

# Night Trials

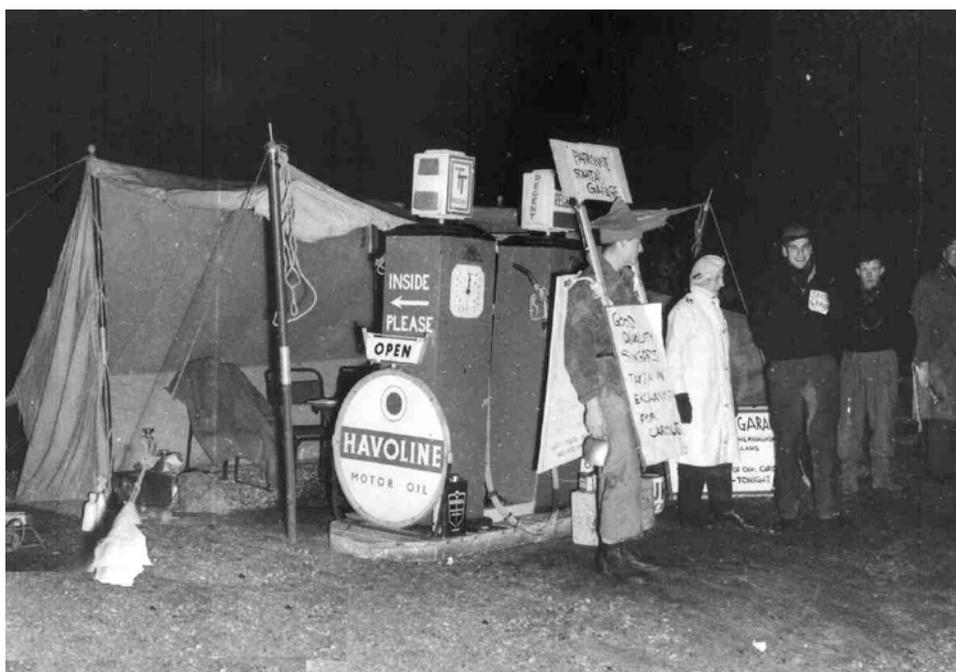
## Some good came out of wartime training

John Higginson

A competitive event based on motorists' ability to interpret complex detail on an Ordnance Survey map and then quickly to translate some of the detail to decide on the quickest route between on- or very much off-road time controls. Would such an event prove popular? The answer after the first Club event on 4/5 January 1947 was a thunderous 'Yes'. Was the concept revolutionary in those drab, immediate post-war days? Yes and no. Drivers had certainly for years been used to looking at road maps if only to read off the numbering allocated by a zealous government department in the 1930s. Many were the drivers in 1947 who had successfully overcome the wartime tasks of interpreting hurriedly printed reproductions of obscure foreign maps at a wide variety of scales in extremely varied terrain. Moreover, participants in the classic trials of the 'Exeter', the 'Lands End' and the 'Edinburgh' all had to read a map correctly to reach the foot of the various ascents. At least one eminent pre-war club, that of the Bugatti Owners, had staged a 'Night Trial' since 1930 in which various steep hills in remote locations had to be found and climbed in the dark.

What was entirely new was the way in which the locations of time controls were defined, the plotting, route finding and driving to be accomplished within the time allowance. In the event of the one inch to one mile map running out of detail near a control, the then new National Grid system could be used to give a six figure reference of the point. All methods were

exploited to the limit and beyond by Holland Birkett, abetted by wife Joan and Michael Burn, initially all plotted on that much to be used map of H&B territory, sheet 169. As has been remarked by founder member Charles Bulmer, it was impossible in 1947 to realise that the whole complex of British rallying for almost two decades would descend from that early and often cunning use of six figure references. Also entirely without rally precedent was the often theatrical and confusing, not to say pantomimical, manner in which control marshals chose to operate in the individual organisation of their usually difficult-of-access control points. Early events could become all night parties in which participants moved from one charade to another. In later years of night trials, complicated navigation questions overshadowed the histrionics while compulsory wheel changes, regularity tests and the like were abandoned in favour of eccentric tie deciding timed contests. These might involve a paddle-boat at Frensham, a game of hockey played from the car, riding a



1954 UHU, Santa's Garage: author and mother (centre of group) with a little help from Gordon Madgwick (behind camera) & some music

defective bicycle or attempting to drive an Austin Seven with reversed steering.

The commanding and persuasive presence of Birkett achieved land and property owners' co-operation for those events to an extent which would be quite impossible to reach today. Thames lock-keepers agreed to keep their locks working all night; the key to the Farley Mount monument was handed over to the Club for the weekend; the top of Chalgrove Church tower was taken over for a car battery, Aldis lamp and tripod for a Saturday night and British Rail agreed to give the Club the run of still operational Churn Halt on the Berkshire Downs. Where possible,

### Rotten Row

A remarkable point in the 1949 night trial was Rotten Row, where the signing out marshal was sitting in a boat some 100 yards inside the disused Basingstoke canal tunnel near Greywell - nowadays a sealed-off bat sanctuary. The competitors naturally plotted it on the tow path above and when they arrived found only a notice saying "You are 25 feet too high". With the sort of instant logic which only prevails on night trials, their first reaction was to climb a nearby tree. Second thoughts eventually brought them to the tunnel entrance where they were able to negotiate with a marshal for the loan of a rather uncontrollable self-propelled boat - hence the title of the point. I suspect that few enjoyed this damp claustrophobic journey in Stygian darkness, especially the ones who might happen to know that the tunnel had collapsed many years ago nearer to the Basingstoke end.

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mapped and precise control points were preferred to six numerals. County boundary junctions, ponds, and even the eye of the Uffington White Horse were employed. Permanent structures, from a Castle to a fort via oast house, farms, barns and cottages were all included. Disused rail tracks, tunnels and canals were all favourite locations. Unsurfaced tracks, if motorable, were included ad lib. Indeed, on one very early event, Holly actually put a marshal at Five Lanes End where the access from any direction was muddy and had every appearance of being a 'stopper'. Moreover, in Birkett's Bugatti period when that prestigious Owners'

Club was busy re-establishing itself in the late 1940s, H&B co-promoted two successful night trial events with that senior Club (these were in addition to the weekend Welsh Rallies similarly co-promoted and themselves resembling less of a Rally and more of much extended and themed night navigation events).

Birkett took several years to forget the tribulations entailed in having to unfold a map in a two-seater without any elbow room at all. In those days he would limit map searching by a notional division of the folded map into twenty four segments. This principle - and others - would endure until some NEW BIG IDEA for identifying controls occurred to his fertile imagination.

The description 'Experts' dates from 1952. After five years of the wildly successful H&B Night Trials, Birkett was faced with (as he saw it) an ever-increasing entry of over one hundred. He reserved the right to scrutinise the past performance of entrants to determine whether they should be eligible to compete on this event. Indeed, the Club had already chosen to co-promote annually with the University of London and United Hospitals MC what was said to be a slightly less ambitious night trial though all competitors would disagree. The 'UHU' came about by several H&B members having a foot in both camps. Geoff Tapp and Bob Gotts were respectively Hon Competitions Secretary and Treasurer of UHULMC. The first of those competitions was held on 27/28 January, 1951.

I do not think that Birkett, or anyone else since, ever had to weed out a list of starters for the 'Experts'. By that time, the invitation calendar was awash with night trial events, all of which enjoyed large entry lists. The number of competitors for the H&B 'Experts' had peaked and slowly, very slowly, went into decline. Sadly, some 'new' organisers, perhaps without proper committee supervision or adequate 'guinea pigs', went out of their way to make the H&B event more and more difficult by a variety of complications. They failed to realise that the success of an event is best judged on the proportion of successful finishers to starters. Once events ceased to be enjoyable and fewer and fewer finished, the fate of the event was decided quite apart from the exigencies of the Control of Rallies Regulations. Yet a renaissance, in the form of the 'Scatter' came to the rescue at the behest partly of Barclay Inglis but principally



'55 Experts Final Control, anxious Peggy McCulloch steadies the rope for the crew on the precipitous slope

masterminded by Gordon Madgwick, who had himself once won the 'Experts' in its halcyon period.

Before leaving those Birkett years and unique, never to be forgotten, nights there are several H&B transgressions which must be mentioned to give a rounded, albeit brief history. As will have been gathered, Holly was an original thinker of strong convictions, prone to laying down the law. Even Homer nods, however and the following examples served as awful warnings to later generations of organisers:

First to the 1952 'Experts'. One control was "Hanged in Hampshire". It was in kilometre square SU6365 although you were not told that on the route card (in fact the three words of the title were the only control description and were supposed to locate the marshal precisely). The situation was a section of scrubby heath land called Gibbet Piece and limited by the then

County Boundary. This point caused enormous loss of marks and complaint. Holly later apologised. Competitors were supposed to be able to deduce that the marshal could be found at the exact centre of the 'Piece'. The marshal had chosen to camouflage himself under pine branches in an area littered with the same objects.

We are next in 1955 'Experts' mode, 1-inch sheet 181. Control and route checks that year had to be visited "in any order". Nevertheless what raised some eyebrows was the statement in the regulations that "All controls have been chosen because of their various difficulties of access." Equipment was to include a climbing rope, length not specified. I actually marshalled at the final control, a disused railway tunnel (OSGR 181/873165) and thought the descent of the steep chalk cutting to be one of the three most dangerous requirements ever made by an organiser of competitors on a night trial. Just as well that I had brought my own 120-foot length of heavy rope (left draped in position for the night) otherwise I and my team would neither have been able to get to the bottom of the cutting to open the control nor to make an exit therefrom

at dawn.

Finally we come to the 1960 'Experts' (started from The Queen's Hotel, Farnborough) and the then brand new edition of the 1-inch sheet 169 which showed for the first time the line of a newly discovered Roman road. Holly had constructed a supposedly Roman Imperial grid using 'Roman' coordinates and Roman numerals. I was pleased that I was unable to start this night trial as a drawing board was certainly essential, not to mention a large pair of parallel rulers, dividers and a Latin dictionary. Finishers were few!

But enough of those trifling difficulties and onwards to the ever-resourceful Madgwick organising supremacy.

**John Higginson**

## A novel amusement - then it got serious

Gordon Madgwick

**M**y very first motoring event of any kind was a Birkett Night Trial in October 1950. It started and finished at Sutton Scotney and was, it seemed to me, dominated by Austin Sevens and peopled by near lunatics in charge of elaborate set pieces and bent on confusing competitors. As novices, my crew and I were totally unprepared for 'Rice Polishing Works' (An excuse to use old notices, 'Motor Ricing Is Dangerous'), a ride in a 'Blarney Wipet MkII' or an encounter with a tramp-like character who claimed to all and sundry to have escaped from Winchester Jail. However, in spite of finishing well down the list, we were 'hooked'.

Perhaps some explanation of how it all worked might be justified. The start and finish would be chosen to be somewhere near the centre of a ring of ten marshalled controls about ten miles apart. Competitors were dispatched in turn on each of the ten radii and further dispersed by being required to circulate around the ring clockwise or anticlockwise. It was rare to notice any extra traffic on the road and even at controls parking was not a problem, except maybe at a *difficult* plot.

Timing was calculated at about 30 mph on the road plus a walking allowance, where it was

### Glossary

**Trial** A series of tests on muddy tracks or hillsides, usually for special cars, decided on who can keep moving upwards longest or highest.

**Night Trial** (1947) The first few events did have a 'Trial' aspect but later the most notable features were a) the use of OS maps and b) the scattering of the entry over most of the area in use. However, the name remains to this day. (also called Hunt the Marshal or Night Navigation).

**Scatter** (1963) A more descriptive name for 'Night Trial' and much the same, although most of the series were Half Night only.

**Rally** Properly an endurance event in which entrants gather via timed road sections, often from different starting points and covering quite large distances over several days. Loosely and confusingly applied to almost any road event!

EJGM

### The Blarney Wipet

Inside an old hangar on a dispersal aerodrome near Stockbridge, marked by a wind sock knitted by Nan Cawthorne, competitors signed in and found an ancient French fighter plane (Reg. GU-FFAW), a genuine Blarney Wipet Mk II, inscribed with its record of honourable "kills" - a Fokker triplane, a cow, a balloon, a cyclist and a line of washing. It was now powered by a captured German experimental unit (a V½) mounted above the fuselage. The victim (aka competitor) was invited to sit in the rear cockpit, slightly dazzled by a light in front of him, whereupon the jet unit started up with a very loud and rising whine and then suddenly to his total horror (having so far treated all this silliness with the indulgent contempt it deserved) it shot forward out of the hangar and accelerated across the dark aerodrome with a red glow coming from the tailpipe. This was because Bill Arklay had attached a very long tow rope to it from his Standard Avon which remained invisible and inaudible ahead of the ambient commotion.

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considered necessary. Marks were lost at the rate of one per minute, the winner having lost least. Dead time was allowed between booking 'in' and 'out' for competitors to enjoy the party, have refreshments (often provided), do a special test and plot the next leg. The need to visit the marshal twice led to a later refinement where the 'hidden' booked in and a separate one booked out - avoiding disclosure to newcomers.

The special test, which was nominally to resolve ties, was simply an extension of the general histrionics and often called for a reversal of role - for example the navigator might be called upon to drive a doctored bicycle or push the driver around a course in a one handled wheelbarrow. Try it sometime!

Looking back I cannot help wondering how the 110 miles of the 'ideal' route managed to take up the whole 8 to 9 hours of the night - but it did! Some people were known to finish late. Perhaps some entrants came for the fun alone. I well recall on a much later event discovering too late that we were circulating the wrong way

and yet continuing in the near certainty of being classed as non-finishers.

Navigation, in these early days, was almost exclusively by map references, with perhaps the odd magnetic bearing, derived from a simple map search, thrown in for a little diversion. As competitors became better and better other methods and tricks were used so that in the end one needed sixth form brains as well as sixth form humour.

The rest of my thoughts are a haze of organisation, reporting and photographic activities and more - so here goes in no special order.

One dark Saturday night I was roused from my bed by torch flashes at the bottom of the garden. Upon seeking an explanation I was challenged by the classic, "Are you the marshal Gordon?" It was Mike Igglesden searching on a wrong co-ordinate one kilometre too far north, no doubt due to an inadequately guinea-pigged route card.

Organising an event was always great fun, although it involved a great deal more work than one ever anticipated. However, it was an excellent excuse to go motoring late into the night to look at some aspect of the route. My own first effort was very nearly a farce in that, by attempting to 'improve' on the well tried formula, my marking system made it possible for a competitor to visit one control and return to the start and win! Luckily no one tried it.

I like to think that in my efforts I did not lose sight of the 'fun' aspect, mostly by having a theme to add interest, particularly for the less expert crew. In doing so I was simply following Birkett's example. For instance, his *Dr. Foster of Bedside Manor* called for competitors in the BOC Welsh Rally of 1950 to chase a patient



Organisers liked their water features: This is typical of the decoys which wasted time for competitors - 'three counties meet' just west of Haslemere

(Gwd Evans) to Aberystwyth and back to Prescott to deliver a life saving injection. The syringe, serum and diluent were all collected from remote locations on the way. It was so much better than a series of characterless controls. The regulations even called for a Welsh dictionary, which turned out not to be needed, but which caused us some bother to locate.

I considered one of my 'better' attempts at running an event was the Evening Scatter of 1965, which used a James Bond theme. One of the controls was derived from a map reference described simply as 'doubly apt for Mr. Bond's arrival by submarine' (007 007 on the Sussex coast). *Par-King Bey* and others also appeared and entrants' numbers ran from 001 to 0034.

*Autosport* used to have several pages devoted to short accounts of club events which had the potential for useful publicity for H&B, particularly if the write up and results could be supported by photographs. I recall rushing home from Sunday events to develop a film, dry it in spirit, print a few of the best, 'phone the organisers for details of the folk in question and confirm results and then write a short description - all this to be in the post early on Monday. It doesn't sound much but it kept me up into the wee small hours. Night events didn't lend themselves so well to photography, although I did a few of competitors plotting on the bonnet or at one of the set pieces.

## The halcyon days - a reminiscence

Jim Morley

**W**e're in the mid-fifties. Picture the scene; inadequate pre-war headlights trying to pierce the gloom on a country road. Pitch black, no street lights or even cat's eyes, "Should be just about now, on the left," said David, my navigator, "Yes, that was it!" A quick reverse and turn in the entrance to find a couple of guys on the gate. Wind down the window.

"Good evening," I said brightly, even though it was about 2 or 3 am, "We're number x." and I handed over the route card.

"OK, this is a special test tie decider; you are now in dead time so no hurry; proceed into the car park."

In the car park or, more correctly, the gravel pit, there were other competitors taking a coffee or marshals being sociable. We were told to get out of the car and go and see Bill (Arklay?) where we were shown into a very tatty Austin 7 or Morris Minor.

"Against the clock, drive this car round those beacons glowing dimly in the distance. That is the starter button. 3 - 2 - 1 off you go."

### Simple also worked

Controls didn't have to be elaborate set pieces. I remember plotting a hidden marshal on a tiny building in the middle of nowhere. I was convinced it was correct and when we got there we discovered a small table in the middle of a tiny barn and sitting behind the table was Joan Johns. Joan insisted she was not the marshal, though the fact that she was there at all seemed a mighty coincidence, so we re-plotted, argued for a bit, walked around the outside for a while and finally went back in. "Joan," I said, "you are exactly on plot." to which she replied, "Yes." It slowly dawned on us that plots did not take into account altitude. Looking up we saw Douglas Johns reclining on a boarded platform on the rafters. Leaning against the wall was a stick with a bulldog clip fixed to the end, just the job to pass a route card up to marshal for his signature. RWK

Check the gear lever, press the starter - it fired up - then the clutch. That's odd - feels wrong - that's the brake - try another pedal! Yes, that's better, get into gear and proceed. Wow, that is a ferocious clutch, wow (again) there's an awful lot of backlash in the steering. Wow (no. 3) this goes the wrong way, some idiot has reversed the steering box!

### Beginner's course

In an early 'Night Trial' I loaned my small cabin boat 'Chad' for the now famous control 'Deep Water' on the River Wey. Peter Figg ran the control and appeared to be pumping air down to a sub-aqua marshal. Competitors were encouraged to don a diving suit to visit him beneath the waves. Meanwhile I ferried Holly around as Travelling Marshal. DHS

Reverse off the bank realising why there was a special bumper and make way slowly and indirectly in the direction of the beacons. The brain learns eventually (I'm glad it wasn't my gearbox) and it becomes possible to go where you intend and back to the line.

I was told I'd scored a good time (I was very competitive in those days) so, feeling good, I had a coffee and watched the next victim or two. Great fun, what a sign of the times (1954?) that so many people should go to so much trouble to entertain their fellow club mates.

Other highlights that I remember include a point in the middle of Frensham Little Pond, where you could see the marshal anchored in a boat offshore and you had to take, I think, one of the coracle-like boats on the beach to reach him.

At another river edge point, the obvious guys denied being the marshals but they said he was nearby, which you knew anyway because of the accuracy of the plot. You could see lights under the water and see bubbles coming up. That was where you were offered a telephone! The voice said he was the marshal, and you could hear the bubbles in the phone. All of course a great distraction. I've forgotten where the marshal actually was, but not far away of course.

We're still with the same pre-war headlights and 6 volt electrics trying to cope with pitch black and mist on a freezing cold night. My navigator then said "I've lost track of the bends in the road but there's a watersplash coming up ..." "soon" he was going to say as I tried to stop before the road turned to water. We stopped, the front wheels completely submerged and steam coming up from the bonnet vents. Miraculously, due to a downdraught carb and my waterproofing effort, the engine kept running and, in spite of the steep slope, I started to reverse out. Then a flashbulb went off to the right. The road had a little joggle in it so the shallow ford had been missed and on a footpath beside it were the spectators!

That was my first awareness of Gordon Madgwick, photographer for *Autosport*, and the picture of me reversing out of the water was published. I scrounged a better print from him later. After that, Gordon always seemed to be around. I remember an underground tunnel in the middle of Linchmere common which led into a full size room where the marshal was. It must have been a wartime bunker of some sort, apparently found by the Madgwicks when exploring the common. On another occasion he was standing exactly on plot on a road bridge, a hefty rope dangling down into the blackness below. No, he wasn't the marshal. I think he was there to stop people climbing down the rope. It would have been a quick way to the marshal.

