

# TAILS OF A TARGA TYRO



*By Alan Judd*

We moved into Te Waerenga Road in 2012 and the October of that year was the first time I'd heard of Targa NZ. Our road was closed for a few hours as the event came more or less past our front door. I was interested enough to watch all these exotic cars come flying past but never gave it much more thought.

Several times over the next ten years the event kept reappearing on our road and my interest grew, as did my car collection.

The Targa cars, with a few exceptions, seemed less exotic and about 18 months ago I started thinking "maybe I could do that".

Once the thought had entered my head it became increasingly persistent but could I last 5 days of intense driving?

Looking at the event in more detail I discovered that there was the option to just do the final 2 days - ideal.

It was looking good: I had a great car to do it in, my Porsche Boxster GTS 4 and an event which looked very survivable for an old man. All I needed now was co-driver who was a good driver and preferably younger than me. I didn't need to look very far as my son-in-Law is both of those things and needed no persuasion to jump into the cockpit beside me but I had to agree to let him do some driving.

Only one thing remained, was I capable of driving at relatively high speeds on narrow twisting roads for up to 40kms without coming to grief or annoying my fellow competitors by driving too slowly?

Apart from driving at very illegal speeds for short periods on backroads near me there was only one option – track days.



First one was at Hampton Downs. This was not a success apart from demonstrating the need to up my skill level. The next one was at Taupo. Moderately better but not brilliant. Not being one to give up back to HD for another go. A full day and I thoroughly enjoyed myself, felt more in control and a little faster although the car was obviously capable of a lot more. Good enough I thought.

All the boxes now ticked, entry in.

My co-driver (Tom) was raring to go so even if I couldn't handle the pace/intensity plan B was for him to take over until I recovered or the end of the event whichever came sooner.

Thursday morning drive down to Fielding for registration, stopped at a good cafe in Waiouru on the way. The sat nav seemed reluctant to find the entrance to Chris Amon Manfeild circuit.

Got there in the end in time for registration which proved to be a rather chaotic affair but all good in the end. The car was now all stickered up so car and drivers were set to go 08.30 Friday morning in Palmerston North.



Friday morning, general briefing then another one for all the newbies where we were told that we had a speed limit of 130km/hr. for the day (this didn't sound too bad but proved to be pretty difficult to adhere to). We were reminded to pay careful attention to the pace notes if we wanted to stay on the road and not hit anything. A bit daunting.

Each day was three short stages of about 13km each in the morning followed by lunch then a long stage of around 40km and closing out with a final short blast.

The 130km/hr. limit on day 1 in the wet wasn't too restricting whilst we both got the feel of the car. In the end Tom did 2 stages leaving 3 for me including the long one. 40km seemingly goes in the blink of an eye when you are concentrating.

No more rain after that first day and on to blasting around the back roads near Masterton. Same structure to the day but at 160km/hr. and in the dry.

Before us newbies started the requirement to not exceed 160km/hr. was emphasized with fines of up to \$1000 mentioned for repeat offenders. This made you think but didn't really slow you down too much. I never exceeded 175km/hr. and escaped being fined!

The roads were a combination of tight and twisting plus fast straights, narrow bridges and gravelly bends. A few people managed to leave the road unexpectedly; no one hurt but one car did finish up in an effluent pond - not a popular rescue job!



We finished on an adrenaline high back in Masterton in the bright sunshine - perfect day and ready for next year.

The car had proved to be perfect although it did pick up a stone chip or two and some gravel rash. Looks like I might need to start saving for paint correction and ppf after the 2024 event.

Will I be going back in 2024 for the full 5 days? That was looking like a difficult decision but the Targa gods have been kind to me and in 2024 there's no 5 days only 2x2 days and a 3 day. Decision made for me really; entry already in for the 2 days in March based in Te Kauwhata and play it by ear after that.

Can't wait.

*Alan*