The good news is that both survive. What's more, one is owned today by a driver who took it to victory lane in the Great Race.





Paul Cross



Clay Cross

1997 AMP Bathurst 1000 Winner

Geoff Brabham/David Brabham

#83 Diet-Coke BMW 320i

Chassis – E36 STC 96/008



Lakeside 1997

Ray Berghouse

The BMW that carried the Brabham brothers to victory in the 1997 Great Race had been built in 1996 by BMW Motorsport and originally competed that season with the Bigazzi team in the German ADAC Super Tourenwagen Cup.

Most sources state it was Steve Soper's car, while Phil Branagan's report of the Lakeside Super Touring round later in '96 in the pages of *Australian Motorsport News* says it was ex-Joachim Winkelhock.

Either way, the local BMW team and Brad Jones' Orix Audi team were pitted in a war for the local championship late in '96. So BMW dispatched this car and a sister chassis to Australia, with Geoff Brabham driving the eventual Bathurst winner as #83 and Paul Morris the sister machine as #1 for the final two rounds at Lakeside and Oran Park.

Brabham was eliminated in a crash in Race 2 at Lakeside and the car damaged, though it was repaired for the final round where Brabham had

a miserable weekend and wound up fourth in the final series pointscore.

He retained the car for the 1997 season and drove it throughout the BOC Gases Super Touring Championship, finishing runner-up to teammate Morris in a BMW 1-2.

However, the AMP Bathurst 1000 fell before the final two rounds of the series and Brabham had brother David join him for The Great Race.

Geoff took provisional pole on Friday but couldn't back it up in the Top 10 Shootout, qualifying sixth, while Morris took pole.

He started the race in the #83 car and engaged in an early dice with Peter Brock in the Triple Eight-run Vectra before first hitting the lead on lap 33 as the first round of pit stops began.

As the race panned out, the Diet-Coke BMW only led eight laps all day and had to survive contact at The Cutting late in the day when an ambitious Belgian Jean-Francois Hemroulle punted David into a spin while trying to overtake him for third position.

Brabham recovered and hunted down the



Andrew Hall

other Audi of Frank Biela to take second spot on lap 155 and crossed the line behind the team car of Craig Baird, which would later be excluded, given the Kiwi pilot had exceeded the maximum allowed continuous driving time.

That gave victory to the Brabham brothers, the first – and so far only – brothers to win the Bathurst classic.

The factory BMW team shut up shop at the end of the season, so this car lay idle in 1998.

It returned to the track in 1999 when Paul Morris formed NEMO Racing and he ran it in the Australian Super Touring Championship as the #23 entry having been updated with a 1998-spec engine, drive train and suspension.

He beat Jim Richards' Volvo S40 and the front-wheel-drive Audi A4s from Brad Jones' team to claim his third Super Touring crown and then went on to win the Bathurst 500(km) in wet conditions.

On top of that he also raced the car in Macau in '99 and finished runner-up in the traditional Guia touring car event before claiming a fourth ASTC crown (and 16 of the 17 races) against a



Greg Taylor



Ray Berghouse

comparatively weak field in what turned out to be the final year of Super Touring in Australia under TOCA Australia in 2000/2001.

The car was eventually sold to Peter Kelly, who raced it in the short-lived Touring Car Challenge (a category catering for ex-V8 Supercars, Super Tourers, Future Tourers, Group A cars, etc), during 2005 and 2006.

It was rebuilt in 2007 and sold late last year (including a pile of spares) in plain white livery to New Zealander Bruce Miles, who also owns an ex-Diet-Coke 1995 series car that he and Murray Cleland drove in the 1998 AMP Bathurst 1000, the wet '99 500km race and the 2002 24-Hour event at the Mountain.

"The Diet Coke car always had a soft spot in our hearts as it was the next generation from our car and technically very advanced for its time," Cleland told us (no relation to the Scottish driver John by the way!).

"When it came up for sale having such great history, it was a no-brainer that it should come to New Zealand. It only arrived in late 2013 so nothing has been done to it.

"We are evaluating what needs to be done, then we will undertake a full restoration back to full racing trim and perhaps use it for events here and possibly take it over to the UK and run it in the Super Tourer series there, which supports the BTCC rounds."