"It's a couple of hundred yards down past this bend, on the left, quite a way from the road so find somewhere to stop," said my navigator. I knew the road down to the A25 near Shere and knew that there was a field to the left of the road. I thought it must be in the woods beyond the field and parked hard in to the left. Nobody else was about. It must be an easy point, they've all found it and gone on. Through the hedge and across the field, boots getting wet in the long grass and torches searching the blackness of the edge of the woods. That'll be it, a wartime blockhouse bang on plot. Quicken pace to a run, round the back. Ah yes, a light inside. Push the door, gloom suddenly becomes dazzling brightness and my navigator is grabbed by white coated individuals and forced onto a table. A huge wood saw was produced and other tools and unlikely equipment appeared. I noticed that one of the 'nurses' had a name tag 'steril Beryl'. Another one was Joan something, equally suggestive I expect.

All of that was planned as a time delay and of course you had to ignore it to get the route card timed in - very difficult. I seem to remember the marshal was sitting very hidden beside the door before you went in. Once signed and therefore in dead time you were offered a coffee and entertained by the next patients appearing. That blockhouse is still there.

I suppose, for those who didn't experience it, these nostalgic notes would beg the question 'What on earth has all that to do with rallying, a motor club, or even motor cars?' Fair point but remember at that time most people had pre-war (1930s) cars and couldn't afford to push them too much. The idea was to have a motoring event that was fun where personal skills mattered more than high speed on the roads, hence the navigational element and, once you started that, the competitor had to be accurate. Without accuracy it was easy to be misled by the various diversions which got better and better and, anyway, it was fun devising a difficult point.

My contribution on one occasion was a point at the bottom of a steep wooded slope, not far from the road.



1954 Pill Box, Sir John assisted by Sterile Berile (L to R) Joan Birkett, Beryl and John Nelms



The author, with BMW and spoils

I was sitting well hidden in a dense bush and there were the usual candles in jars scattered both ways, but up the slope there was one light that I could move by radio control. A servo motor could make a rattling noise and it was terrific fun to get the competitors climbing the slope to find the cause. They found a note, "You may think that this is a perfectly ordinary radio-controlled saucepan but in fact it is a diversion. Try plotting more accurately."

Sadistic wasn't I?

Jim Morley

## The later years - flourish and decline

I came into the frame in about 1965. My father, Gordon, regularly competed in and organised various events, mostly night trials, during the 1950s and 1960s. At the time I was too young to take much notice, but I do remember visiting potential control locations during the weeks before events he was organising. I also remember wondering who *'the man'* was, and why did my dad need to go and see him *'about a dog'* so late on a Saturday evening.

In the days before photocopying, paperwork for an event had either to be professionally printed or duplicated. We didn't use the Club's rotary duplicator but rather a simple home version, which father still has, comprising a platten with a hinged frame holding a fine mesh silk screen. My mother, Deirdre, would type the 'skins' which were fixed to the underside of the screen with printer's ink. The frame was closed, more ink applied and a hard rubber roller used to squeeze it through the silk screen and skin on to the sheet of foolscap placed on the platten beneath. It was hard work and the first few copies were never any good. The quantity of ink necessary was difficult to estimate and sometimes the letters were too faint or the middles of the enclosed letters fell out leaving ugly blobs. The resulting 'regulations' and 'final instructions' took ages to dry and could not be stacked together without the risk of spoiling. My first involvement in event organisation was to help distribute the still sticky copies to horizontal surfaces around the house to allow drying time before folding and posting.

## David Madgwick

The first 'Scatter' was in February 1963 and then annually at least until '66 and used the same marking (ie a time allowance between hidden controls) as did the 'Experts Night Trial' and UHULMC events.

Maybe father anticipated the trouble to come with the public due to 'Rallies' week-end after week-end roaring through otherwise sleepy villages. However, had not Birkett already done this? (above). His reason was to avoid the 'Rally' tag. He had long been at the sharp end of trying

### Dodo's egg



Denis Jenkinson was so intrigued by this three-dimensional route card that he welded together a steel replica. Facets were painted green or white (later all white) and the egg became the perpetual award for the Evening Scatter, the names of winners being inscribed on the white facets. NC

to placate landowners who would clam up at the whisper of the word 'Rally'.

He was very disappointed that the new rules imposed on motor sport did not at first cater for 'Scatters' (or 'Night Trials') but rather lumped them with 'Rallies' (1967) as indeed they had been from 1947. It was not until the '80s that 'Scatters' had their own rules.

Father always enjoyed a bit of technology however simple or ludicrous and this was occasionally reflected in the 'Scatters' he organised. My brother Paul was good at maths at school and very interested in science and electronics. We had the idea of printing a Scatter route card on the pentagonal faces of a solid dodecahedron. Nothing so daft had been done before. Father was, I remember, very sceptical about the practicality of creating such a route card. But Paul helped draw out the developed shape of half a dodecahedron with little tabs wherever required for gluing. Mother typed out the control information onto a 'skin' and pentagonal fold lines were scribed to create two 'developed' halves. We all helped in the duplication, gluing and assembly of the three-dimensional cards. Mother named them 'Dodo's eggs' in keeping with the event theme where control points had names such as 'Battery Hen' and 'Fan-tailed Exhausted Bird'. Competitors were stunned when presented with their 'route cards' at the beginning of the fourth Evening Scatter in 1966. I've heard that some competitors have retained their route cards into the next century and still wonder what it is that rattles inside.

Other innovations included novel ways of presenting simple information such as map references. In 1973 a spoken map reference was included on a strip of magnetic tape attached to the edge of the route card. Competitors had to slide their route card through a reader that played the words into headphones. This 'playing' of the tape sometimes required several attempts to get the speed close enough to enable the words to be deciphered. Did he invent the 'data strip' as used on credit cards I wonder?

On this same event I acted as a hidden marshal in a tent at the centre of an old fort in Pipers Copse near Northchapel. It was a

very cold, damp and foggy night. I'd not long passed my driving test and drove a bit too fast on the way home at about 2 a.m. after picking up a code board to the South of Petworth. I failed to see in time a kink in the road. It was over thirty years ago but I remember the place well (SH 97 ref. 197/930½128). I had learned from father, after an incident involving snow and a ditch 100 yards from home, that slamming on the brakes was the worst thing to do so I drove for some distance on the verge whilst fighting with the steering. It was too foggy to see anything but the waist high grass flattening under the Mini but I knew the road was somewhere to my left. I steered left and eventually found the tarmac. That was bad enough, but next day my feet began to hurt. By Monday morning I could not put them to the floor. A qualified nurse neighbour diagnosed VD when quizzed by mother! The doctor diagnosed frostbite, the first case he'd ever come across, and gave me a week off work. By Friday about 1/8 in of dead flesh had peeled from the greater part of my soles.

By 1975 the committee deemed that I was mature enough to organise an event myself. There had been a foot and mouth epidemic in 1974 so, in its third year, a twelve-car rally formerly organised by Reg Dennis had been cancelled. The 'Hampshire Challenge' had already got the reputation for being a lot of fun but a bit too long at 140 miles. Reg had asked me, rather suspiciously nicely, to check the



1968 Jim & Maureen Dennison (L) collecting the replacement Noctavigation Trophy from Joan Johns, Jimmy Hogg beyond

route of the mothballed event to help him prepare it for resurrection. I fell straight into his trap and he neatly off-loaded the whole thing to me. The cost of petrol had rocketed from about 33p a gallon to about 50p at about this time so I used this as an excuse to reduce the mileage to a hundred or so. Marshals were in short supply too so the number of controls was similarly cut. The event was won by the famously competitive husband and wife team Jim and Maureen Dennison. They were sticklers for accuracy and woe betide any organiser who slipped up. They also had some of the most legendary arguments whilst competing on rallies: "No, no, NO!" Maureen might exclaim to which Jim might retort, "You're talking complete nonsense, woman." This often occurred even before they'd left the Start. More often than not they would go on to win the event.

In the late '50s and early '60s father did many events with BBC producer Morton Surguy in a very tatty Austin A40 Devon, a car that made me horribly sick, I remember. Richard Hartland had cadged a ride in the 'sick seat' for some navigation experience and recalls an incident that goes to prove that it never pays to do non-vital maintenance shortly before a rally. They were on their way to the last control of an 'Experts' when the engine started a sudden loud and rapid knocking. Father cut the engine and they coasted to a stop. The sump plug had fallen out. They followed the oil slick back up the road and searched for some time but failed to find the plug. A nearby hawthorn hedge provided a penknife-whittled substitute but there was little hope of acquiring any oil at 3 am. Having fitted the 'new' plug they coasted down a hill. By good fortune they found a ramshackle private garage close to the road. It was not locked. In the garage, by even greater good fortune, lay a Duckhams tin with its side cut out. It contained a few pints of sludgy sump draining. After pouring this in the engine they drove gently to the finish. The 'owner' never responded to the note they left in the garage thanking him for the oil they had stolen. It might have been better and certainly cheaper to have not changed the oil the day before. Apparently they still won the event.

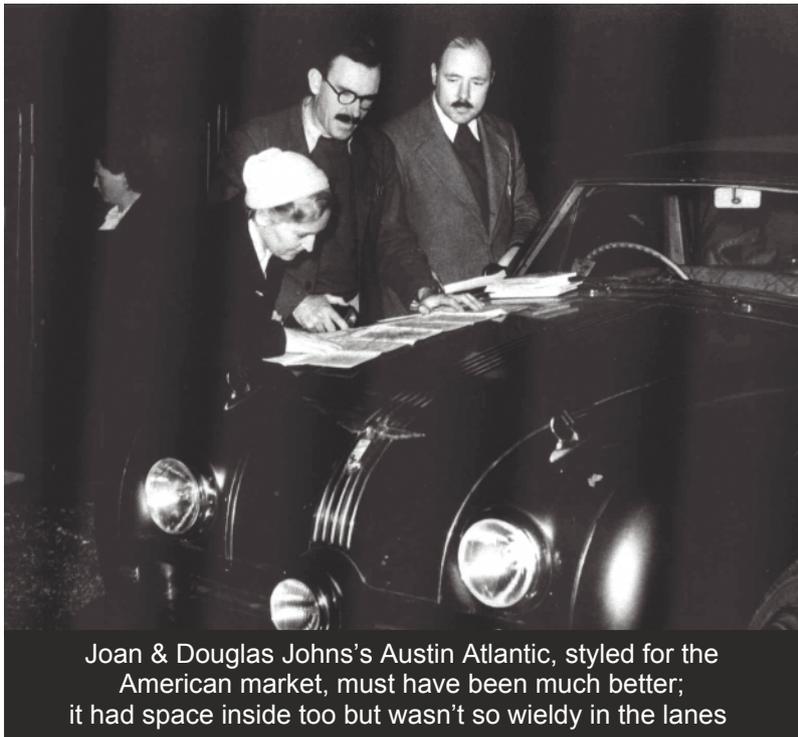
Weather can make or break a competitive event but I enjoy battling against the elements. One



1-inch Ordnance Survey maps & small sports cars (MG J2 here) never did mix well. Narrow bonnets and central hinges weren't much good for plotting on either

occasion sticks in my mind. My navigator for much of the 1970s was David Hands, a fellow RAE apprentice. Like many previous H&B members, we both lived in the apprentice's hostel at Farnborough. During the early '70s we did a huge mileage together, mostly in my 1960 Mini 850. With petrol costing under £1 for three gallons you could drive a summer evening away with a trip to Bognor or Littlehampton for fifty pence each. We entered a CSMA event that claimed to be running on maps 185 and 186. It was the year that the West Country had suffered blizzards for several weeks. There was no snow at the start in Fleet but, the further west we went, the worse it became. At the half way halt the organisers presented us with a hand traced version of map 184. There were no place names and all roads were shown in similar solid lines. It was very difficult to find the correct route with so little to go on. It was the weather however that was the greatest challenge. It became treacherous. I spun the Mini on ice between the walls of a narrow railway bridge and we had to battle snow drifts a couple of feet deep in blizzard conditions on Salisbury Plain. We spotted an MGB snowed to its roof some distance up a side road. It took a few minutes on foot in knee-deep snow to find it empty of occupants. By the time we had returned to the Mini the wheel tracks had gone. We were very lucky not to get lost or stuck. Every crew reached the finish in more or less one piece. We all had a tale to tell.

By the late '70s a formidable H&B navigator, Keith Simpson, who had many rally successes with Bob Tilbury, had turned game keeper and



Joan & Douglas Johns's Austin Atlantic, styled for the American market, must have been much better; it had space inside too but wasn't so wieldy in the lanes

less fun and the possibility of being stopped for speeding, though rare, was ever present.

As Bill Bonney explains in a later chapter, a group of local clubs banded together to help maintain the standard of events and give consistent advertising to all events in the region. After a couple of false starts H&B joined 'The Five Maps Scatter Championship' which promoted its own awards structure and spawned several excellent new series of events. One I remember in particular was organised by Chris Pears of the Windsor Car Club and titled 'The Don't Panic' or DP. This themed event used amusing and elaborate references to the Douglas Adams' iconic book 'The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy'.

was organising the 'Scatter' with help from Ray Drew who had useful contacts in the photocopying business. They produced some of the best events of the period. Ex-merchant seaman Ashleigh White from Liphook had joined the club and become my navigator. He was a dab hand with the 'parallel rules' and a very accurate navigator. Together we had some success driving an under-gear'd Mini 1275 GT. In 1981 and, after a very frightening demo, I bought a second hand MG Metro from Ashleigh's brother-in-law. At the time the MG Metro was advertised as being the fastest production MG ever produced! It was an enjoyable car to drive and far better than the few sad remaining relics would imply. It's easy to forget how poor were some of its contemporaries. Keith Simpson's events were taxing and complicated and attracted huge entries, sometimes a hundred or so. The car park at Frensham Great Pond was rarely so busy. I believe the MG Metro helped us to a memorable 'Scatter' win against a large and talented field of competitors.

Along with our own 'Holland Birkett Navigational Scatter', this event and a handful of others are the most recent echoes of the old 'Night Trial'.

I hear a lot about rallies that pre-date me but I believe the early 1980s was probably the golden era of 'Navigational Scatters'. The overall standard of organisation was good, the paperwork well presented and the crews were skilled and competitive without being rich professionals. Indeed, 'Scatters' must provide the most 'fun to the pound' of any form of motor sport. I have no doubt that events in the early days of map-based rallies or navigational trials were both fun and required skill to win. I get the distinct impression, however, that competitors took it all a bit less seriously and just getting to the finish without the crankshaft breaking was the main challenge. The navigation was far more straightforward and the manned controls far more elaborate with an almost party atmosphere.

Scatters had permeated throughout grass roots motor clubs and there were many organised 'themed' events lifted directly from the H&B mould. Overall, though, the entries started to dwindle during the 1980s as the older teams grew up, had their families and younger folk (mostly men) found other amusements. Traffic was increasing, motoring had perhaps become

The original 'Night Trial' was largely the brainchild of Holland Birkett, a pivotal member of H&B in the 1940s and '50s. It is certain that 'grass-roots' motor sport in Great Britain owes a great deal to Holly's extraordinarily innovative events.

**David Madgwick**

# *Sunday events*

## **Exercise Sunday and other treasure hunts**

**John Higginson**

**W**hy were those Sunday springtime map reading events so called? None now can remember but the runs complemented annual November Club runs of a similar nature. A series of simple competitions had started in the early 1950s under the capable organisation of Stan Read and Ben Hook, two surveyors, who prided themselves on their ingenuity and accuracy. This pair continued to plot these popular events for nearly ten years after which the continuation of the series was dependent upon 'volunteer' members who often abandoned the original title in favour of a 'themed' series of questions. Some will still recall the 'Eversley Zoo' run, the 'Highwaymans' Hoard facsimile map, the extraordinary ingenuity of Morin Ness in producing the Club's first (and only) musical event, 'Verisyew Hydin' and the problems of plotting one question based on a fictional grand opera libretto in which a recurring 'the bells ring

out' took near-baffled competitors past yet another parish church. As organisers began to grapple with the Control of Rallies Regulations, other themes were tried, such as 'Hampshire one million years B.C.', 'Dr. Finlay's Bookcase', an 'Autocrossword Puzzle', Sir F. Chichester (on the Chichester map, of course), and 'Pooh's Picnic', to name only a few. Such events were often used as apprentice pieces for promising new organisers, usually with the admonition to 'keep it simple; competitors are their own worst enemies'. This worked well until Geoff Halliwell took it so literally that he had to sort the winner from several finishers with maximum marks.

In the 1970s, the 'Cheaters' Chance' series overwhelmed the old springtime slot in the Calendar, which emphasises the extraordinary level of deceit of which this impostor on the Club scene was capable.

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## **Simple treasure hunt turned classic, the Pairs**

**Joe Lowrey**

**O**nce upon a time, this Club was such a large fraction of the British motor sporting scene that a month without an H&B event seemed like a disaster. There was a nasty gap in the fixture list in post-Christmas weeks, so the late Jack Ballett and I decided to fill it. What we called a Point-to-Point was announced, a daylight map-reading event much less ambitious than the Night Trials, on the first Sunday of the New Year. Clues, rather than manned Controls, had to be found by competitors, so very few members had to work as marshals. Quite conventionally, our little event sought single-car entries.

The early events were adequately supported and seemed to please the competitors, but we felt that they somehow lacked character. Jack and I used to work together by me making damn-fool suggestions, Jack usually saying "you cannot be

serious" but, just occasionally, he would say "well, I suppose, maybe!" Then, he would make my "silly" idea work. The idea for New Year 1954 was still to run quite a simple map-reading event, but to run it for two-car teams who could share the "hunt-the-thimble" process in any way they fancied. We set out to make the event enjoyable, by scheming route cards which would require paired competitors to choose meeting points during the event, for pooling collected information which would enable them to plot further clues.

We suggested that, for a change, they might like to team up with respected rivals - and oh boy, they did! The Links Hotel at Liphook, which we had booked for the start and finish, was quite swamped by the number of entrants. In 1954 post-war shortages of petrol, tyres and new cars were still keeping rural roads fairly quiet so

spreading competitors widely, and making pedestrian quests for inconspicuous clues as time consuming as the motoring, allowed organisers to get away with public road events being won or lost on time. When our unexpectedly numerous entries for the first "Pairs" came in, though, Jack and I looked very hard indeed at the partnership of Pat Stark and Tony Ambrose, two delightful chaps but both extremely serious and successful competitors. We reckoned, privately, that they would either win our event, or crash in the attempt! We were more than correct - Pat and Tony did win, and they crashed in the effort! Fortunately they only collided gently with each other when arriving all too rapidly at an agreed rendezvous to exchange information so no "outsiders" were involved.

Lots more brain-storming did eventually produce the safer and, we hoped, acceptable idea of finding winners on the basis of fewest miles driven, rather than least time spent en route. It meant more work for us and our helpers as distance recorders of varying accuracy needed to be calibrated. That job was all the harder because, in that era, many cars had odometers recording only whole miles, not tenths. We decided to have a go, and the minimum-mileage idea did indeed prove very acceptable for many, essentially safe years. We had to fix a close-down time for the finish, but very fast motoring became less essential.

So, the "Pairs" had a second lease of life and it also survived two January blizzards. Once we contrived a hurried shortening of the route, eliminating what we guessed would be the worst, hilly lanes west of Basingstoke. The other blizzard was so severe that Jack could not get up the hill out of his house by car, so whilst I was able to reach the start point, as were some entrants, cancellation was inevitable. The Ambrose and Stark team on that occasion included a Mini Cooper, prepared for the Monte Carlo Rally, complete with shovels and a set of tungsten-spiked snow tyres. Told that the Finish would have been in the heart of the South Downs at Singleton, the four chaps who should have crewed two cars piled into one Mini, and set off thither to eat lots of teas. They made it, the very first outsiders to get through snowdrifts to the village that day, from any direction!

Technology of the 1950s nowadays seems primitive but, like others in the Club, Jack and I with our helpers took pride in publishing results quickly. At the end of a Sunday event, we would work out results while most finishers ate a meal, and type them onto wax stencils. These went onto a Gestetner duplicator, often that owned by Jim and Rene Scott's school at Cove, and relays of us cranked the handle! Duplicated results went into pre-addressed envelopes and were taken to Aldershot postal sorting office by about 1 am so that they would reach the Monday morning breakfast tables of most competitors.



An essential skill in any 'Pairs' - organising an efficient meeting of the twins. Details unknown, probably early '60s

The original organising partnership broke up when I removed to North Bucks, and my new wife nearly killed herself motor racing. The "Pairs" series went on and on anyway, even after Jack's sad death, but without nearly such strong support as it had initially received. Perhaps mad enthusiasts were becoming too scarce?

## The Pairs weathers the storm of bureaucracy

**Robin Birchall**

**T**he Pairs for 1967, being the first event in the year, was also the Club's first toe in the water in meeting the new Authorisation Regulations which landed Jack Ballett and me with this pioneering role. We had a no-fixed-route event which should have entitled us to automatic authorisation but some sly character had expressly excluded from this category events where minimum mileage was a factor. We had to invent a notional route to achieve authorisation at all. This we did by drawing a line which included all clue points, start, finish and intermediate controls and sent it with a note explaining that it would not be followed in its entirety. It apparently satisfied the RAC for we never had any trouble in gaining authorisation, although detailed route changes were sometimes demanded, a nonsense considering its fictional nature. It became an annual tradition for us to foregather in Jack's office after work. There he would take out of his desk drawer pencils and sharpener, eraser and a pile of pre-decimal coins for marking points on the map. He would then produce a cardboard tube and a large roll of tracing paper which he proceeded to manipulate with a skill gained, he said, from years of wallpapering experience. After this ritual we could transfer our imaginary route to the tracing paper in duplicate and the charade would be on its way again.

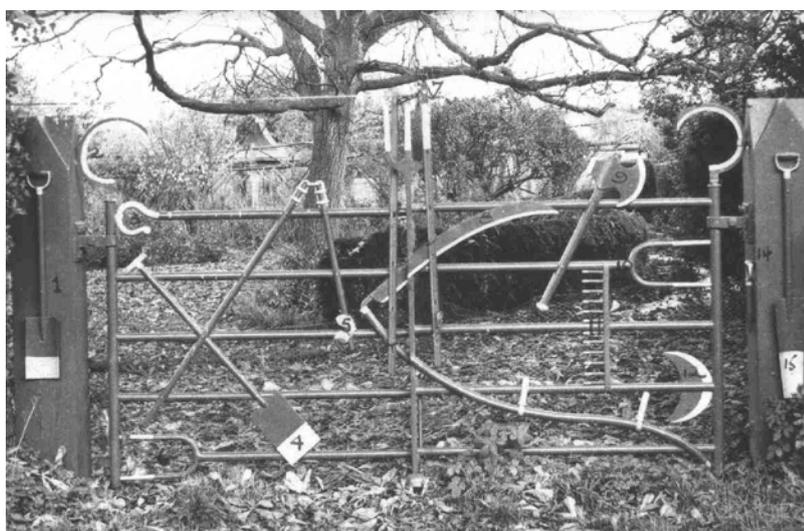
Development over the next 15 years was steady but unspectacular, such were the solid foundations laid by Jack and Joe initially. We played tunes on the lunch controls, confusing

everybody by having none for the 21st event and exchanged pub fireside for the Club caravan, a practical solution to the problem of providing a sociable finish. That idea received a setback, however, when the caravan was reduced to matchwood in the 1976 gales only a couple of days before we needed it. Even the stove, which we planned to use to warm the soup and sausage rolls, was nicked on the morning of the event.

Some of the themes remain in the memory. The Roman Aqua Board Inspector relied on a shifted grid but, mindful of the criticisms expressed by John Higginson in the previous chapter, it wasn't angled and we did provide a translation of Roman numerals. When I proposed a crossword on one occasion Jack told me, in no uncertain terms, to think again. He and Joe had tried it before and he wanted no more of such things. I compromised with a number square. Even that fell foul of a late change in clues but we had notebooks filled with lists of numbers and locations and disaster was averted with alternatives. It even improved the square by allowing me to eliminate the remaining blank cells.

The route card based on family history was, perhaps, the most ambitious. For that one I think we had a novice's version, no doubt on Jack's insistence (his wife understood it but he didn't). This was the only event during my tenure where snow almost brought it to a halt. Heading for final control, we came across Howard and Jane Johnson, the other half of the Kingdon crew, stuck in a drift across the road. Having made sure that help was on its way, we reversed out of the impasse and carried on. Imagine our surprise, then, when Ray and team turned up at final control a little while later. Not only that but, not having had the means to go anywhere, they'd covered so little mileage that they won by a country mile. I never found out how much that chance encounter pointed them in the right direction.

With the Pairs, interpretation of the route card was seldom a problem. Failure to find final control was



Pairs events need numbers - how many implements?  
From a Higginson Sunday event

almost invariably the result of adventurous guessing, a vital part of the event to have any hope of winning. Either guesses were inspired or ignominious failure was the result. Because of this we always tried to ensure that some of the clues were easily guessable and controls might be found by the speculative. However, a control placed in a public car park near Chichester foiled many (Jack liked to go down to the sea occasionally) and, for our final Pairs, the 25th, we lost all but two entrants by putting final control in a masked lay-by. Why that threw so many was never satisfactorily explained although a difference in road colouring between our edition of the map and that of many competitors didn't help. At least most of them turned up at the finish, a party at Cove Cricket Club.

Vera and the late Stan Chisman, together with Geraldine and Barry Edwards were our faithful guinea pigs who kept our feet on the ground and doubled as intermediate stage marshals. We always tried to find them scenic points for their marshalling duties but, in January, these were also often somewhat bleak. To try and ensure that the final route cards were correct we always made a complete check the day before the

event. In the end no vanished clue caught us by surprise any more but perhaps the most impressive was the stone crusher, weighing something like 20 tons and looking as if it had been on site for generations, which vanished overnight from its place in a quarry on the South Downs. We had telephone boxes removed, leaving only the concrete base, as well as innumerable signposts, arms of signposts, padlocks, chains, gates and many other objects. Before we had word processors these problems meant panic alterations by hand of upwards of 50 route cards overnight, not to mention finding an alternative clue in the first place.

For me, the memories are all happy ones. I learned much from Jack about organising a Club event and my knowledge of the byways within a radius of about 30 miles became encyclopedic. Despite my best efforts to obscure the clues, throughout the 15 years the entry level stayed pretty constant in the mid-teens, not a patch on the heady early days but well worth the annual effort, nonetheless.

**Robin Birchall**

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## **The Pairs - add simplicity and survive**

**I**n 1983 John Horne took over the Pairs from Robin Birchall and Jack Ballett and ran it with help from his wife, Sylvia. It was in good health then having achieved an entry of 17 pairs in 1982. Unfortunately, the new organisers achieved an entry of only 9 pairs in 1983.

John Horne was joined by John Hogg and me in 1985. As Robin has explained, the Regulations had been drafted to require authorisation for minimum mileage events but it emerged that this was on the assumption that the shortest route was unique. We decided to try applying for a 'scatter' permit which required competitors to visit no more than 75% of points, clearly imperative for anyone trying to do well in the Pairs where distance covered was the tie decider. This argument was successful and has been the basis of running the Pairs ever since.

Over the next few years others such as Rob Shrapnell and Nick Bettin helped. Stuart Ibbotson joined us from 1991. John Hogg's employers in Guildford provided us with a very

welcome Start venue until he left the team in 1998. We combined the roles of "guinea pig" and steward as the work carried out as the former gave a good knowledge of the points that needed to be visited/checked by the latter. There have been occasions when having a steward was crucial, like the time when a wrong map reference was given, when panic envelopes were not given out at the start, or when a lunch marshal closed early, leaving a competitor stranded. Luckily such occasions have been rare over the 49 events. Reg Dennis, Keith Simpson and John Horne have been occasional guinea pigs but Peter Still was our anchor man for many years. When he withdrew, to concentrate on work with Farnborough Operatic Society, Robin Birchall took over.

The style of the Pairs has varied over the years depending on the expertise of the organisers. Initially it followed a "story line"; a "pair" was chosen and clues would be slanted to include their activity. Some memorable themes were: Cobbett's Rural Rides, the activities of secret

**Pam Roper**

agents, Morcambe & Wise, Reagan and Gorbachev and Clegg and Compo (with Foggy for good measure). Sometimes the covers of the questions would include suitable graphics and half the task for the competitors was sorting the clues from the surrounding verbiage. However, John Hogg and Stuart preferred to write straightforward clues but requiring more elaborate mathematics.

In 2000 when John Horne returned to organising the Pairs with me we discussed format and decided that competitors were quite capable of confusing themselves without any help from us. And so it has proved. The desire to cut mileage always leads to "inspired" guesswork and this in turn can lead to the team getting a very wrong map reference for a control. We've had expert teams looking for a finish near Guildford when it has been at Alton or Old Basing and we've also had them turning up only 200 yards from the point but puzzled by not being able to see us.

Participation levels in the Pairs have varied from 6 to 14 pairs over the years. In 1985 we woke up on Pairs morning to a deep covering of snow and decided to postpone the event for a couple of weeks but we lost a few entries in the process. However, even to get this level of entry takes a lot of phoning, reminding and lobbying, although recently we have been able to get very nearly enough H&B cars out to run the event without other clubs.

In 1987 through Stuart Ibbotson's contacts we moved from the little "silver" trophy to a specially made pottery mug. This proved popular and,

despite difficulties in finding suitable potters, we have continued with this form of award. Some people must have quite a collection of Pairs mugs by now.

Working out the Pairs has its good and interesting moments. It is a wonderful excuse to pack a picnic and drive through the lanes of Hampshire on a sunny day looking for suitable control points and roadside clues, perhaps picking crab apples, blackberries or sweet chestnuts on the way. We have also had some pleasant afternoons and evenings spreading buttons, pennies and/or different sized washers around the map to see which points make a good "route" to each control and then mixing up the points on the question paper so the teams have to work it all out again. Put a point (however necessary) too far out and it will not be visited, bring it a bit nearer, and some will be tempted to commit to the extra mileage.

It's hard work finding the points and suitable lunch and final control spots, writing the questions, inviting the clubs, sending out the regs and then getting up on a Sunday morning to open the start but very satisfying when the teams find their way to the Final Control and say they have enjoyed the event. All this route finding means there are not many lanes on OS maps 186 and 175 which I have not traversed at some time in the last 20 years. In the end, however, John Horne and I felt that our contribution was enough and we retired in 2005.

**Pam Roper**

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## No Sunday charity here - Cheater's Chance

Let me admit at once that I did not invent "Cheater's Chance", that honour goes to Barry Hardcastle, aided and abetted by Dick and Nan Cawthorne. When John Hadnutt and I saw the event announced in October 1969 as a new type of Sunday exercise, we thought it would be fun – so did a lot of others for, as it turned out, there was a very good entry. From what we could gather at this stage, it was to be a free-for-all romp around the countryside, without any rules or restrictions other than that any form of cruelty to Officials (as distinct from fellow competitors) would involve instant disqualification. That seemed

very fair and offered one a lot of scope for enjoyment. What follows is entirely from an ageing memory, as I have long since lost all traces of any of the paperwork.

As I recall, some cryptic clues were published in *Sidelights*, aimed more, I suspect, to confuse than to help. Entrants were also invited to ring a Manchester telephone number (Barry had an office up there at that time) during a limited period early on the Sunday morning of the event. On the phone they would be given the map reference of a Start Marshal and charged some penalty points for the privilege, the idea

**Ray Kingdon**



Typical Cheater's Chance clue - find this spot

being that said Start Marshal would then reveal the real location of the start and give some sort of token to enable you to collect your Route Card – or what there was of it - but more of that later.

Being a natural rebel, I did not care for this phone call idea, so I was determined to beat the system by solving the cryptic clues in *Sidelights* (which included some partial map references), thus saving the points penalty and the cost of the call to Manchester! After some thought and a few calculations, I concluded that there were, mathematically, sixteen possible locations for the Start. A quick look at the map and many of these could be ruled out as being too far away from the area, or in quite impossible locations. In the end only two were probable, the most likely of which was under the bridge where the M3 crossed the A327 at Frimley. So, a couple of days before the event, I phoned Barry locally and told him that I would not be using the services of his secretary at Manchester but would see his marshal at 864580. The surprise in his voice confirmed that I had guessed the right one. Sure enough in this exact spot on Sunday morning was Nan Cawthorne, heavily disguised as an elderly woman with a shopping basket - apparently waiting for a bus? Her information directed us on to the Cawthorne's house at "Dawn", London Road, Camberley – where the serious business began. Here we received a Route Card (of sorts) and an incomplete set of photographs, leading to some of the locations about which questions were asked. The cunning scheme was that each

competitor got some photos but not all. To get sight of a complete set we had to trade amongst ourselves. For this purpose we had each been provided with a few cards with letters on. Again these had value at the Finish if you could spell a word (or words) with those you held. I recognised the cards as being from a word game called 'Kanugo'.

So far it was all very cunning and calculated to make life difficult for the entrants. To further confuse the mix, we were asked to end up with various items – from memory, a rusty nail (worth 1 point per inch), a picture postcard of Camberley

and the most useless thing we could find – to be marked by Barry at the Finish. We had a busy day ahead and got stuck into the trading, trying not to be cheated. In those days I was still of a trusting nature and it came as a great shock to me when someone who shall be nameless (I think it was Robin Birchall) stole all my lettered cards, which happened to be slightly protruding from an envelope on my clipboard. Without those, the whole basis of the game vanished – much laughter all round! I tried to look upset – but I had already remembered that my daughter Jane had two similar packs of cards in her toy cupboard. The only concern at this stage was whether the pattern on the backs was the same as those in official use. Only one way to find out – rush home and look. On the way calling at a newsagents to buy a Camberley postcard.

The Devil looks after his own. The cards matched and in my junk-box was a six-inch rusty nail. We were back in business in a big way. During the rest of the day we traded all we needed, to the puzzlement of some. Now to the finish, back at "Dawn" – we solemnly handed in our Answer Sheet plus the nail and postcard. As the 'most useless thing' we proffered a single sheet of toilet paper with the centre torn out! That scored highly. Then as a *coup de grâce* we produced our 'Kanugo' cards and laid out the words "CHEATERS CAN WIN", worth fourteen bonus points. The organisers had arranged a very good event with lots of variety, which we had thoroughly enjoyed.

We now move on to October 1970. We repeated the trick of telling Barry in advance

### Ultimate cheat

On one occasion the final instructions mentioned that there would be a modest award of a balloon on a stick for the winners. When the results were published Ray and John were in first place: they had decided that there was nothing in the regulations to prevent them from entering and they had, of course, achieved full marks. At the Annual Club Dinner the following year they were solemnly presented with their balloons on sticks while those in second place had to make do with the customary inscribed tankards. FB

where his Start Marshal would be. This year we said that Nan would be on the footbridge over London Road (just down from her home) and so she was! Having had a whole year to consider the best way to cheat, we prepared a number of fake photos of places that could well have been used and traded them around. These caused considerable confusion we are happy to say. Also I had noted that the Route Cards had been produced on an ancient 'Hectographic' spirit duplicator, which produces a rather fuzzy purple text. It so happened that, down at the office, I had one of these amongst the junk so I was able to produce some false Route Cards to feed into the system. To cut a long story short, we won again. This time, not so much by getting a lot of things right ourselves, but rather by getting everybody else to put in wrong answers. That was the true spirit of the game, wasn't it?

By way of punishment, we were asked to organise the October 1971 "Cheater's Chance". It was only then that we realised just how disconcerting it is to be faced with such a bunch of cunning rogues. We were determined to carry the event forward in the tradition that it had already acquired and to add to it wherever possible. Pause for thought!

The entry had grown and the number of 'enprint' size photographs needed to support it was enormous. The solution was to offer the pictures as 35mm contact strips of six. No one strip would contain more than five pictures and one blacked-out space. Some pictures would be pointless, having nothing to do with the event. The sets would be evenly mixed amongst the

entrants. Now we needed a foolproof trading currency. Not easy but where there is a 'will' there is a way – and my second name is not William for nothing.

Once again my office came to the rescue – there I had a good offset litho-printing machine. That is where the unique currency, the 'Franc Swizz' was forged. It was in the form of notes, a bit like the Swiss Franc, in denominations of one, two, five and ten. Each note was uniquely numbered at the left and right corners and each entrant received a packet of notes. Just to put a bit of a spanner in the works, some notes were cut in half and the opposite halves ended up in different packets. So trading was necessary to make the best use of what you received, as the value of the complete notes (two halves) that you had at the Finish, counted as points. As a further minor complication some of the halves were missing, especially amongst the higher denominations and some were scarcer than others. This all made for a lot of activity during a day which was rampant with 'Wild Geese' and 'Red Herrings'. Otherwise we asked for much the usual things on the Route Card, with the odd trick question thrown in, like asking competitors to write down the name of the farm at 681497. If you took the trouble to look at the map, at this place was printed quite clearly 'Down Farm'. I hope those who went there enjoyed the drive.

These events were now started at my works in Aldershot, which gave the competitors the use of an ample car park, the loos and a room for plotting (in every sense of the word!). The two organisers (John and I) were able to lock ourselves safely in the General Office and deal with the proletariat through a hatch. This same hatch served as the 'Central Bank,' the function of which was to offer rare and missing half notes at outrageous prices and to deceive and mislead in every possible way known to mankind. In spite of that I believe the Club members liked it as they kept coming back for more. As I have none of the paperwork, I'm not certain for how long we did run it. As far as I can recall, the format hardly changed, so it was relatively easy to concoct each year. Once launched, the event almost ran itself and required no marshals. We were largely able to sit back and enjoy it. Thank you Barry, Dick and Nan. John and I were happy that some of the credit had rubbed off on us.

**Ray Kingdon**

# *Timed stage rallies*

## **Riverbank tales - the Riverside Rally (1954-1959)**

**John Higginson**

**W**hen the all too short series of Versatility Trials came to an end in 1953, the Club Committee decided to include in the competition calendar a serious road rally. The intention was not only to demonstrate the ability of the Club to organise a first class regional competition, but also to provide a complete contrast to the more arcane hunt-the-marshal night events where hand torches were as important as headlights and in which a bewildering range of land, sea and air navigation methods was employed to pinpoint on the OS map a dozen or so time controls, all within an entertaining format that had been pioneered by the Club from 1947 onwards.

For the new event, only grid references or simple road directions would be used to define the route. As most of the northern boundary of Berkshire then followed the course of the River Thames between Abingdon and Windsor Castle, what better name for a multi road section contest than 'The Riverside Rally'? A suitable bank-side central control for the event was found in the elegant setting of the Phyllis Court Club, Henley-on-Thames. Just round the corner there was even a local garage, Bell Street Motors, which agreed to make company history by staying open all Saturday night. In deciding to stage a major event on the road, H&B faced plenty of competition from other well established rallies, some of them organised by much bigger clubs, but H&B had an unrivalled reputation for efficient organisation and rightly decided that one or two ideas borrowed from other clubs might be given new twists over some three hundred plus miles of winding roads.

The first Riverside was held on the 24/25 April 1954. Telegrams featured in the first section, those almost forgotten but then indispensable items of communication, now part of Post Office and Royal Mail history. Those were the days when vehicles could be parked right outside any Post Office door. Competitors were able to choose their own starting 'Post' to satisfy a time and distance equation set in the regulations.

Maximum marks could be obtained by driving not much more than a total of eighty 'crow' miles to Phyllis Court at a speed of no more than 30 m.p.h. Navigators would hand their completed telegram forms over the counter and wait a few seconds while the postmaster added up the words (delivery address, entrant's name and starting number) to assess the charge. Then followed a sprint back to the car to motor to the next chosen Post Office or direct to the Phyllis Court finish control. This method of 'do-it-yourself' starts had been pioneered by Holland Birkett and Michael Burn in 1950 but was declining in popularity and not used again on the Riverside. Nevertheless, many Post Offices on an eighty-mile radius from Henley-on-Thames saw some surprising sights that Saturday afternoon and central control had much to calculate as a snowstorm of telegrams settled on the results desk.

After a leisurely high tea and into the hours of darkness came an '8 Clubs' section where map references gave the locations of six, seven or eight points at which roadside boards each displaying a letter and number could be seen; at the last point the board contained a line of those letters. The concordant re-arrangement of the numbers gave the grid reference of the next time control, which was also the start of the next similar sub-section. This method of defining controls had originally been invented by Club member Barclay Inglis for the Eight Clubs Eastbourne Rally and came to be used extensively in road events. A marked map was given out at the start of another section; not an original H&B idea this time but here made tantalisingly difficult by multiple route choices. As in the previous section some time controls were encountered in rapid succession, leaving no margin at all for error.