Greg Taylor

Oran Park 1999



Ray Berghouse

Oran Park 2000



Ray Berghouse

2013



1998 AMP Bathurst 1000 Winner

Rickard Rydell/Jim Richards
#40 Volvo S40 Racing Volvo S40
Chassis – R8-002



Greg Taylor

After racing the 850 model wagon then sedan in Aussie Super Touring, Volvo stepped it up in 1998 and imported an S40 for Jim Richards to drive in the local series.

However, for Bathurst the factory TWR-run Volvo team brought out a pair of its British Touring Car Championship cars (R8-002 and R8-003) for The Great Race, pairing Richards with Swede Rickard Rydell and Brit Tim Harvey with another Swede, Jan Nilsson.

Rydell and Italian, Gianni Morbidelli, had been the works drivers during that year's BTCC

and the former believes his Bathurst car to have been raced by Morbidelli during the season.

"I'm not sure if he ran it all season or just some races, but I have a vague memory of him changing cars throughout the year but I'm not sure," Rydell told AMC.

Either way, the Bathurst campaign would result in victory for Rydell and Richards in the #40 entry, enduring a day-long fight with the Nissan Primera driven by Brit Matt Neal and Jim's son Steven – who at that stage had been test driver for Nissan's BTCC program.

The Volvo led a total of 83 laps to claim the first win (and so far only!) for a five-cylinder car in the history of the Bathurst endurance race.

But perhaps the most amazing achievement from that weekend was Rydell's stunning pole position lap when he cranked a 2m14.9265s time with military precision from the front-wheel-drive, 300-horsepower S40 that was a whopping 1.4878s faster than the next-best car!

The #40 S40 claimed pole position, victory and the fastest lap of the race to finish what had been a stunning year for the manufacturer.

"I'll always remember the Bathurst 1000 win with Jim Richards as very special, especially since being at such a famous race and being the greatest track of all!" Rydell says today.

"Jim was also a really nice guy to share the car with, I had real fun. The qualify lap was of course very special."

The Bathurst-winning car remained here in Australia for the following season with Jim Richards driving as part of a two-car team in



Greg Taylor



Ray Berghouse

the local Super Touring series.

Battling Paul Morris' privateer BMW and the works Audis, Richards claimed 10 race wins in the 1999 series and six pole positions but missed out on claiming the title when he was pipped by just six points by Morris.

The car returned to Bathurst for the modified Bob Jane T-Marts Bathurst 1999 festival of racing on the October long weekend with a 100-kilometre qualifying race on Saturday and a 500-kilometre race on Sunday.

Cameron McLean was signed to partner Richards, who won the Saturday qualifier to claim pole for Sunday. However, the wet weather conditions made it a miserable day and the front-wheel drive S40 struggled to get front tyre temperature in the conditions.

McLean didn't get to drive in the race, as it was red-flagged after 50 of the scheduled 81 laps with Richards in second place, and a massive amount of running behind the Safety Car, which turned it into more of a procession than a motor race.

That was the car's last race as Volvo pulled out of Super Touring at the end of 1999 and the chassis was shipped back to Sweden and restored by SportsPromotion.

Volvo then presented the car to Rickard Rydell as recognition of his on-track efforts for the manufacturer and it then remained in the BilSports Museum in Karlskrona, Sweden in 1998 BTCC-like livery.

Rydell tells us it's now in the garage of Johnny Haraldsson, who used to work on the Volvos in

the Scandinavian Touring Car Championship series, and has been that category's scrutineer for quite some time.

"He is going through the car to make it ready to run," Rydell told us.

"It should not be too much work, but there was a few things missing and since it's not been run for quite a few years it has to be stripped. Daniel Reinhard, a Volvo fan from Sweden, is helping Johnny to get the car ready."

While Super Tourer 'historic' racing is on the rise in England (they're supporting the current BTCC at some events this year!), Rydell has no plans for the car for this year but may do a demo run at the historic Knutstorp Revival meeting in Sweden in May this year.

Either way, there aren't too many Bathurst 1000-winning drivers who own one of their first-placed cars, so it's great to know that the Super Swede now has the very Volvo that once conquered the Mountain.



Mallala 1999

Ray Berghouse



Calder Park 1999

Ray Berghouse



Daniel Reinhard



Daniel Reinhard