The next part was an observation section, which posed the problem of visiting some thirty points and noting from milestones, signposts and other permanent features, answers to questions as proof that the correct places had been found. To keep crews in a state of high alert, there were

## Timed stage rallies

several questions concerning points which were un-referenced but which could be seen 'somewhere on the route'. Finally, as dawn



1955 Riverside "Am I in time?" J J Macklin looks anxiously at the marshal as he slides to a halt at the end of a stage

broke over Berkshire, there were four driving tests, designed to give no advantage to 'special' cars. The results of the tests were only used in the event of a tie. There were 57 entries and the event was won by that experienced crew, the 'Three Owls', Angus Greig, David Mann and George Whiteaway in a much rallied and familiar Austin A40 Sports.

In 1955 the Rally was staged on 12/13 February. The same format was followed, omitting only the telegrams, and a hundred competitors started. From Phyllis Court, one long road section wound tortuously down to Winchester and the Hampshire lanes did their best to disorientate some of the crews. Once again the intricate maze of Chiltern tracks was used to its full and confusing potential in the 'Eight Clubs' sections devised that year by Sam Moore and Joyce Chesterton. The event was won by John Sunley, navigated by Tom Pigott, in a not-quite-works-entry Sunbeam Alpine.

To appreciate the full flavour of the event today, copies of the 1950 edition maps, the Sixth Series, must be savoured. The mapped detail is razor sharp. 'White' minor roads and tracks are indicated by spidery but accurate lines, which at a first glance would be dismissed as 'unsuitable for motors'. These tracks made up as large a proportion as possible of the route and most of them had never previously been used on any

rally event. After booking out from the control caravan at Phyllis Court, there was much less than a mile of main road driving before

navigators pinpointed some sharp turn onto an obscure but hard surfaced by-way that signified the start of yet another contest for driver and navigator with the formidable Chiltern Hills. Up in the beech woods a thick carpet of fallen leaves made track junctions extremely difficult to see in darkness. Some of these 'white' roads today have simply disappeared without trace and others are merely footpaths whilst, nearer to civilisation, development of one sort or another has swallowed them up. As the rally sections moved further away from the hills to more

open terrain, the surprising thing was that most of the 'white' roads were just as difficult to locate in the dark, where mapped landmarks seemed non-existent just when they were needed to fix some vital turning in that sparsely inhabited region of the upper Thames.

For 1956 the 'Riverside' attracted nearly 120 starters to Phyllis Court on the 11 February. On this occasion not all the night sections finished at Henley-on-Thames as some of the continuous route wound round the North Chilterns and on to the Berkshire Downs. The format was generally the same as in previous competitions. Another section went south to Hindhead and the Sussex border, crossing into that county for a particularly challenging marked map section. Winners were H&B members P.S. Ford and R.A. Hubbard.

The planning of the 1957 event for 9/10 February was almost completed when the Suez crisis erupted and petrol rationing was imposed by the British government. The allowance was 200 miles a month, later rising to 300 before rationing ended in May 1957. This meagre allocation of fuel was hardly sufficient to allow some members even to attend Club 'Noggin and Natter' evenings. Nearly all competition motoring ceased during this period and the Riverside that year was just another casualty.

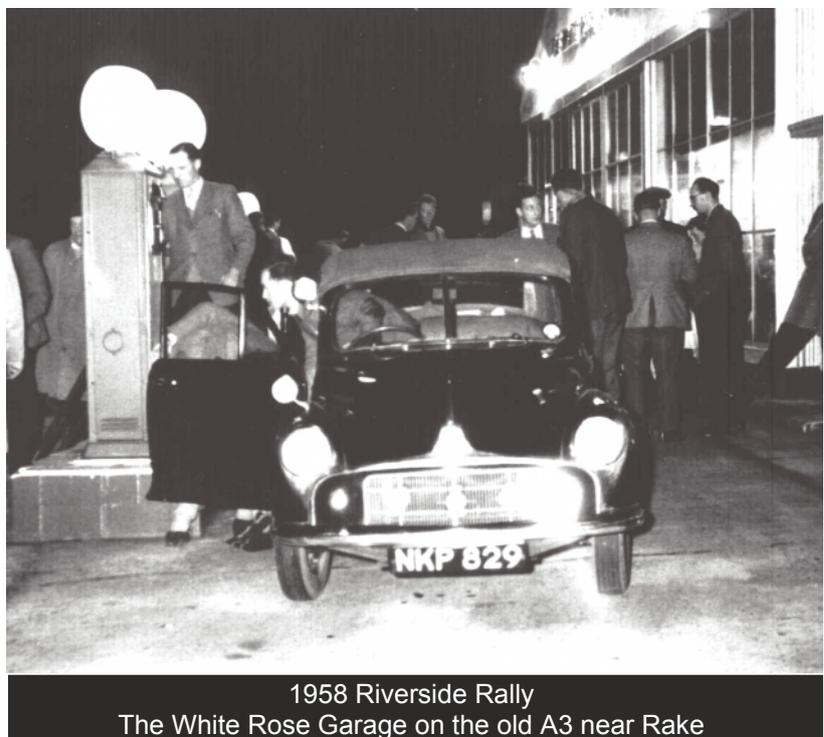
In 1958 the event start and finish was moved to the Royal Ascot Hotel. This was by no stretch of the imagination a riverside venue but Joe Lowrey's half serious suggestion that the rally should be renamed 'The Racecourse Side' was ignored lest such a title should encourage some folk to drive in accordance with the name! The format of the competition had proved popular and remained unchanged. The observation section had gradually lengthened and now included questions on names of remote pubs. There were 114 starters on 15 February. The event was again won by Sunley and Pigott, entered this time in an almost works-entry Sunbeam Rapier. Best performance by a ladies' crew was the Morris Minor of Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom. Well known crews from the international rally scene were then often to be found participating in major club events so as to maintain their skills at the highest level.

For 1959 there was a significant change in the organisers as Douglas Johns decided at long last to compete. As Clerk of the Course he had supervised every previous 'Riverside' with the assistance of teams of very competent helpers. Douglas had insisted at the outset on accuracy and on the importance of checking and rechecking every section. The supply of marked maps necessitated the utmost care and each event had relied on a great many marshals to man the multiplicity of time controls that were such a feature of some sections of the competition. Nearly the entire membership of the Club had been involved, either as an official, a marshal or a competitor. There were more entrants than ever in 1959 and 118 starters was nearly a record for an H&B event. Yet clouds of government interference were gathering on the horizon.

Sensing the situation, part of that outstanding trio of the 'Three Owls', who had won the first 'Riverside', decided to make one more attempt to win. So it was, that in the afternoon of 14 February Angus Greig called at George Whiteaway's Walton-on-Thames home to interrupt a daughter's birthday party and set out with George in the latter's

well-rallied MG Magnette to the Royal Ascot Hotel, a few miles down the road. The route had proved particularly difficult for the organisers to plan. The tide of public opinion was now running strongly against motoring competitions on the road as too many clubs over-used the most 'interesting' of the available roads and regularly disturbed and infuriated local residents. Even the initially voluntary system of 'black spots' introduced by the RAC Competitions Department did not lessen the problem since some motor clubs were not affiliated to the RAC and as 'pirate' organisations motored as they pleased.

As a consequence the selected 'Riverside' route escaped from built-up Berks as soon as possible and ran across the maps of the Winchester and Salisbury areas to enter wildest Somerset. There were certainly 'river sides' that night but the likes of the Brue, the Cary or the Parret seemed foreign and all drained to the Bristol Channel. The event was duly won by those 'Two Owls' mentioned above. It was entirely appropriate that they should win the first and the last of the series. Angus Greig had competed in every event and George Whiteaway in four out of the five.



1958 Riverside Rally  
The White Rose Garage on the old A3 near Rake

Sadly, this last real Riverside proved controversial. Protests were lodged not, as might be supposed, about inaccuracies but about the more than usual degree of accuracy required in

the plotting of map references on the observation section. The organisers had based questions on some staggered cross roads and certain public houses in close proximity where fifty metres of map measurement one way or the other could change the all-important answer. Was this accuracy justifiable where a simple control of passage was involved? Many thought not. Moreover there were no fewer than forty eight retirements, mostly the result of competitors running out of their overall time allowance. The Club Committee considered all these criticisms for future improvement but eventually decided that, as a responsible motor club, H&B should take a lead in taking events off-road if possible. Negotiations were immediately opened to use the newly constructed MoD vehicle testing ground at Longcross in Surrey but, in spite of taking the request to the highest levels, no permission was forthcoming. There was just time to substitute in the 1960 Calendar of events a simple afternoon map-reading run to keep the slot open and on

the 14 February the competition attracted only twenty-five entrants.

Times were certainly changing. The RAC Rally that year introduced their first ever off-road section (just one Scottish hill climb of two miles in length) that heralded the end of that international competition on public roads. Meanwhile H&B had concluded that, pending any formal Government restrictions on rallies, one temporary solution would be simply to curtail as much as possible the number of events on the road by combining competitions with other Clubs. For 1961 and 1962 H&B pooled expertise and resources with the Oxford University MDC in running as a co-promotion the 'Riverside and Boanerges Rally' but it proved impossible to recapture the very special Riverside atmosphere of previous years. The story came to an end as anticipated with the imposition of government Rally Regulations and the Riverside was no more.

**John Higginson**

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### **Into the forests - the RAC Rally and beyond**

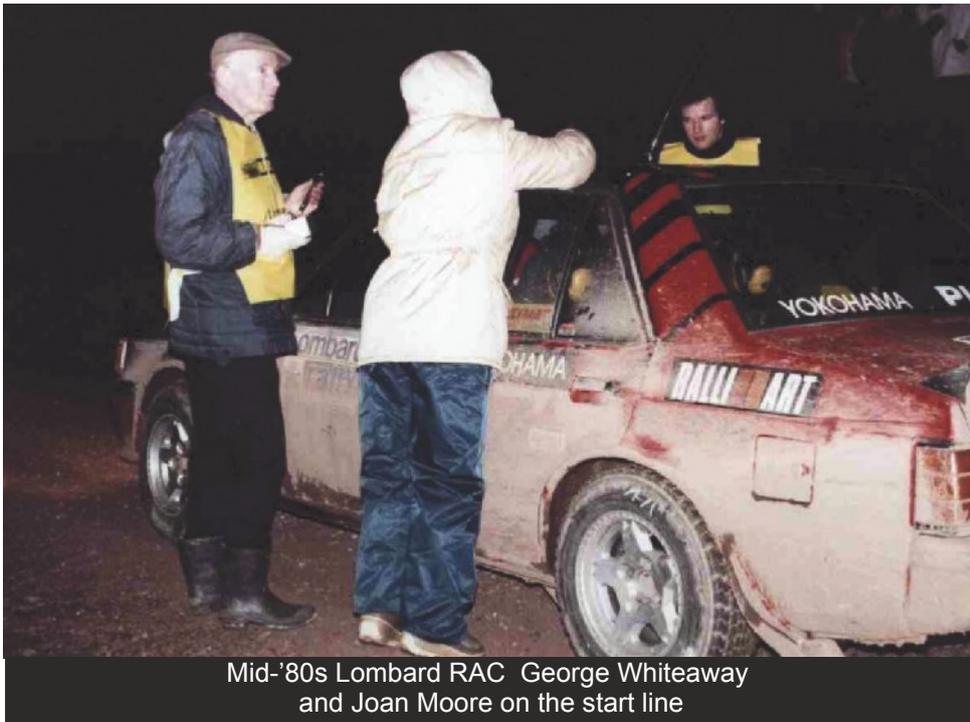
**Bill Bonney**

In the final chapter Les Needham analyses the evolution of post-war rallying. Let's now see how H&B were involved in the development of the RAC Rally, later successively the Lombard Rally, the Network Q Rally and the Wales Rally GB together with some of the other International and National rallies held in Britain. A number of our Club members were successful competitors on the RAC in the 1950s including Joan and Douglas Johns, Patsy Burt, Margaret Inglis, Sam Moore and Nancy Mitchell, who would ultimately become the Ladies' European Rally Champion in both 1956 and '57. The Club's most active stage rally driver would be Paul Burch who was a regular competitor on the RAC Rally as well as other rallies around the country.

It was not until 1975 that the Club became formally involved when we had a request from Bath Motor Club to provide marshals. They were to run the infamous Longleat and we were able to provide 40 members and friends for the last section leading up to the finish line. The next year a number of members showed continued interest and Mick Harris and I, after discussions with the RAC, were asked to put together a

group to run passage controls at Monmouth on the Saturday and at Kington on the Tuesday. In 1977 we moved up the league and were asked to organise and run our own special stage, Taliesin near Machynlleth in mid Wales.

The organisational structure of the event was in three tiers. At the first level was the RAC team and Clerk of the Course, at this time Jim Porter. The headquarters team had been strengthened, the majority of procedures and systems were more robust and the event was now starting to use modern technology for results and distribution of information. At the intermediate level were a number of regional organisers each dealing with the detailing and planning of the road route and special stages within their areas and local public relations problems. At the third level were the motor clubs who had been asked to manage start and finish locations, special stages and passage controls. Once we had been selected to run a special stage we had first to get enough marshals, including those specialists who could run the start and finish time controls, visit and drive through the stage making notes of obvious hazards such as piles of logs, areas where tree felling was still underway and then



Mid-'80s Lombard RAC George Whiteaway and Joan Moore on the start line

sort out overnight accommodation for those who would be helping.

We ran the same stage in 1978 (with a start time of 1 am). For the 1979 Lombard Rally our team moved slightly south to the Brychioniog (Brecon forest) special stage, one that I remember for all the wrong reasons. We had spent the day getting it ready and, well before time, all marshals were in place but we were short of our start line ambulance. I headed for the nearest public phone box about a mile away on the narrow yellow road to Erwood. Emerging from the forest onto the public road I found it solid with spectator traffic which I managed to squeeze through. About half way along my route I came across our ambulance stuck behind the spectator queue. I asked the driver to pull over and wait a few minutes until I returned from the phone box. I told central control about the traffic situation which looked to me as if it would delay but not stop the competitors getting to our stage, returned to the ambulance and asked the driver to put on his blues and twos. We proceeded very slowly as the traffic opened up for us and finally got back to the stage knowing that our start time would be delayed. What I did not know until later was that central control had contacted the local Brecon police who sent out a motor cycle patrol and had the road cleared in rapid time.

About this time I decided we needed to look a bit further afield for marshals and wrote to other local motor clubs asking for their help. I was pleasantly surprised by the response and I gradually put together a database of those interested, an exercise which would prove valuable in the future. I think in our best year we had 300 marshals helping us in the forests of Wales, support which was greatly appreciated. Our team grew stronger with both Dave Bye and Ashleigh White becoming my deputies. We soon had an excellent start and finish line crew and experienced stage sector marshals and H&B was able to offer event organisers a total package for running a special stage. We ran most of the famous Welsh stages over the next few years.

This led to other tasks. In the early 1980s we were asked to help on the Welsh International Rally where we ran stages from 1984 through to the last event in 1991. In 1988, having worked previously with several Forest of Dean MC members, we were asked to run one of the special stages of that club's Wyedean Stages, a task which has continued. We have also run stages on the Mazda Winter Rally (now the Rallye Sunseeker) in Ringwood Forest and at Hurn. More recently we were delighted to be asked to run several stages on the Tempest Rally, granted International status in 2003, when it became the final round of the annual British Rally Championship.

Checking back through our records I see that the Club has run a total of 64 special stages, run controls on a further 40 and marshalled on many more since we first ventured into the forests back in 1975 - not a bad contribution to our sport so far.

**Bill Bonney**

## How rallying changed at the coal face

**Bill Bonney**

I find it of great interest to compare how things were done in the '70s with the present day's procedures. In those days the kick off would come with a short letter from Jim Porter, thanking us for the offer to assist. The letter would provide the stage name, location and start and finish map references and ask us to contact the local forestry commission official. It would ask us to attend the regional briefing meeting at Llandrindod Wells. All stage commanders, their deputies and, where possible, start and finish crews would attend this half day event. After an outline briefing by Jim Porter we would be shown the 'safety film' reminding us of the inherent dangers of this type of event. We would discuss the timetable, review any changes to the documentation and be reminded of the impact on the whole event if we delayed our individual stages. After a question and answer session, we would collect our piles of arrows, signs and boxes of documents and make our way home.

Control to say we were ready to receive the first car, one hour before it was due. For many years this was the most difficult part of the whole exercise.

Looking back through the files I note a comment that I penned after the 1977 RAC Rally, 'must try and solve the lack of communications between the start and finish lines'. In those days we did not have the benefits of today's radio systems which use a specially allotted safety frequency. We would write the preceding car number on each car's record sheet and check that it had passed through at the next finish control. If not, I would have to stop the stage and send a car in to find our missing competitors. Today we have satellite tracking systems so we know immediately if a car is in trouble. In the 1970s we would be lucky if we had a doctor at the start of the stage; we generally relied on a St. John's Ambulance and our recovery vehicle was often a Land Rover driven by a local motor sport enthusiast. These days we have properly equipped recovery vehicles, licensed rescue units with fully trained medics supporting the doctor and, if the special stage is longer than nine miles, we have a second team based halfway through the stage. But this said, this branch of motor sport still relies heavily on a huge force of volunteers.



1981 Lombard RAC Rally,  
Bonneys on duty on the start line at Crychan

It would be unlikely that we would hear any more from the headquarters and regional representatives until the day of the event when the Clerk of the Course and others would arrive on our stage ahead of the competitors. It was then down to us to organise our resources and get the stage set up. Oh, and most important, to find the nearest local telephone box on our initial visit. This would be our communications centre from where we would telephone Central

Back in 1986 the Lombard RAC Rally, a five day event, required 12,000 marshals, 200 doctors, 150 timekeepers and 60 staff at the event headquarters plus 45 stage commanders and 12 area organisers. Although it has now evolved into an event with shorter road sections and fewer special stages, it still relies heavily on a large band of enthusiasts who make the annual pilgrimage to the forests to organise and run the country's premier event.

**Bill Bonney**

# Co-operative ventures

**Any major event now requires involvement with other clubs**

**Bill Bonney**

**H**&B has had its fair share of partners over the past sixty years, some long lasting, others not. Without doubt the longest running and most successful club liaison has to be Eight Clubs. How it was introduced by Holly Birkett to overcome the RAC's Rule 20, which stated that a club was restricted to running one race meeting annually to which other clubs could be invited, is covered elsewhere. The original eight clubs had all worked together before. In fact co-operation between H&B and two of them, 750 MC and Chiltern CC, goes back to 1946/7 when H&B members were regularly invited to their events on a reciprocal basis.

By 1948 the net also included Lancia CC and Cemian MC on the H&B Night Navigation Trial in October of that year. In 1949 co-promotions included Harrow CC, the ACOC, the Lagonda Club and Herts County A & AC, although the latter would not join the Eight Clubs until some years later so when, in 1950, the Eight Clubs alliance ran its first race meeting the vast majority of partners were far from strangers, although of course this would be the first time they were all jointly involved in organising a race meeting.

The background of co-operation between clubs stemmed from members who had a foot in several camps, an example being Holly Birkett, who, even before H&B was formed, had a large input into the 750 MC and, like many others, was already a member of both VSCC and Bugatti OC. Barclay Inglis was a keen member of the ACOC, so it was no surprise when they and H&B got together on an early Point-to-Point with almost equal numbers competing from the two clubs. In later years this level of co-operation between motor clubs would become almost mandatory for common sense reasons and, as Les Needham describes in the final chapter, the regional Associations began to be formed.

In those early days many Club members did not feel they were getting value for money from these Associations. There were a number of

exchanges at annual general meetings, when proposals were tabled to leave the Association of Central Southern Motor Clubs but, in the end, members were convinced that it was better to have it on the Club's side rather than trying to fight it. Much of this dialogue came about when rule changes made the running of fixed route road events very complex and bureaucratic. However, as described in previous chapters, the club was experienced in organising night trials in a way which spread out the entry. Such events would eventually be recognised by the RAC and incorporated in the 'Blue Book' as Scatters.

## Networking

Some readers may wonder why we had such close connections with the Bugatti Owners Club just after the war, even co-promoting several events with them. I have referred elsewhere to Holly Birkett's Type 46 Bugatti pick-up and to his collection of components from which he eventually assembled complete Bugattis of Types 30, 35, 38, 40 and 44, not to mention a very mysterious Type 55 of which we spoke only in whispers. In addition to this Michael Burn, who worked for my father in Cheshunt when he left school, came to live at Pondtail Road, acquired a type 40 Bugatti and then went to work for Colonel Giles and his brother Eric who ran an interior design company in Mayfair and who, to all intents and purposes, were the BOC at this time. There were further connections through Rodney Clarke and Mike Oliver (later of Connaught fame) who then owned Bugatti specialists Continental Cars at Chobham. It was a small motoring world in the late forties.

CHB

The concept was soon adopted by just about every club running half night navigation events, but with numbers restricted by inviting only six other clubs. A decade or so later this would be increased to eight which remains the case today. If we look at what the Club was doing on the



It's not always mud and horizontal sleet. Marshals take a break on the 1989 Lombard RAC Rally, Weston Park, to watch the Grand Prix on TV

scatter front in the early 1980s we see a fairly full programme with the Pairs Point-to-Point, the Dawn Handicap, the Evening Scatter and the Holland Birkett Experts. These were attracting 14 (pairs), 28, 90 and 32 entries respectively. Keith Simpson, aided by Ray Drew, organised the Scatter until 1983 when Dave Bye, helped by Alan Marlow and Rob Shrapnell, took over. Although the event fell in line with the RAC rules as far as invited clubs were concerned, it enjoyed excellent support and in 1982 had its largest entry of 120 cars. The Dawn Handicap Rally was then being jointly organised by Pam Roper and me and in 1981 the entry reached 39. David Madgwick, who had previously assisted his father Gordon with the Holland Birkett Night Trial, became its principal organiser in 1981 and continued the good work driving entries up to 42 in 1984. The long running Pairs Point-to-Point was now in the capable hands of Robin Birchall and Jack Ballett and in 1982 the entry was 17 pairs.

So, although at the time many of us were unhappy with the low entries in these events, things were by no means as bad as they would be at the end of that decade. Of course we were not the only club organising this type of event. Many other local clubs were doing the same and, although H&B were well used to competition, we had not reckoned on the general level of entries to scatters falling so dramatically in the space of just about five years. We, along with others, found ourselves with too many events chasing too few competitors.

Several clubs got together to try and find a solution and, after much soul searching, a group of clubs formed the Five Maps Scatter Championship. This would ultimately involve seven clubs each running one event which would be supported by all seven clubs. The events would be run on one or more of the five local Ordnance Survey maps 174, 175, 185, 186 and 187. The clubs were Natwest

MC, Hart MC, Windsor CC, Guildford MC, Cranleigh MC, Middlesex County AC and, after several years, ourselves. It seemed to us at the time that membership of the group was essential even though we would only have our one event, the Holland Birkett Night Trial, in the Championship.

Mammoth efforts were made by members David Madgwick and Ashleigh White, at the time our most regular scatter competitors, to try to convince the group that the Holland Birkett event should be included. It would be several years before their lobbying would get the desired result. Many could justifiably argue that only the top events were included with the Skeletal, Hunters Night Trial, King of Hart, Printemps, Safari and Dan Clare and our own Holland Birkett. But even this solution was only short term and by the end of the millennium clubs were again experiencing difficulties in attracting competitors and events had to be cancelled. It seemed that what many considered to be a motor club's staple diet, the half night navigation rally, had reached an unpopular end. We intend to hang on to our remaining events, the Pairs Point-to-Point and the Search & Scatter and, if the market does improve, we will once again introduce other well organised navigation events.

One of the most challenging event co-promotions dates back to 1987 when H&B teamed up with The Caravan Club to run the 1987 National Car and Caravan Economy Run. When we received the letter of intent from the Caravan Club in October 1985 I didn't realise

how different this experience would be from previous such arrangements with other RAC recognised motor clubs. It had not occurred to me that they would already have in place their own General Standing Regulations (GSRs) born out of their famous, or to many infamous, British Caravan Road Rally. Although these had been tweaked since their last event was held, much did not comply with the then current RAC General Regulations (Blue Book).

At that time Derek Cartmel was the Caravan Club's Staff Director of Events and he, Dave Bye and I spent numerous hours editing their GSRs to comply with the Blue Book and, of course, our own well developed economy run Supplementary Regulations, whilst retaining those regulations that applied solely to the caravans but would not conflict with anything in the Blue Book. It took until late 1986 to finalise these. Even then I can recall several queries being raised by would be competitors which were only finally sorted by the Caravan Club's Events Committee early in 1987. Although the event would be run under a National Permit issued to H&B, clearly the competitors in the caravan section of the event piloting tow cars needed to comply with a consistent set of regulations.

As mentioned previously, co-operation between clubs has now become essential, especially in the field of stage rallies. Any event organisation takes time and effort and in the early days there were generally plenty of enthusiastic Club members who had high levels of organisational

ability. Whether it was a night trial or an economy run, there was adequate expertise from within. However, organisation of many events now requires much more than the good will and expertise of its membership. Because of much more stringent regulation of the sport, licensing of key officials and health and safety considerations, I doubt if any one club, however experienced, is able to muster the resources to go it alone.

Clubs such as the Sutton and Cheam MC, who have many years of experience in organising stage rallies, are proud that, without exception, these are now undertaken on a co-promotion basis between several clubs. On top of this they still require expert resources from many other clubs to be able to run the event. A good illustration of this is the South of England Tempest Rally. Its predecessor was the popular Tempest Rally, run for many years as a Clubman's event in the Aldershot area and now elevated to International status, the final round of the annual British Rally Championship (BRC).

Although the permit is issued to S&CMC, the company that runs the event includes Middlesex County AC and Hart MC. But the event partners also include Farnborough DMC, Craven MC, Wickford AC, Oxford MC, British Rally Marshals Club, Southsea MC and ourselves. We each provide a stage commander and run several of the special stages using our own resources. Other specialists are also required including personnel associated with the BRC itself, such as Chief Timekeeper, Eligibility Scrutineer, Competitor Relations Officer, Results Officer, and so on.

Similar arrangements involve us with many events each year, one of which, the Forest of Dean MC, has been going since the early 1990s. In this field, as in many others, co-operation between clubs is essential and, as time moves on, I can see it increasing. Clubs who do not want to be included will no doubt fade away from this kind of motorsport.



2005 Welsh International, family White, Michael, Ashleigh and Sally with Jim Gritt on the start line at Epynt

**Bill Bonney**

# Classic cars

## A new venture proves a success

In the early 1990s this Club, along with many others, was having difficulty in getting reasonable numbers of members to compete in traditional motor club events, whether a half night scatter, a daylight navigation exercise or even a simple treasure hunt and in other chapters we have described our efforts to solve this problem. We had a fairly static membership, many of whom were now semi-retired from competitive motoring but still remained members and maintained contact with their friends through the Club.

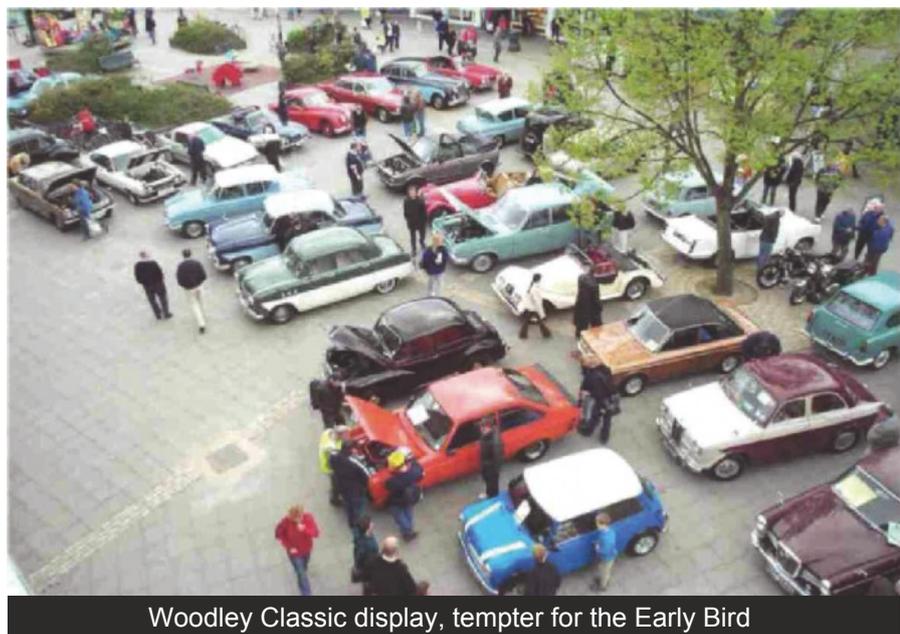
A motor club is not unlike any other business venture in that, if it is to survive, it must maintain a reasonable number of customers (members) and to do this it must be able to offer a reasonable level of service (events). Also it must be able to offer attractive events before it is able to attract new customers. So, at its simplest, the club needed to develop a new area of motor sport which would target a new group of members. Looking to see what other local clubs were doing proved a dead end - they were staying with what they were good at and several were going downhill fast with very little to offer members. It was time to look outside traditional club motorsport and see what was on the increase.

About this time the Bonney garage contained the now totally rebuilt 1965 MGB and the recently acquired 1959 Austin Healey 3-litre BN6. Less time was needed to work on the cars so spare time was becoming available to use them, the thing that had been missing over previous decades. Looking around at what was available, we focused on several organisations which were running so-called Classic Tours. Amongst these was

## Bill Bonney

publisher John Haynes whose Museum, based at Sparkford, had two events, the Haynes Publishing Two Day Classic in May and the Falling Leaves Classic during September. There was also the Norwich Union RAC Classic which had become a huge event. All these were attracting very large entries and were generally over subscribed.

The format seemed to be very simple. Participants drove a fixed route or one of a number of fixed routes, all finishing at a location of interest. On the Haynes events, everyone started at the Museum but half the entry followed the so-called Red route, the remainder the Green route, with everyone visiting the same control checks. This had the effect of reducing the number of cars on each of the routes to about 150. On the Norwich the Monte Carlo concept with starting locations spread around the country was used to split the 1500 entry into smaller groups. The MSA had introduced specific rules for these Touring Assemblies allowing them to be run under a Certificate of Exemption even though they followed a fixed route.



Woodley Classic display, tempter for the Early Bird

What was surprising was that the majority of events were being run by commercial organisations rather than the traditional motor clubs. So was this the type of event H&B should be involved with? Bearing in mind our proven ability to organise and manage 1000 mile fixed route events, one of about 100 miles should not prove too stressful.

During 1994 the decision was made to give it a try and we organised, with the local Reading newspaper, a display of Classic cars at Loddon Bridge Road and an article announcing the Club's planned event for 1995. We decided to name the event The Early Bird Classic Car Tour because we intended it to be one of the first in the annual calendar by holding it in early May, the first month in those days that many car owners taxed their vehicles for the summer period.

Following this initial publicity flyers were sent out to a number of local classic car owners to gauge interest. Within the next couple of weeks, not only were we receiving responses from them but many more from their friends and other contacts. Our first event proved to be a winner with a full entry of 50 cars. In 1996, egged on by our previous success, we went for an increased entry of 75 and again this was achieved. Within this two year period, many other organisations were now getting on the bandwagon and during the summer months there were events in most parts of the British Isles giving plenty of choice.

The Club was now building a reputation for organising a well planned event with an accurate Tulip style route book whilst maintaining a relatively low entry fee and we were starting to build an extensive database of classic car owners in our area. This helped to attract return business each year and, of equal importance, many participants were joining the Club and taking part in other events.

We started in 1995 from the Childe Beale Park at Pangbourne and, following a route north west, we lunched at the Cotswold Motor Museum at Bourton on the Water before returning to Child Beale for the finish. Our second run started from Stonor House near Henley on Thames with the finish at Haynes Motor Museum where Joan



John and Ian Edmonds depart on the 2002 Early Bird under the watchful eye of the Chair of Woodley Council

Moore presented finishers with their plaques. One thing we learned from the 1996 event was that the media were not necessarily attracted so much by the event itself as by the surrounding scenery. The picturesque Stonor House backdrop brought out a BBC television camera man and the event featured on the local television news programme.

A year later we started at Wellington Country Park and the 100 mile route took participants to the annual Thorneycroft Society Vehicle meet organised by the Basingstoke Classic Car Club who provided a dedicated parking area for us. This was also the start of a two year relationship we formed with the Reading branch of CSMA whose badge we included on our rally plates in exchange for them publicising the event in their widely circulated house magazine. We had a very disappointing response from this publicity adding just a couple of entries but bringing in several new members.

What the Early Bird was missing, however, was a home - a fixed location for the start of the event would help to put it on the map. Late in 1997 Woodley Town Council asked if we could gather a few Classic cars and display them in the town's pedestrianised shopping precinct. This we did and an agreement was reached to start the next year's Early Bird at the nearby Woodford Park and, even more of a bonus, it was agreed that the town's council leader would flag away the participants. There would be another important plus to come from this new partnership but more of that later. That arrangement continues today.



Classic car evening 2002 Dave Harris examines his raffle prize dubiously while Pam Roper, Rose Harris & Malcolm Royston applaud

The event has a base, entries are flagged away by what is now the mayor of Woodley and one of the major spin-offs for the Club has been that it always attracts the local media spurred on by our own and the town council's Press Officers. Within a couple of years we had moved on from just newspaper coverage to receiving television coverage as well, not only useful from the Club's point of view but much appreciated by our participants.

Over the last decade we have visited Gaydon Motor Museum, the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, the Watercress Line, Bucklers Hard in the New Forest, Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton, the Shuttleworth Trust at Old Warden, Atwell Wilson Motor Museum at Calne in Wiltshire and, in 2005, the Stondon Transport Museum in Bedfordshire. The classic car interest within the club has progressed with the addition of other events and classic car pub evenings started with a meeting at the Red Lion at Rotherfield Peppard in July 1997 and then became a regular annual event, settling at Sherfield-on-Loddon from 1998.

As a result of the association with Woodley Town Council, in 1999 we agreed to put on a display of about 30 vehicles in the Woodley shopping area on Easter Saturday. This was a great hit, bringing shoppers from outside Woodley into the town, so it was no big surprise when we were asked to repeat the exercise the following year, this time with a maximum of 50 vehicles. This now features in the annual

Woodley calendar as the Woodley Classic Car Show, is regularly over-subscribed and once again attracts much attention in the local newspapers, local radio and, in 2004, was featured on Southern Television News.

During 1998 we tried to widen the horizons for our classic car owners by running the Daytime Summer Scatter, a competitive event but more of a treasure hunt than a navigational exercise. It attracted 15 entries, a mixture of classics and more modern cars, but it became clear that the majority of our classic car owners were just not interested in this type of event and were content with non-competitive tours, Noggin' and Natter pub evenings or classic car shows.

In 2002, following a number of requests, Mike Pearman agreed to run a second Classic car tour, the Autumn Classic in early October. It followed a similar format to the Early Bird but with a start at California Country Park at Finchampstead and early finishes were at the Submarine Museum at Gosport, the Bentley Wild Fowl Trust in Sussex and Knowle Gardens in Dorset. Both events are now attracting good entries and form the focal points of the Club's calendar. It is worth noting that 50% of Club members are now owners of classic cars and most of them regularly support these events.

When we kicked off the first Early Bird in 1995, diversifying into non-competitive, motor sport, none of us was confident enough to predict that interest would still be strong ten years later and more crucially getting stronger each year. Looking around at what is happening with other motor clubs it is satisfying to see that some are now exploring similar routes with one nearby, long established motor club having successfully organised a Classic car tour, again with a good level of entries. Interestingly, we also attract many members of the one make clubs because, as their members often confide, these are national based clubs who tend to organise national events, many of which take place in the Midlands or northern England and too far away to travel for a one day event.

**Bill Bonney**

# The social scene

## Wives allowed to be Partners

There can be no doubt in the reader's mind by now that H&B was founded in January 1946 by a small number of young men, most of whom were unattached, some loosely attached and a few firmly tied to partners. These founder members, although primarily worshippers of the internal combustion engine, realised the advantage of encouraging the other sex to seek enlightenment with them -for mutual benefit, increased membership and to assure suspicious family members that the hours spent out of the house were not in the pursuits of the flesh but something even more addictive - the motor vehicle.

At the suggestion of Bert Fountain, at 6 pm on 11 August 1946, there gathered at the Wayside House Country Club by the Thames at Pangbourne some 45 bods contacted mainly by RAE bush telegraph. It was a warm summer evening; on offer was food, probably sausage rolls and sandwiches, drinks in the form of tea, coffee and maybe beer but, more seductive than all these, the opportunity to talk, listen and plan the shape of things to come in the company of like-minded people – what stimulation and what a future this promised to be! There are still seven or eight of us who were together on that evening and who meet rarely or frequently but do still reminisce.

Club competitive events were so numerous from the start that a prize giving and annual dinner had to be established in the first year for awards to be presented and that set the tone for this precocious Club making its social mark very firmly in the motoring calendar. The first of our many annual dinners was on 16 January 1947 at the Grosvenor Hotel, Caversham with prize giving, film

## Heather Bulmer

show and dinner for 10 shillings (50p) per head. Subsequent glittering occasions had guest lists which now read like a motoring Who's Who. For three or four years the highlight of these dinners was a motoring Brains Trust featuring many of the celebrities of the motoring world of that time such as Kaye Don, John Cooper, Laurence Pomeroy, Rodney Walkerley, Sam Clutton, John Bolster, Kaye Petre, Gordon Wilkins and Bunny Tubbs. Sir Algernon Guinness, ex-racing driver and RAC luminary, whose wife Lady Guinness presented the prizes, was the first of several after-dinner speakers of renown.

Venues changed as did organisers, the Falcon Hotel at Woodley, the Caversham Bridge Hotel, Phyllis Court or The White Hart at Sonning being the most popular. Among the organisers were quizmaster Barclay Inglis, Julian Jane, Derek Buckler and Bert Fountain. Joan and Douglas Johns proved to be born dinner organisers in many subsequent years and Joan, with Sam Moore, has continued similarly since. The early fifties were heady years for these social engagements. Usually about a hundred people came, paid about 15 shillings (75p) and wore smart in-



Cabaret at The Grosvenor, Caversham, late forties.  
Left of trio brother of Sam Moore, other performers unknown

## The social scene

formal dress or even (under protest), evening dress.

In 1954 the downstage Christmas party was introduced to capture impecunious young members for a ticket price of six shillings (30p). On 3 December 1954 the first of these distinctly downstage 'dos', excellently MC'd by Don Laver, took place at the Hawley Hotel, Blackwater (no longer standing) and fun and games were had by all and dancing (by most) to a very good band led by Wilkinson (Wilkys of Farnborough) and these parties, described by someone as orgies, added another social function to the calendar.

We were still fortunate to attract award presenters and guest speakers of note; for instance Robin Richards of the BBC and Tommy Sopwith. For the next fourteen years these two functions featured in the annual contact names by Jenks, extracted promises of club calendar, the Christmas

party of 1955 prizes for games from companies exhibiting at celebrating our tenth anniversary. The venue the Motor Show. The Country Club was highly might be the Royal Ascot Hotel, Eversley Village decorated on that occasion. I remember Hall or the Wellington Country Club at thinking that preparations for and clearing up Crowthorne for which a group of us, including after were often more fun than the parties Nan

Cawthorne and Beryl Nelms, given valuable themselves!

The introduction of the breathalyser in 1967 had no real dampening effect on the youthful high spirits of either organisers or participants but in 1968, either by coincidence or design, a summer party was suggested to replace the Christmas party with the format and venue to cut the costs of band hiring and hotel catering. For this Bill Tanner offered his large new barn at



Cutting the 21st Birthday cake. L to R Nan Cawthorne, Jimmy Hogg, Charles Lambton, Pat Stevens, Joan Johns and Joe Lowrey



Founder members at the 50th anniversary celebrations. L to R Joe Lowrey, Joan Birkett, Harry Hopkinson, Charles Bulmer and Bob Newton



Clevedon Away Days 2004 L to R Nan Cawthorne, Heather Bulmer, Stewart Arklay, Charles Bulmer, Geoff Tapp

White Hart but award winners were often not present and invited guests, although worthy, added to the rising costs. For a year or two the committee had been considering an Autumn supper dance with a view to replacing the other two social events and this was held from 1973 to 1977 at Easthampstead House, Bracknell, organised by Reg Dennis and subsequently Steve

and Frankie Loughton. Response from members was poor and it was discontinued. Dinner dances turned into suppers at Colley's Supper Rooms in 1989 and ran for a number of years. A Christmas party was started by Bill and Janet Bonney at their home but grew to the stage where it had to be transferred to a hostelry. Why not mix non-competitive motoring and socialising over a few days? In the seventies Dick Cawthorne suggested "Export Drives", trips abroad but too many members had young families and the idea foundered. On a less ambitious scale, Gordon and Deirdre Madgwick organised the first of what became known as Away Days in 1986 to mark the Club's 40th anniversary. This was a weekend break to the Braich Hotel at Corris, near Machynlleth. It was followed by many

Hook End. Bill prepared and decorated it in the week before each party while a group of us including Joy Stevens, Liz Gotts, Josephine Hogg, Pauline Fountain and Joan Johns prepared the food for who knows how many? Fancy dress to complement the specified theme of each party was the order of the day and produced both splendid outfits and others imaginative to say the least - Country and Western style, Eastern Delights, the Big Top and The Future (with Beryl Nelms as an all green outerspace creature). Vera Chisman made beautiful outfits most years but after Bill installed a covered swimming pool all outfits tended to be discarded at a certain stage in the evening. Barry Hardcastle provided tapes of music suitable for most occasions and numerous other helpers included Zena Goodwin and Christine Dennis. In 1973 the Hook End Pop Festival was the theme for the Summer Party - 50p and bring your own wine! The last party at Bill Tanner's Barn was in 1977 but it did struggle on at various venues for two more years.

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A Posse of Presidents, Long Mynd, 2003. L to R Sam Moore, Stuart Bladon, Nan Cawthorne, Charles Bulmer, Joan Moore (Johns), Eric Tobitt

Meanwhile the annual dinner dance also continued for several years at the

## Trophies

As has been noted in an earlier chapter, the Club has had many trophies over the years. The majority have been donated for its major speed events, the Eight Clubs race meeting at Silverstone and the National Hill Climb at Great Auclum. They were generally imposing affairs of silver, heavily engraved and, if not retained in the Club's archive or lost, were donated to the last winner on the demise of the event. Others were returned to the original donor in the hope that they could find use for a later worthy cause. However, two awards deserve more than a cursory note, one for its unique form and the other for its longevity.

The first is the Noctivation Trophy, inaugurated as the premier award for the Experts Night Trial in the early '50s. It takes the form of a ceramic witch mounted on a broom. Perpetual awards are in the form of cats. The original Witch, christened Hecate after the Greek deity, patron of witches, was sculpted by Suki King, sister of Spen King, the Rover engineer who merits several mentions in this book.

Sadly, legend has it that Sam Moore, Awards Secretary at the time, had an unpleasant Christmas present in 1960 when a large box turned up containing no more than a plinth and an impressive collection of ceramic shards. The Witch had hastily to be remodelled, losing in the process

the sculpted broom (replaced by a stick and horsehair affair) and, some say, much of her character. The sculptor on this occasion was one JB Adams and the cost was £5. It is an award loved by some, loathed by others, generally those who have to dust it. The protective dome, if indeed there ever was one, has long since disappeared.



John Higginson looks delighted to receive Hecate from Helen, Mrs Neil Gardiner at the Falcon Hotel in 1953. Derek Buckler stands between with Holland Birkett behind John



Douglas Johns receives the Hopkinson Challenge Trophy and shield from Lady Eleanor Lowrey in 1952 at the Falcon Hotel

The other award is the Hopkinson Challenge Trophy dating from 1950, given in recognition of endeavour on behalf of the Club. It comprises an imposing silver bowl and, for a time, had associated with it a handsome carved wooden shield. It is remarkable not so much for its form as for the fact that it has survived to the present day despite having been a political football throughout its life. Successive committees have fiddled with its scoring system in an attempt to ensure that it goes to the most deserving member as perceived at the time. At least nowadays keep-

ing the score, presently in the capable hands of Pam Roper, is better managed than in the days when members had to be cajoled into submitting their competitions records.

RMB

others, the Dart Valley, Norfolk, Lyme Regis, Herefordshire, Lynmouth, Isle of Wight, Peak District, Isle of Man, Harrogate, Plymouth, the Long Mynd, Clevedon and Rye. As well as the Madgwicks, these were organised by such people as John and Zena Goodwin, Dave and Ann Wilson and Nan Cawthorne. Eric Tobitt organised the first of the foreign holidays to Villedieu-les-Poêles in the Spring of 1998 and Derek Argyle, a later one to Holland.

Weekday lunches - the brainchild of Joe Lowrey - started in 1995 as a run up to the 50th anniversary and then proved impossible to stop. They have had a rejuvenating effect on the Club and its senior members and, as younger members also retire from work, the attendance, often approaching 50, has increased to a level which creates problems in finding suitable venues.

These monthly gatherings have been successful both in bringing old members back into the fold and in recruiting newcomers who have found the friendly atmosphere and mix of general and motoring talk to be to their liking.

All our significant anniversaries have been celebrated in style - 10th, 21st, 25th, 40th and 50th as well as the 30th anniversary of Holly Birkett's death. Steve Lovegrove organised 40th and 50th Great Auclum reunions and, in 2000, Dave Wilson arranged a 40th reunion for Economy Run veterans. All these occasions have brought to light so many memorabilia, forgotten treasures and nostalgic evidence of the Club to remind us of members and events past and present.

**Heather Bulmer**

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## **Our private Motor Show, the Floggin' and Patter**

**John Higginson**

**I**n 1959 the view across the motoring horizon from the H&B clubroom at The Chequers, Eversley Cross, was good. New cars had become available and we were at last beginning to see some technical innovation. Disc brakes were then becoming commonplace on production sports cars and power steering could be had for luxury cars. Tubeless tyres had become standard but fuel injection was still nearly a decade away. BMC were about to launch the revolutionary Mini and the M1 had just opened. Technical details of each new model were discussed *ad nauseam* in the clubroom over pints of unremarkable Red Barrel.

In March 1959 the Club Committee agreed to try to bring some of the new contents of local car showrooms to The Chequers. This superb microcosm of Earls Court was only achieved by the hard work and devotion of Sam Moore who persuaded, cajoled and arm-twisted seemingly all the main dealers in Reading into action. That first event, on 24 April, was a huge success, with such mouth-watering models as an MGA Twin-Cam and a Mk IX Jaguar joining many other models and 'go faster' conversions in the display and all-evening demonstration runs up the A327 to Yateley and back. Any members with new cars (yes, there were some!) were invited to join in and Charles Bulmer or Joe Lowrey could usually be relied upon to bring the latest *Motor Road Test* car.

This event, and the annual evenings that followed, were exceedingly well organised and attended. Attempts were made to limit members to a quota of demonstrations so as to give all a fair share of the machinery but this rationing never quite seemed to work, particularly if there was something like a Ferrari or Rolls-Royce on hand. Nobody complained, everyone had a marvellous time and even the trade representatives said that they might come again next year.

Changes at The Chequers resulted in a move to the Hawley Hotel in June 1966 from which the winding drive gave ready access to the derestricted A30 and Hartford Bridge Flats. Sadly too, other changes had occurred which meant that this was the very last meeting of its kind. A big vote of thanks is due to all, particularly Sam Moore and Terry Noble.

Today, rightly or wrongly, the multiplicity of new models that follow each other with bewildering rapidity seems to have left us all blasé. At a recent Club weekday lunch, the much-heralded Citroën Pluriel arrived at the showroom just opposite our venue in time for the lunch. Warning the showroom of a possible stream of interested Club members, a note was placed on each table. None took the trouble to walk across the road. Progress?

## A very special themed 'Natter', the Sloggin'

Nan Cawthorne

The "Sloggin' and Clatter" was first dreamed up in 1961, though in that year it was demurely called "Open Bonnets". The title grew out of "Noggin and Natter" via "Floggin' and Patter". The "Sloggin'" was devised so that "Joe Bloggs" could show what he or she could demonstrate in the way of interesting transport. The title was a misnomer from the start; "sloggin'" there certainly was in the development and preparation of the cars, but "clatter" they did not!

It was quite astonishing how the meeting snowballed as it became an annual summer feature from 1961 to 1975. The criterion was that the vehicles should be privately owned by members or their friends. We were tapping a gold mine! I had no idea that we were such an inventive, adventurous and - dare I say it - eccentric crowd of people! "Joe Bloggs" proved to be a many faceted character. I am sitting here surrounded by lists of cars, owners and dates and I hardly know where to start and where to stop.

setting we enjoyed was in 1967, our 21st Anniversary year when Charles Lambton was President. He invited us to hold the Sloggin' in the grounds of his house, Mortimer Hill, a fine background for a specially large turnout. We ran our own bar, with the help of Nick Williamson, charging, for instance, 2s.0d (10p) a pint for best bitter and 2s.6d (12½p) for a whiskey and soda. We actually made a profit of £111.6s.8d which I am sure pleased Treasurer Bert Fountain. Charles and Lady Lambton even provided supper for all.

When I think of the Sloggin' a picture forms in my mind of two steam engines, one, past President Jim Fisher's 1922 Foden Steam Wagon, rebuilt by himself from a heap of scrap and registered as a private vehicle (!) and David Fowler's 1919 Burrell 5 ton Crane Tractor, one of only seven made. They rarely missed a meeting. Overtaking them on the way as they trundled along produced that reassuring feeling that all would be well. Once parked they hissed away in an avuncular fashion overlooking the more frivolous exhibits.



Jim Fisher's Foden. Joan Johns (Moore) and Nan Cawthorne

Hardly frivolous and in fact older in years were a 1901 de Dion Bouton and Steady Barker's 1908 11½-litre Napier. I am ashamed to say that I had no satisfactory details recorded for the de Dion, the oldest vehicle that ever appeared. Fortunately, two members, Allan Lupton and Michael Trotter, have come up with some interesting information. The

We met at various venues, The Chequers, Eversley Cross at first and later the Hawley Hotel, Ed's Barn, Wokingham, Bracknell Sports Centre (where, if my memory is correct, we had the only seriously wet evening in the series) and finally at The Cricketers, Yateley. Landlords at the time seemed pleased to have us - with one exception which I'll come to later. The most delightful

car was affectionately known as "Martha" and was bought from its original owner (unknown?) in 1904 for £60. It passed to a Colonel Wellingham who used and exhibited it until the 1950s. He bequeathed it to the Veteran Car Club who leased it to a Club member. Eventually the V.C.C. sold it at a Bonhams auction in 2003 for about £42000. I still don't know who brought

it to the Sloggin', but I am very grateful.

A Zedel looked quite at home with these two "venerables". Although built in 1923, its technology was still truly Edwardian. It belonged to Murray Beacroft, was pale in colour and was therefore inevitably christened the "Murray Mint" by Michael Burn who brought it. Brewster Cobb who rode in it commented how enjoyable it was to be able to see over the hedges.



Charles Lambton's Bugatti Type 37, Bernard Harding's Frazer Nash and the Wellingham de Dion

The majority of the cars shown came from the inter-war years: a whole article could be devoted to them alone – a 1919 Calcott, Alan Southon's 1928 H E which he had bought for £4 in 1933, successive Frazer Nashes brought by Bernard Harding, the Type 37 Bugattis of Dudley Gahagan and Charles Lambton, Jenks's 328 BMW, Ian Easdale's 1937 Alfa Romeo, Bill Boddy's Riley Monaco and Fred Hobbs's Riley Ulster all put in an appearance. Mike Eyre produced a succession of Austin 7s, all rare models – he seemed to find and restore one per year – and Brewster Cobb arrived in his normal everyday transport, a 1937 Austin 7 Ruby, one of the last ones made. Colin Malcomb brought a 1926 Fiat and David Small's delightful little dickey-seated 1927 Jowett 7 (which he still has) was a frequent visitor. On a

larger scale were Steady Barker's 1921 Lancia Dilambda, Sheridan Thynne's 1929 Delage and Bob Wood's 1932 Low Chassis 4½-litre Invicta, christened Felicity, from which he claimed 100 m.p.h. More stately was a huge Sunbeam saloon jointly owned by Bill Boddy and Jenks.

The "specials" appeared too: the very successful autocross contender "Turfsmoker" built by Derek Argyle, John Holford's racing Turner, Bob Russell's Austin 7 and Dick Cawthorne's Rochdale Olympic. Dick also exhibited what he called his MES, the space frame chassis of what was to be a Mid Engine Special. (For some reason this was to be the one among his many "specials" which he never completed.) And who remembers the H&B's very own Club Special,

the Anglia, built by a group of enthusiastic members to compete at autocross meetings? The cast as listed by Eddie Wild was as follows:- mechanic, Chris Brooks; technical advisor, Derek Argyle; procurer of parts, Chris Goodwin and odd job man, Eddie Wild. It was on show at the 1972 Sloggin' having been driven with some success by Eddy and Chris Brooks.



Sloggin' scene, Alan Southon's ex-Jenks Porsche 356 prominent. L to R, Tony Waddington, Mary Small, Virginia and Joan Birkett

Then there were the "smoothies": Every year an assortment of Rolls



Bob Russell's A7 trials special in competitive mode

Royces arrived, among them Lochée Bayne's 1933 Thrupp and Maberley saloon, with its original number plate, "RR40", Dudley Steynor's 1935 Phantom II, 7-litre 7-seater (the last of the Phantom IIs) and the 1937 Vanden Plas with disappearing hood brought by John Langton who always described himself as the first "vice" President of the Club. Younger examples of the sleek brigade included Michael Burn's Le Mans Replica Frazer Nash, rebodied to look like a Targa Florio model, John Michelsen's Lancia Aurelia, his BMW V8 Coupé (the last car built by Frazer Nash) and Tommy Smith's Bentley Continental. Bringing the list even more up to date were the Jaguars of Michael Bowler and Bert Fountain, the Alpine of Paul Burch, the Jensen 541s of Bill Tanner and Peter Hampton, and the Daimler SP250 of Allan Lupton. The ex-Jenkinson Porsche 356 was brought by new owner Alan Southon and later Porsche models by David Small and Dicky Stoop. Lotus was represented by Derek Argyle's Elite and two Elans, one owned by Col. Moscardi (he didn't seem to like it very much!) and the other assembled from a kit of parts by Charles Bulmer, assisted (?) by keen members of the Club. A 1959 Peerless owned by Maurice Gates was described by him to be very inappropriately named since he "had never known a car at which people peered more, trying to make out the name!"

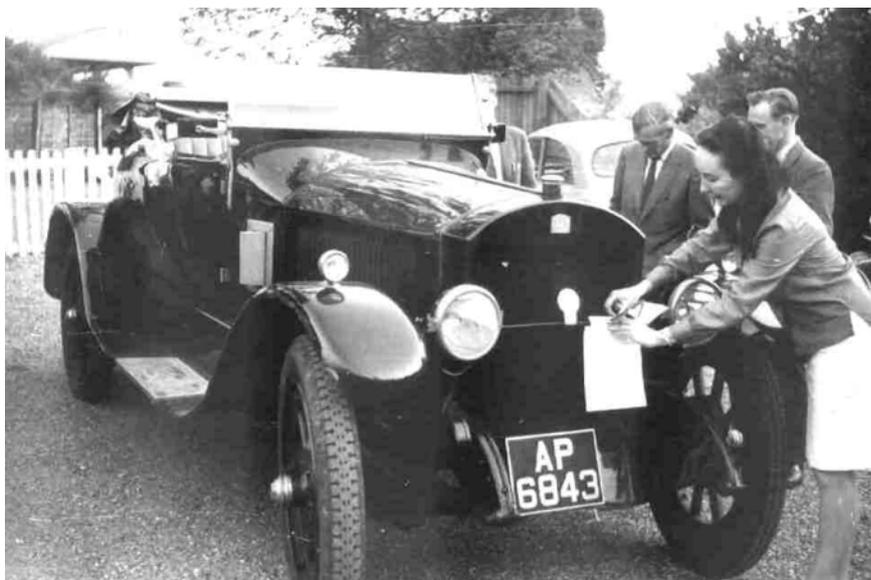
"Fragments of Forgotten Makes" used to be the title of a section in *Motor Sport*. I am tempted to borrow it. Do you remember the Goggomobil which J. Fitzpatrick brought? And the Daf - as exhibited by Dudley Steynor? And what about a "Yimkin" Mini - Sheridan Thynne or a Steyr Puch from John Higginson? Still fresh in our minds of course is the 2CV but the example brought by Dave Conway was the very one road tested by Bill Boddy for *Motor Sport*. Also in the oddments corner was Eddie Wild's fully functioning London taxi. And do you recall the Adler Trumpf Junior? This car, banana yellow in colour, arrived at the very first Sloggin' in 1961. The owner just called in for a drink at the Chequers and could not believe his

senses as he was welcomed like a long lost member, pressed into the display and had to explain to his wife why he was so late home. Serendipity! - and I never even found out his name.

Always of interest were the competition cars "off the peg" so to speak as opposed to the "specials" mentioned earlier. We inspected the Lotus 7s of Jon Derisley and Stewart Arklay and an Avenger rally car owned by Paul Burch. An Allard appeared and two ex-works Austin Healey 3000s, one belonging to Tony Ambrose and the other to Liz Gotts (now Liz Trotter).



Derek Argyle's Turfsmoker, mechanic Rino on board



Nan's favourite - Pat Bush's Stanley Steamer  
Behind Nan, Pat Bush and Bob Russell

The "big stuff" on the competition front was represented by some outstanding machinery. There was Charles Lambton's HWM Jaguar, Richard Bergel's Maserati, Hugh Chamberlain's Cooper Jag and Nick Williamson's March Cosworth. Nick also brought a Brabham F2 and other Brabhams appeared – Roger Willoughby's F3 Ford and McDowell's BT36. David Good, past President of the Club and, like the aforementioned, a regular and popular contender at Great Auclum, presented his Weslake Ferrari, a Martin FVC and a four wheel drive BRM. Jackie Epstein and Mike Eyre were competing on the continental circuits at the time and we never quite knew what they would "drop in" with. They arrived once with a BRM V8 on tow behind a 1964 Pontiac Parisienne. Quite an équipe! In 1966 Jackie brought his Ferrari 250LM, the car that he raced at Spa and the Targa Florio that year. On another occasion, Mike Eyre came in his Cooper Buick, literally on his way home from Bouley Bay. Mike's motoring interests certainly covered the widest possible spectrum!

Jackie was instrumental in the only trouble we had with the natives. In 1965 coming down from the Hartford Bridge Flats to the Chequers in his D-type, he was followed by Chamberlain's Cooper Jag and Dicky Stoop's racing Porsche. The noise was quite exciting! The next day I had a 'phone call from the landlord: complaints had been received, would we please not come back. That's why the next year's meeting was held at the Hawley Hotel.

The real glamour on the competitive scene of course was provided by Patsy Burt, another past President and donor to the Club of the beautiful award for the most successful lady competitor of the year. As elegant in her cars as in her person, she presented a succession of beauties: two Mercedes, a 280 SLC and a 350 SLC V8, a Ferrari 330 GT and her very competitive Hill Climb cars, the 1957 F2 Cooper Climax and the McLaren Oldsmobile. On a very special occasion she and Ron Smith brought along a one-off McLaren research car. The

specification read: "Stock 5-litre Chevrolet unit, ZF 5-speed gearbox, basic Can-Am chassis, modified Group 4 body.". That was the same year that she brought Bruce McLaren to talk to the Club.

Confession time now! The car which I found the most intriguing in all those years did not even have an internal combustion engine. It was a 1920 Stanley Steamer belonging to Joe Lowrey's friend, Lt. Cdr. Pat Bush. An immaculate dark red two seater with a dicky seat, it was so quiet its engine seemed to whisper. It was fuelled by paraffin with a pilot burner fired by unleaded petrol and its tank took twenty gallons of water. Pat Bush would describe the amazement of garage attendants when asked for more and more and even more water. I remember in 1963, the landlord at the Chequers (before the *débâcle* described above), happily attaching a hose through the kitchen window to his sink tap to fill her up – this on a very busy evening! Pity we had to move!

It has been impossible to mention all the cars which appeared at the Sloggin', choices had to be made. If I have left out somebody's favourite I apologise. I also apologise for errors of specification and dating which must inevitably have crept in – my records are not as well crafted as the visiting vehicles! But what a feast it has been to ferret through them once more!

**Nan Cawthorne**

# Spreading the word

## How *Sidelights* came into being and other avenues

Robin Birchall

To perpetuate a cliché, communications are vital to the health of any organisation and, from the outset, H&B was particularly blessed in this respect. Avenues to the motoring press were open through Joe Lowrey, recently released from RAE to take up the post of Technical Editor at *The Motor* and Bill Boddy, 'Mr Motor Sport', both of them regular visitors to Pondtail Road. Joe would also later fill the post of bulletin editor but we'll come to that. It should be noted that, well into the 1970s, both *The Motor* and their deadly rivals, *The Autocar*, continued to publish reports on club competitions. As far as the Farnborough contingent was concerned, internal communications were well served within the RAE but it was still necessary to produce a newsletter of some sort for those not at the end of a Ministry telephone. Thus was born the Club bulletin, a publication which has continued regularly ever since.

Charles Bulmer, as Secretary, wrote the first bulletins and Joan Cooper typed them, duplicated them on a 'jellygraph' and posted them. Early examples in the archive bear the address of the recipient on the reverse of the single or twin foolscap sheets which were triple folded and tucked in to avoid the use of envelopes. They bear stamps for 1d (0.4p) and other evidence suggests that, if posted in the morning, they would have been delivered the same day. The handwriting is also that of Charles but, by October 1946, he had clearly acquired some help, for the writing changes to a more flowing script.

In the first issue Charles wrote, "By publishing a Bulletin, which should appear early in each month, we hope to keep members better informed, and spread any news of importance." That laudable objective was maintained until early 1947 when the task apparently overwhelmed the system and publication became irregular. Charles was already exhibiting a flair for entertaining writing which would eventually lead him to a successful career in

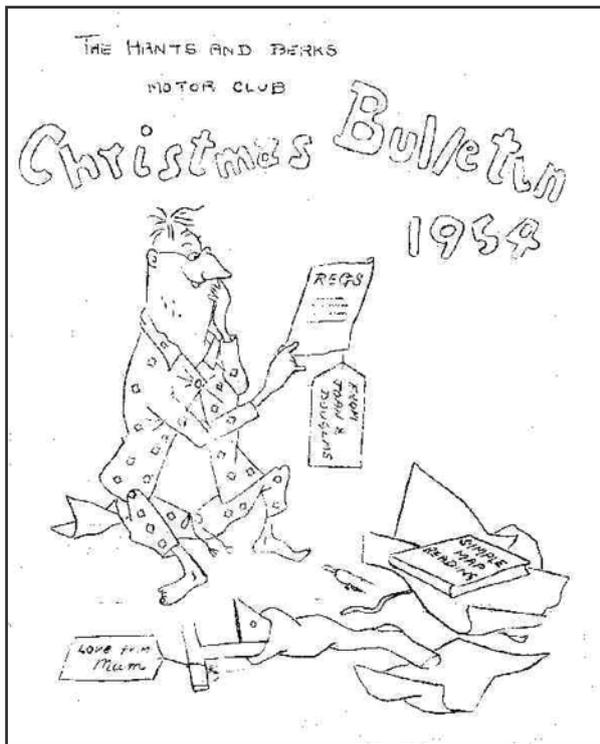
journalism. This, for instance, appeared in the Bulletin for September 1946:

***"To fill the vacancy on the Committee, Mr.G.E.G.Browne [Gerry] has been co-opted .... he is distinguished by the Austin Seven chassis on which he disports himself with sober dignity. This spartan vehicle is cleverly draped with a few small sheets of aluminium which, in certain lights, may produce the illusion that the machine is fitted with a body. Adequate weather protection is achieved by means of a large and rather ornate striped umbrella of doubtful origin. As this machine is not graced by a large Alsatian dog, a spare half-shaft serves to repel small boys who wish to purchase ice-cream."***

He set an example which others attempted to follow later, notably Holland Birkett.

Michael Burn was the next to take up the baton in January 1948, confusing the historian by starting afresh with the numbering and stating that the bulletin would be "expected to appear irregularly at about 8 week intervals." There was some justification for this since, as noted elsewhere in this book, the basic petrol ration had been "stamped out" just before Christmas. At this point Joan Cooper, who worked at GWR with Treasurer Bert Fountain, gained access to the office duplicator. Despite Michael's threat, the bulletin appeared at monthly intervals until June when he repeated his earlier statement.

This seems not to have pleased the Committee since the next bulletin bears the imprint of Holly as editor. He established his authority by imposing yet another numbering system and continued to hold the reins until Joe Lowrey took over "temporarily" in the summer of 1951. Joe inherited a bulletin which had grown considerably in size. A sample from November 1950 runs to ten pages of foolscap and includes a 2,750 word article (about six pages in current *Sidelights* format) by Holly himself on the Night Trial. While the bulk would be reports on events of this and other clubs, there would be an extensive list of invitations, full lists of results and



Christmas 1954 cover, 'present from Joan and Douglas - Regs'

the occasional advertisement typical of the period. How about, "3-speed gearbox in excellent order, 10/-" (50p) or "Wanted urgently and cheap, [rolling] Austin 7 chassis"? The Hopkinson Trophy scoring system, an award reflecting involvement in Club events, appeared as Joe took over.

As might be expected, Joe brought a professional touch to the pages with consistent headings and orderly typescript. He even managed to find some art work for the 1951 Christmas issue, illustrating Santa Claus driving a trials car up a snow-laden roof to the chimney. The pages of 1952 note several landmarks: Barclay Inglis married Margaret Willis and Charles became engaged to Heather Logsdon in January. The death of King George was properly noted with expressions of loyalty to the new Queen in February. The election of Gordon Madgwick as Press Secretary was reported in April, a post which was to lead him to reporting Club events for *Autosport*, and Club badges were advertised in October.

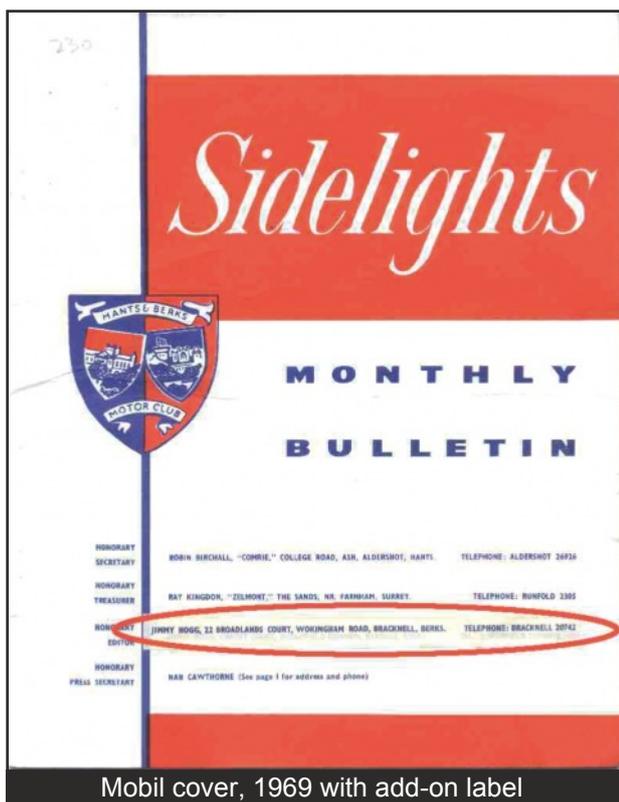
January 1954 marked a revolutionary experiment which was not to be seen again until the advent of the desk top publisher (dtp) 40 years on. The 8-page bulletin appeared in blue-on-white letterpress as a stitched quarto booklet.

The following month it also boasted two photographs, one by Gordon Madgwick, and a reproduction of the Club crest, similar to the present version but with detailed trees and an absence of shading on the quarters. Joan Cooper had relinquished the post of bulletin producer and the new incumbent, Trevor Clark, had decided that professional printing was the way to go. He even offered to subsidise the cost. It was not to last. Members refused to support the 75% increase in subscription necessary to meet the cost and a delay at the printers, which meant that a vital piece of news was late, sealed the fate of the idea. By June the bulletin was back to its former state of duplicated foolscap but Joe again managed to rustle up a picture cover for Christmas.

From early 1956 there was a long-running national printer's strike (I remember that *The Autocar* was published in France for a time) which perhaps explains why Joe went to 12-per-inch elite type for three months before returning to the familiar 10-per-inch pica. No doubt the office typewriter was idle. Was it the shock of having to return to tight printing schedules which caused Joe to slide from under the (temporary!) burden in July, Joan and Douglas Johns acting as continuity before John Ellis became editor in September?

<b>THE HANTS &amp; BERKS MOTOR CLUB</b>		
<p><i>Hon. Secretariat:</i>                  JOAN &amp; DOUGLAS JOHNS,                  48, Reading Road,                  Woodley, Berks.                  (Tel. Sonning 2106).</p>		<p><i>Hon. Editor:</i>                  JOSEPH LOWREY,                  Green Shutters,                  Avenue Road,                  Farnborough, Hants.</p>
<hr/> MID-FEBRUARY, 1954. <span style="float: right;">No. 51.</span>		
<p><b>OH! WHAT A SURPRISE</b></p> <p>The arrival of a professionally printed Hants &amp; Berks M.C. "Bulletin" through the letter-box rather late in January, instead of the usual duplicated affair, was no doubt something of a surprise to most members. Fortunately enough, it was just as much of a surprise to the Editor!</p> <p>Printing the first "Bulletin" of 1954 instead of duplicating it from stencils in the usual way resulted from a last-minute decision by Trevor Clark, who took over the responsibility for duplicating and addressing Bulletins not long ago and who decided personally to guarantee any extra cost involved in experimentally having a simple "Bulletin" printed. At this moment, no decision has been taken on how the cost of printed Bulletins each month can be related to the fact that this Club still asks only 10/- per year subscription from its members—so, at the moment of writing, we don't know whether you will read this in typescript or in print, but we quietly hope that it will be the latter.</p> <p>As a member has already commented, in one of the letters which have come in expressing approval of the experimental new-look "Bulletin", if this is the shape of things to come it looks as if lots more contributions from members will be needed. How right he is!</p> <p>In recent months, we have had a fine flow of voluntary contributions from members, articles most of which were reports of the navigation events in which our folk excel. The varied Authorship of these contributions has added greatly to their interest and to their value as a guide for potential competitors hovering on the brink before "having a go" in competitions of this kind. But, the Hon. E. Editor recalls with some alarm that last summer the monthly Bulletins shrank to half their winter size, for lack of contributions—please, don't let the end of the long, dark evenings mean the end of Bulletin contributions during 1954.</p> <p>Another request which has been made, and which the Editor is delighted to pass on, is for articles on other subjects than Rallies and Navigation Events. If you say "hear hear" to this request, then YOU are obviously one of the folk who ought yourself to do something about it—who ought to record quite informally the history of your own personal "Haveagoston Special" and the lessons you learned in building and running it; to let other competitors into the secret of how the M.C. which you race was made as fast as the speedometer, and what it cost you in time and cash to keep one move ahead of the 8-Clubs handicapper; to record just what care and cunning has been necessary to remain in the Championship class as a builder-driver of Trials cars; to tell other members how the plan of combining a visit to a Grand Prix with a summer holiday abroad worked out. Remember please, the Editor can only prevent the "Bulletin" becoming catastrophically bad—it takes support from a wide circle of our members to make it really good!</p>		
<p><b>COMING EVENTS.</b></p> <p><b>February 26th, Friday evening.</b> Motoring Films made by the Mobiloil folk can be seen for free at California-in-England, off the Nine Mile Ride, nr. Wokingham, Berks, from around 8 p.m. onwards. We have a very much bigger hall than before, so don't be afraid to bring along friends—you'll be able to get a drink between reels, incidentally.</p> <p><b>February 27th-28th, Saturday night.</b> Peterborough Club have once again invited our members to compete in their Night Navigation Rally, the 4th in a series of which previous examples have been much enjoyed by our members. For details, contact the Hon. Secretaries, or communicate directly with the Secretary of the Meeting who is, R. A. Johnson, 34s, Priestgate, Peterborough.</p>		

Expensive experiment - letterpress bulletin 1954



Mobil cover, 1969 with add-on label

John and Sue Ellis were supported on the bulletin team by their close friends Jim and Rene Scott so Jim's name was quite likely to be found in the editor's box when John was away. Trevor Clark had given up at the end of the previous year and it was probably the office equipment of The Oaks school, which Rene ran, which produced the bulletins. For 1957 members were supplied with a pack of 12 envelopes and asked to self-address them and the following year, from September onwards, the front page of the bulletin carried the Club crest in line form. The self-address scheme was to continue until 1972. Occasional articles by such luminaries as John Gott, Nancy Mitchell, Ann Wisdom and Rivers Fletcher enlivened the pages. The name *Sidelights* appeared for the first time in October 1959 on a luridly coloured cover supplied by Mobilgas. The back cover carried the latest Economy Run results but they don't seem to have inflicted on us that memorable jingle "What, 50.69 mpg in a Mostin Thingummy like mine?" The identity of the inventor of the title *Sidelights* is uncertain but may well have been a Mobil staff member.

In 1961 the Ellis/Scott team retired to be succeeded by Jimmy Hogg and Harry and Colleen Fleischmann who in their turn handed over production duties to Ray and Pat Hilborne in April 1964 by which time the Club had bought

its own duplicator. In the interim Jimmy had changed the page layout from foolscap (8 in x 13 in) to octavo (7½ in x 9½ in) side stitched to a folded card cover supplied by Mobilgas. At the end of the year Nan Cawthorne occupied the editorial chair as caretaker while Jimmy was away, complaining, like the present editor, that efforts to encourage a gossip column had failed. From my recollection, at that time it was more likely that the gossip was unprintable than that there wasn't any!

It may be inferred from the lack of detail that bulletin production, both from an editorial and a production viewpoint, had settled down and there were few alarms or excursions more serious than the occasional glitch with the technical equipment or a late posting to disturb the calm. However, Ray Hilborne might well have viewed things rather differently when he found that he had to lick 2,300 labels to bring the covers up to date after a change of Club officers in 1968. Both he and Treasurer Ray Kingdon did occasional duties as stand-in editor.

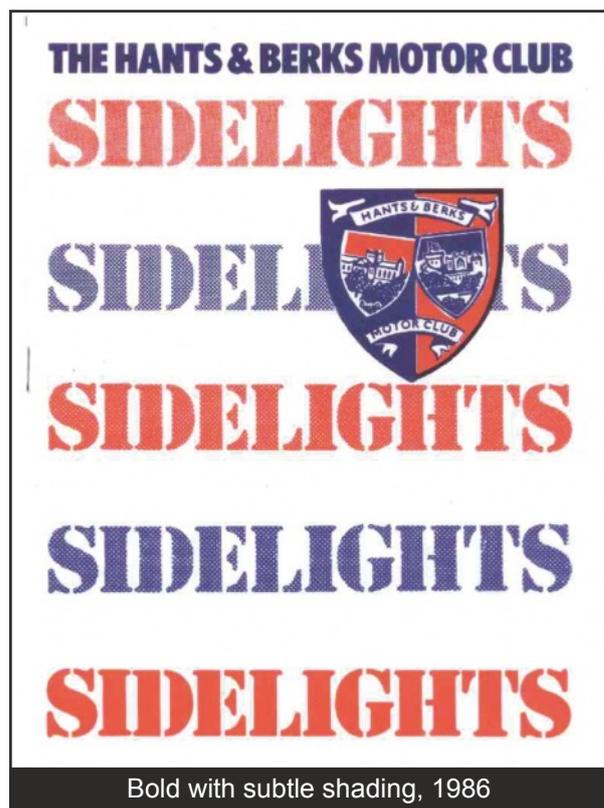
In October 1973 Jimmy resigned as editor and was replaced by George (Topper) Brown and a little over a year later the supply of Mobil covers dried up. The format changed to its present folded A4, centre stitched in a card cover. An interim design was done by Tony Bedingfield before the approved version appeared in June 1975, with details of the Club officers on the inside front and calendar on the inside back. After 11 years service and 30,000 copies Ray Hilborne stepped down and was rewarded with honorary membership by the Club. Thereafter the team of myself, Jack Ballett, the Chismans and many other helpers congregated each month at our bungalow in Church Crookham until gratefully accepting Ray Kingdon's offer of the use of his new factory in Aldershot as a production centre. No doubt Jack and I had an eye to using the Club duplicator for the Pairs but we soon found that the Gestetner could be a temperamental beast.

By the end of 1977 Topper had had quite enough of wrestling with an unco-operative post office and handed over the reins to Pam Roper who, remarkably, was to continue in post for another 15 years. The cover design by Michael Kennedy, a bold column of five "SIDELIGHTS" backing the club crest, stayed for ten years, although it very soon became paper and lost the

Club information printed in front and back. Pictures began to appear regularly during 1977.

Nick Bettin produced a new cover design for 1987 with a silhouette of the two counties behind the Club crest and a sports steering wheel bearing, for some reason, the MG logo. I wonder if this was ever cleared with the Company? Assumedly we weren't so copyright conscious in those days.

By the beginning of 1988 the Gestetner had at last been abandoned in favour of photocopying thanks to the expertise of Ray Drew who worked for Xerox. This change was to the great benefit of clarity and gave the editor the flexibility to make cut-and-paste page designs. Another change in cover design occurred in mid-1991, to a single crest with printed titles. For the first time the month was shown and a list of officials returned to the cover. The current design was first seen in May 1993 in single colour format before being replaced by the professionally printed two-colour version a couple of months later, unfortunately losing the month in the process. This was a small price to pay for the



### Friday the thirteenth

I was late that evening, so perhaps the Gestetner was not set in motion with quite the usual care. However, it appeared to be quite happily producing 200 copies of pages 1 and 12 so I left it alone while I did some other task. As soon as my back was turned, it decided that it had been fed with the wrong type of paper and destroyed the 31st sheet. Producing the remaining 170 on my return was quite straightforward; it only took a quarter of an hour and three separate attempts. Thence to pages 2 and 11. I inserted the painfully collected block of 1s and 12s and churned them through again. What lovely black copies - blank black copies! I attached stencil to duplicator and tried again. White copies this time - still blank. I hadn't removed the backing sheet. The Gestetner's parting shot was to chew my final stencil into little shreds - but that was only the Treasurer's subscription reminder. Naturally, magazine collation took twice as long as usual, just because nothing went exactly right.

It was really no great surprise on receiving our copy to find that our jinx had been abroad long before that evening and contrived to produce a navigator's nightmare of the page numbering. RMB

improved quality under the new editor, Stuart Ibbotson, who had enthusiastically embraced the desk top publisher. Ashleigh White had found a reasonably priced service at Basingstoke Hospital print room which would not only photoprint but also collate and post *Sidelights* for us. Under Stuart's editorship the pages became much brighter, the flexibility of the dtp allowing him readily to incorporate graphic decorations.

For Golden Jubilee year, 1996, a special cover was printed with a garlanded Club crest and many nostalgic articles appeared, most notably Joe's series of "That's H&B, that was". Pressure of work forced Stuart to relinquish control at the beginning of 1999 and I inherited the editorial chair. Like Stuart I had great fun exploring the new-found freedoms conferred by the dtp but, towards the end of Stuart's tenure, the printers had had to move office and had then had no space for their excellent photocopier. Quality of illustrations suffered with its replacement and it was not until a new and much better colour copier came that we had photo quality restored. The new machine gave us the further benefit of electronic access through the PDF system so that paper masters were no longer necessary. Other than for the occasional centre spread, however, there were insufficient funds to enable us to go over to colour illustrations completely and, as with the letterpress experiment all those years

## Duplicating

### The jellygraph (hectograph)

A master image is typed or written on paper using special inks. The face of the master is then applied to the moistened flat surface of a tray of gelatine, gently rubbing for a few minutes leaving a reverse image. A sheet of paper is then placed on the surface and smoothed over with the hand to produce a copy. The process is good for about 200 copies. The gelatine may be reused after wiping off excess ink and re-melting.

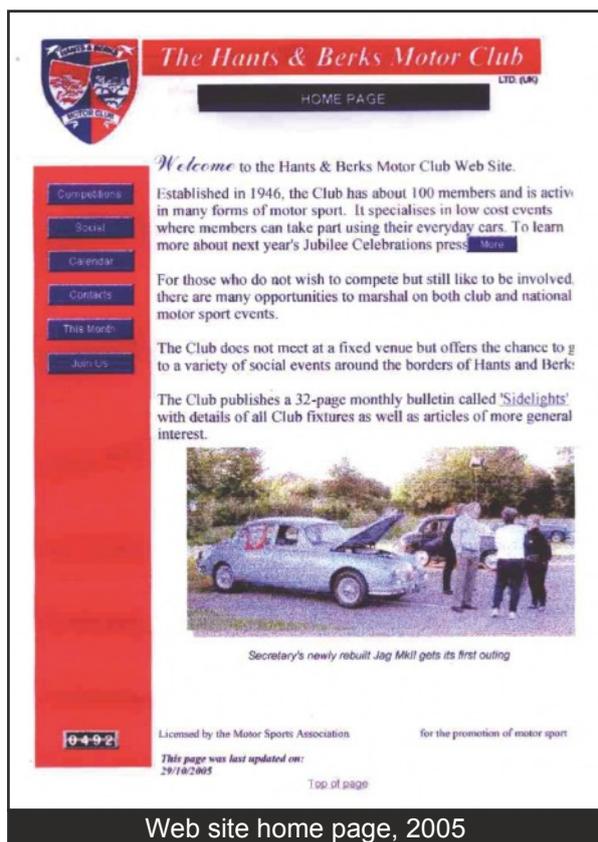
### The screen duplicator

The principle is to squeeze ink through a fine screen and stencil onto paper. It can be a simple home device like that mentioned by David Madgwick in a previous chapter or automated on a rotary machine like the Gestetner. The stencil or skin is a paper backed wax sheet, the wax being held in a delicate paper matrix. A ribbon-less typewriter is used to create a permeable imprint of the typeface on the stencil. The typist has to be skilled - too gentle and the imprint isn't permeable enough, too ham fisted and the centres of enclosed letters such as O fall out. Once the backing has been removed a roller is used to force ink through a gauze mount (screen) and the stencil onto the paper.

The Gestetner is a complex machine (I know, I've overhauled one) on which the stencil is clipped to the cross bar of a gauze belt fixed between two perforated steel driving bands. As the belt is driven round, a spreader bar applies ink to the back of the gauze and stencil which then pass between two rollers in company with a sheet of paper. The mechanism counts the copies, regulates ink supply and synchronises paper feed. The copy limit, somewhere around 2000, is set by the deterioration of the stencil which eventually loses sharpness under the pressure from the rollers - and more of those centres fall out. RMB

before, no enthusiasm for raising the subscription to meet the extra costs.

The advent of the PDF system also allowed me to offer an electronic version of *Sidelights*. This had the potential to save on production costs and postage and gave members the benefits of coloured graphics and immediacy but there was



Web site home page, 2005

little interest. Most members, it seemed, liked to have their paper copy to flick through.

Meanwhile Pam Roper had taken over as Press Officer and was busy building up a very effective network of local and national press contacts. Thanks to her persistence, she now has established links with regional newspapers and exposure is frequent. Bill and Janet Bonney, too, have an excellent relationship with their local area council which gives us access to venues and representation on local press and radio.

In February 1997 Stuart had started a Club web page. Towards the end of 2000 I discovered the old site, now totally neglected, and replaced it. For the time being at least the new site is being continuously developed with pages devoted to specific events as well as more general subjects, a calendar, recruitment form and contact details. It is updated on a monthly basis. Strike rate is about 500 per year. It works well enough as an information centre but still needs development if it is to become an effective recruitment tool as well.

Technology has transformed the communication process. Never again, though, shall we see the same-day postal service which Charles enjoyed all those years ago.

# An overview

## How the sport has changed

Les Needham

No one reading this book can doubt that the Club's birth and progress were the direct result of the times in which it found itself. The social, economic and technological changes were unprecedented and the Club's leaders had to respond swiftly, devising new events and tapering off the old to match demand.

Between the two wars, club motorsport consisted mainly of speed events, sprints and hill climbs and reliability trials, where cars were required to climb steep and often muddy hills, with road sections between the various climbs (a type of event, such as the Land's End Trial, still run by the Motor Cycle Club) and various events which today would be called Touring Assemblies. Racing at Brooklands and Donington was in the hands of major clubs such as the BARC (originally the Junior Car Club, then the Brooklands Automobile Racing Club, and now, of course, the British Automobile Racing Club) and the BRDC.

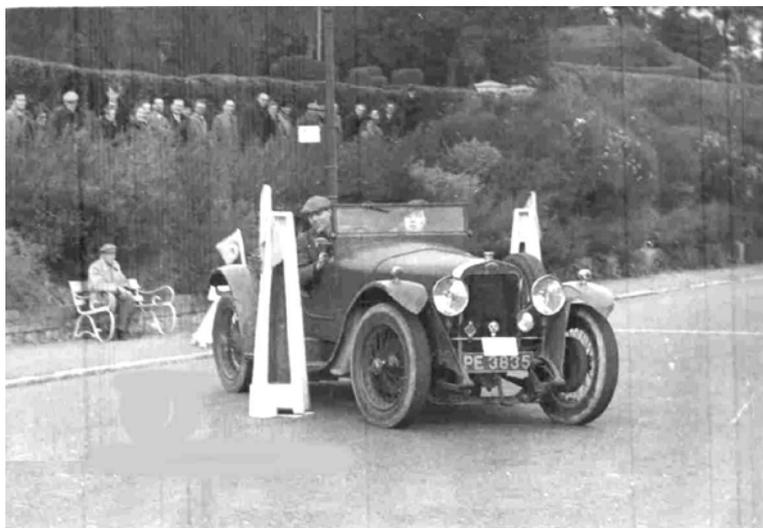
Rallying was essentially the name for a gathering of cars, although the Royal Automobile Club ran a number of National Rallies from 1932 with no outright winner. The competitive nature of these events was usually some form of manoeuvring test, sometimes similar to today's Autotest.

Naturally, all forms of motor sport came to a sudden stop in 1939 with the outbreak of WWII. The war in Europe ended in May 1945 and that with Japan in August of that year but conditions were difficult for many years with petrol rationing, for example, lasting until 1950. No new cars had been built since before the war and, because of the necessity of exporting, it was difficult and very expensive to purchase new cars.

Nevertheless, the competitive spirit hadn't died and, as troops were

demobilised, they wanted to recapture the years they had missed. The two main pre-war circuits, Brooklands and Donington, had suffered badly during the war years, Brooklands having had great chunks carved out of it for the benefit of war production whilst Donington had been used as a vehicle depot. Brooklands could never be restored for racing and it was many years before Donington was released. Crystal Palace made a hesitant start in 1953 and a motor-cycle grass track at Brands Hatch was eventually tarmac surfaced and became a major circuit. The big find, however, was a war-time airfield at Silverstone which in 1948 held the first post war race for Formula One cars which, incidentally, was also the first race of the newly instituted FIA World Championship. Other ex-airfields have also become race circuits and, from the three circuits pre-war, we now have nearly 20, with a number having dropped by the wayside. This meant that many more clubs could become involved in race organisation, including H&B through the Eight Clubs.

Whilst the MCC have persevered with the reliability trial, trials cars in general have become much more specialised and thus trials now take place on closed venues in very tricky terrain. Two new disciplines since the war have been



Typical of its time. Eight Clubs Eastbourne Rally 1953 - driving tests on the prom M Vaughan & DL Allen, Delage

off-road events for the 4 x 4 brigade and karting, which started off in America, was brought to this country by American servicemen and has expanded in this country and throughout Europe at a tremendous rate. It is worth noting that several years ago a 250cc Kart lapped the Silverstone GP circuit as fast as a Formula Three car, not bad with your backside only a couple of inches above the ground. In general there are two branches of karting – direct drive (non gearbox) of 100 or 125cc, and 125 or 250cc with gearbox.

It is in Rallying that the greatest changes have taken place, both shortly after the war ended and then again in the 1950s. Before the war, the routes for road events were described by means such as “Turn left at junction, straight on for two miles”, etc. During the war it was necessary for troops and others to be directed accurately to a specific spot and accordingly the maps in use were overprinted with a grid by means of which a location could be defined by a grid reference. Post-war Ordnance Survey maps continued to be overprinted with a grid and it didn't take long before it was realised that it would be very simple to define the route of a rally by a series of map references.

Thus was born the road rally where competitors were timed from control to control, marks being lost for late arrival. Theoretically, the maximum permitted average speed between controls was restricted to 30 mph but, as competitors and navigators became more experienced and cars became faster, many clubs “pruned” the times allowed.

On the continent International Rallies, of which the Monte Carlo was the doyen, still tended to use descriptive routes until the Dutch, organising an event from Holland down into the mountains of France and back, realised that a route card with instructions in Dutch was not really practical. Accordingly, they developed a system of simple diagrams which illustrated each road junction, showing direction of approach and departure, and since their event was called the Tulip Rally, these diagrams have ever after been known as Tulip diagrams.

Initially, the main British International Rally, known to all throughout Europe as the RAC Rally, remained very similar to pre-war with two or more starting points and a run through various

## The rule makers

Both the World and National governing bodies were originally formed by clubs getting together for their mutual benefit. The World governing body, the *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile* (FIA) was founded in 1904. For many years it had a separate section dealing with motor sport but it now operates under the broad heading FIA, based in Paris and Geneva.

The staff of the FIA are the 'civil service', operating for the World Motor Sports Council which promulgates the various rules. This council, elected by all the countries that run any form of International event, also includes the Chairmen of the various specialist Commissions. These are the rule proposing committees and include the Formula One Commission, the Rallies Commission and the Safety Commission. The sporting side of the FIA is mainly involved in the World Championship and International scene.

The Royal Automobile Club started life in 1897 as the “Automobile Club of Great Britain” to look after the interests of the fledgling motorists. The RAC formed the Competitions Committee to look after sport, with a Motor Sports Division acting as its 'civil service'. During the 1950s the Committee held an annual club conference in Pall Mall where, as is related elsewhere, Eight Clubs was born.

During the 1970s the Motor Sports Division became the RAC Motor Sports Association. Like the FIA, the MSA is the 'civil service', the rule making body being the Motor Sports Council which in turn is supported by a number of committees. An important one of these is the Regional Committee comprising the chairmen of the Regional Associations. Currently there are some six to seven hundred clubs recognised by the MSA which issues the rules for motor sport each year in The Blue Book. LNN

control points, finishing with manoeuvring tests on some sea-side promenade. It was Jack Kemsley who took the event into the forests in 1960 to start the type of stage rally which many clubs organise to the present day.

H&B was the originator of yet another type of road event, the so-called night trial. Here a route, originally defined by grid references, took

competitors to various locations where a marshal would often be concealed and competitors were timed while finding him (or her). Again, the expertise of the navigators required a tightening of the competition but, rather than the pruning that was commonplace in road rallies, this was achieved by making the method of defining the marshal's locations more difficult than simple grid references. These night trials also used the method of distributing competitors around the course as Gordon Madgwick has explained in a previous chapter so that nuisance to the public was minimised. This culminated in the series of "Experts" night trials described elsewhere.

Motor sport was becoming ever more popular; entries of over 100 vehicles were commonplace and the London Motor Club's "Little Rally", a daytime event, attracted 400. The public were starting to complain in a big way and it was obvious that government interference was likely. In the early 1960s the Chesham Committee, consisting of representatives from the police, road users, motor sport etc, including our own Douglas Johns, was formed to consider possible restrictions. A useful ally on that committee was John Gott, who was Chief Constable of Northamptonshire and a keen rally competitor.

The main conclusion of the committee was that, whilst motor sport on the public highway could cause annoyance, it was desirable to reach a compromise which they called "a tolerable level of nuisance". This was eventually accepted by the government who brought in restrictions under the title "Motor Vehicle, Competitions and Trials Regulations 1965". Broadly, these

restricted the number of competitors who could take part in day or night events and also the number of times that any given stretch of road could be used in each month. Events with fewer than 12 competitors were exempt from most of the regulations on the basis that 12 cars down the same stretch of road were unlikely to cause undue annoyance. The operation of these regulations was given to the MSA but with the interesting proviso that they had to treat non-MSA recognised bodies in the same way as MSA recognised clubs. To enable this to work, a separate Rally Authorisation department was set up within the MSA. With a few amendments, these regulations continue to control motor sport on our roads to this day.

Over the last few years environmental matters have grown in importance and this has mainly involved the control of noise. Noise limits on new cars have been imposed on car manufacturers but these are subject to after-sales modification so, to counter public complaints, separate limits are imposed by the MSA on many branches of motor sport.

In general, car clubs have seen a reduction in membership over the last few years as rival attractions appeal to the younger members of society. With the increase in the number of cars on the road, it is becoming more and more difficult to run road events, but the number of off-road venues is also decreasing. Now, sixty years after the end of WWII, perhaps it is time for someone to invent a new branch of motor sport?

**Les Needham**

# *Acknowledgements*

In his introduction Bill Bonney has paid tribute to the key members of the Club who have made this book possible. A glance down the Contents List will show that he himself has been responsible for chronicling, almost single-handedly, the last two decades of the Club's development and has left a legacy for future historians which will be highly valued.

Contributors have been unfailingly helpful and tolerant of the mauling to which their work has sometimes been subjected in the attempts to maintain consistency. That helpfulness I have exploited to the full, particularly with Charles Bulmer and the late John Higginson, both of whom responded instantly and fluently to the request "Could you just give me x hundred words to fill this gap?" Others too have responded with equal enthusiasm. My thanks to you all.

One problem which we foresaw early on was that some members with extensive, often very special, recollections would feel unable to put pen to paper. We therefore let it be known that interviews with such people would be welcomed. To this there was a magnificent response from John Higginson, David Madgwick and Eric Tobitt. Their contributions have added much to the anecdotal material. Not everybody enjoys being interviewed so our thanks go to the interviewees as well as the skilful interviewers.

In seeking illustrations to decorate the text, many private collections have been raided and that of Gordon Madgwick in particular, covering a wide field from Night Trials to Great Auclum, has been a treasure house. John Higginson's collection of photographs of social gatherings was excellent featuring as it did portraits of key players in the Club's history not to be found elsewhere and a third collection notable for its breadth was that of the late Dick Cawthorne. A problem with this method of trawling for pictures has been that many are unattributed so I have not tried to annotate individual photographs. It is inevitable that some will have been chosen which were originally professionally produced and the sport owes a great debt of gratitude to such early post-war photographers as James Brymer, Guy Griffiths and Julian Jane, sadly now no longer with us. To the current owners of such archives we express our apologies for any inadvertent transgression of copyright. Of the remainder I know that at least one of the later photographs is credited to Anne Hope and the pencil sketch in the Great Auclum chapter is the kind gift of the Bugatti OC's archive through its curator. Other photographs are the work of Derek Argyle, Mike Bloodworth, Bill Bonney, Aubrey Bowling, Mike Igglesden, Steve Lovegrove, Joe Lowrey, David Madgwick, Burton Mills, Jim Morley, Bob Newton, Pam Roper and the Editor. My thanks also to Mike Igglesden who did a fine job of reducing a couple of hundred Economy Run photos to something digestible and annotated them beautifully.

Last but by no means least go my thanks to my wife, Fiona, who has tolerated with good grace a house littered with papers, Club bulletins and photographs for several months, provided support and encouragement when the task appeared mountainous and not pestered too aggressively when routine matters were neglected.

**Robin Birchall**

Editor

February 2006

# Appendices

## 1. List of Presidents

Cdr Harry Simonds	1946 to his death on 28 April 1948	Michael Bowler Esq	1981 to 1983
Neil Gardiner Esq	1948 to 1955	Ms (later Baroness) Jean Denton	1983 to 1985
Tommy Sopwith Esq	1955 to 1957	Richard Noble Esq	1985 to 1987
Jim Fisher Esq	1957 to 1959	John Welch Esq	1987 to 1989
Mrs Nancy Mitchell	1959 to 1961	Harry Hopkinson Esq	1995 to 1997
John Gott Esq	1961 to 1963	Eric Tobitt Esq	1997 to 1999
A. F. Rivers Fletcher Esq	1963 to 1965	Charles Bulmer Esq	1999 to 2001
Major Charles Lambton	1965 to 1967	Stuart Bladon Esq	2001 to 2003
Douglas & Joan Johns	1967 to Douglas's death on 15 May 1967	Mrs Nancy Cawthorne	2003 to 2005
Mrs Joan Johns	1967 to 1969	Leslie Needham Esq	2005 to 2007
Miss Patsy Burt	1969 to 1971	Gordon Madgwick Esq	2007 to 2009
David Good Esq	1971 to 1973	Ray Kingdon Esq	2009 to his death on 18 June 2009
Sir Nicholas Williamson	1973 to 1975	Mrs Jane Johnson	2009 to 2013
Tony Ambrose Esq	1975 to 1977	Mike Igglesden Esq	2013 to 2015
Sam Moore Esq	1977 to 1979	David Madgwick Esq	2015 to 2017
Joe Lowrey Esq	1979 to 1981	Dave Wilson Esq	2017 to present

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## 2. List of Vice-Presidents

SW Gordon Esq	August 1946 (not mentioned thereafter)
Sir Algernon Guinness	1947 to his death in 1955
Harry Hopkinson Esq	1947 to 1996
John Langton Esq	February 1947 to 1989
R Whittington-Moe Esq	1947 to 1949 (not mentioned thereafter)
Jim Fisher Esq	1955 to 1957
Barclay Inglis Esq	1956 to his death in 1988
John Gridley Esq	1956 to his death in November 1968
Holland Birkett Esq	1963 to his death in July 1963

Note: Following the decision to award Honorary Membership, the practice of appointing Vice-Presidents ceased.

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### 3. List of Honorary Life Members

Miss Joan Cooper	1954	Miss Patsy Burt	(past President)
Neil Gardiner	1955 (past President)	Sam Moore	(past President)
Jim Fisher	1966 (past President)	Joe Lowrey	1996 (past President)
Bill Boddy	1971	Bill Kirkby	
Charles Bulmer	1971	Dr J Starkey	
Pat & Ray Hilborne	1975	Harry Hopkinson	(past President)
Mrs Nancy Mitchell	(past President)	John Langton	(past President)
John Gott	(past President)	Barclay Inglis	(past President)
AF Rivers Fletcher	(past President)	Mick Harris	1986
Major Charles Lambton	(past President)	Mrs Barbara Harris	1986
Mrs Joan Johns	(past President)	Bob Newton	1987

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### 4. List of Honorary Officers

#### Honorary Secretaries

Philip Hayden	January to May 1946
Sheila Benke	January to May 1946
Charles Bulmer	1946 to 1953
Joan & Douglas Johns	1953 to 1967
Robin Birchall	1967 to 1970
Dave Wilson	1970 to 1971
Mick Harris	1971 to 1977
Bill Bonney	1977 to present

#### Honorary Treasurers

Bert Fountain	1946 to 1967
Ray Kingdon	1967 to 1979
Keith Simpson	1979 to 1984
John Hadnutt	1984 to 1995
Alan Marlow	1995 to 2002
Doug Powell	2002 to 2004
Malcolm Royston	2004 to present

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### 5. List of Honorary Bulletin Editors

Charles Bulmer	6/1946 to 12/1947	Jimmy Hogg	4/1961 to 10/1973
Michael Burn	1/1948 to 6/1948	George (Topper) Brown	2/1974 to 11/1977
Holland Birkett	8/1948 to 7/1951	Pam Roper	12/1977 to 2/1993
Joe Lowrey	8/1951 to 6/1956	Stuart Ibbotson	3/1993 to 12/1998
Joan & Douglas Johns	7/1956 & 3/1961	Robin Birchall	1/1999 to 12/2016
John Ellis (with Jim Scott)	8/1956 to 2/1961	Rob Rowe	1/2017 to present

Sheilah Higginson 2005

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## 7. Glossary of initials

CHB	Charles Bulmer	JL	Joe Lowrey
FB	Fiona Birchall	EJGM	Gordon Madgwick
RMB	Robin Birchall	JM	Joan Moore
NC	Nan Cawthorne	LNN	Les Needham
MSI	Mike Igglesden	DHS	David Small
RWK	Ray Kingdon		

