

The Hants & Berks Motor Club

The first sixty years

1946-2006



Foreword by Bill Boddy MBE

Dedicated to the memory of the men and women who had
the vision, determination and organising genius to set
this Club on its long and successful road

Written and photographed mainly by members or past members of the Hants & Berks Motor Club

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Cover pictures (clockwise from top)

2CV Cross, Blackbushe, 602cc class, mid '70s

California-in-England Driving Tests, Joan Johns, Austin A90 Atlantic, 1952

Mobil Economy Run, Harrogate, Peter May, Jaguar MkII, 1967

Woodley Classic, Reading, Malcolm & Carole Buckler, Buckler, 2005

Great Auclum Hill Climb, Michael Burn, Frazer Nash Le Mans, 1954

Eight Clubs, Silverstone, Beatrice Shilling's Rapier leads a 3-litre Lagonda, 1956

Map based on Bartholemew edition of about 1950

Cover design by Robin Birchall

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Foreword

It was nice to be asked to write the Foreword to this welcome story of the Hants & Berks Motor Club. It gives me the opportunity of thanking its members. Amusing, too, because I was never a member although I spent much of World War Two working at the RAE in Farnborough and later lived in Fleet. In those days I was involved with Holland Birkett, the inimitable “Holly”, whose lifestyle defies description. It was in this indirect way that I became engaged in the events of your Club, of which you generously made me an Honorary Member after years of my inadvertent absence.

I remember some very ambitious events that Holly devised, mostly nocturnal. How did he get sartorially-correct Eric Giles, brother of Col. G.M. Giles, one of the founders of the Bugatti Owners’ Club, to a “treacle factory” in some subterranean location in the middle of the night and join the industrious treacle-stirrers, who were of course the marshals who had to be found before competitors’ route cards were signed?

I think that in one event, in daylight this time, you had to declare the exact time that a boat (on the Thames was it?) passed a certain mark – but how was this arranged and who was the boat’s captain? Then there was a night control when luckless navigators had to agree to take an aeroplane flight if they wanted their cards marked – something to do with a mock-up machine and a tow car I think. Or how about searching for a marshal and ignoring a couple in the back of a parked saloon car who were obviously in an advanced state of snoggerly – but who were, of course, two well-known H&B members there to mark your cards!

I recall how Jenks (also a non-member) and I, at Farnborough together during the war, used to grab any rides available in that petrol-rationed age, in Joe Lowrey’s Morgan 3-wheeler and HRG or in Charles Bulmer’s Morgan and Frazer Nash, while my Chummy Austin 7, Gwynne 8, 12/50 Alvis and Lancia Lambda were exercised on “official” journeys.

These were not the only enjoyments organised by the evolving H&B. Indeed, it was soon to become remarkable for its ingenious competitions and its keen membership, as evident today as then, with supporters not necessarily living in the two counties that its name proclaims. The Club’s lively magazine “*Sidelights*” helps to keep alive the enthusiasm for all things motoring, as does Joe’s idea of revisiting for lunch various hotels and taverns which H&B has used in the past. Living far away in Powys - “shireless”, although once it was Radnorshire - we came to one of these lunches after your visit to the Morgan factory in Malvern. Thanks for your hospitality.

I am now signing-off to enjoy the accompanying history.

Bill Boddy MBE

May 2005

Introduction

To Sheilah Higginson must go the credit for recognising some three years ago that, with the approach of the Club's Diamond Jubilee, efforts should be made to pull together the history of the early years of the Club. This might be the last opportunity to address it using first hand material from those who still remember the early days. It is not Sheilah's way just to sit back and hope this would happen. She set to, accumulating early copies of the Club's magazines, trawled through committee meeting minutes and event regulations and other sources to assemble a comprehensive and organised record of the Club's birth and progress through the decades.

It seemed to me that such dedication deserved a wider audience and I proposed that a book should be written capturing factual account, reminiscence and those very valuable anecdotes, all in a readable form. We put together a wish list of topics, together with the names of possible contributors, letters of invitation were sent out and this book is the result. It has been written entirely by the Club members who contributed to making it one of the most innovative motor clubs of its era. We were extremely fortunate still to have three of our founder members, Charles Bulmer, Joe Lowrey and Bob Newton and even more so that the former two spent a large part of their careers in motoring journalism and were well able to record lucidly their recollections of those very important early years. John Higginson too, stimulated by Sheilah's records, was able to recall in remarkable detail much that happened in the early decades of the Club's events. Sadly, John lost his battle with cancer only a couple of weeks after this book was first published.

Another founder member, veterinary surgeon the late Holly Birkett, was one of the most influential people associated with motorsport in immediate post war Britain and his innovative ideas have stood the test of time to form the foundations of much of today's club based motor sport. Such people were key to the Club's early ability to develop new concepts, a talent which was highlighted by the late A F Rivers Fletcher who described the H&B in one of his books as '*a very special club run by knowledgeable enthusiasts*'.

We are most grateful to Bill Boddy MBE, long term editor of *Motor Sport* and Honorary H&B member, for agreeing to write the Foreword. In the Club's early post war years both he and Denis Jenkinson (Jenks) were significant contributors to its success. At that time both were working at the Royal Aircraft Establishment in Farnborough, from where so many of the Club's members came in those early days.

Finally, a word of thanks to Robin Birchall, our current *Sidelights* editor, who was persuaded to take on the editing of this volume. His task of producing a coherent and readable narrative from the varied and often disparate contributions would, however, have been immensely more difficult, even impossible within the planned timescale, without the willing help and guidance of Charles Bulmer. To Charles alone goes the credit of welding together the complex story of the Economy Runs but he has also spent many hours acting as sub-editor for the remaining chapters. Thank you Charles.

We are aware that there will be many who read this book and protest "But what about so-and-so ..?" Unfortunately it has just not been possible to cover more than the important or unusual threads. Nevertheless I hope that the accounts which follow will bring back many memories for those who have been associated with this great Club and provide an absorbing insight for others into the antecedents and traditions of the Hants & Berks Motor Club.

Bill Bonney

Honorary Club Secretary

February 2006

Founding Fathers

How the Club started and how Hants met Berks

Charles Bulmer

This is my recollection of how and why H&B came to exist – it has to be a personal account because there are very few of us left to share their memories of what happened 60 years ago. For me it started in my final year at university where the future pattern of my motoring life was about to be determined by none other than CP Snow. He was then the special wartime Civil Service Commissioner whose job it was to interview all new scientific and technical graduates and direct them into the forces or into research, taking into account the results of their finals and where they were most needed at this stage of the war.

So, on January 1, 1944, I was told to present myself at the Engine Department of the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) Farnborough to that famous negative g carburettor expert (and Brooklands Gold Star motorcyclist), Beatrice Shilling. She was actually Mrs George Naylor and both she and George were to become H&B members later. At lunchtime I went to the RAE canteen and found myself standing in a queue immediately behind a very small man with a very powerful voice who was saying that the only car that any right-minded person could possibly have was a Frazer Nash. I thought this was a bit dogmatic and said so. He was, of course, a clean-shaven and, at that time far from famous, early prototype of Denis Jenkinson (Jenks) who had arrived there about two years earlier from the Regent Street Polytechnic, in company with Bob Newton who was now also working for Miss Shilling.

In the course of the first few days I met Philip Bateman and Tom Bowling (both of whom I already knew slightly from university), Bill Arklay, who also worked for Miss Shilling and Joe Lowrey, a member of the engine flight test section, who was in the unbelievably enviable position of owning an HRG, bought just before the war, and being allowed petrol to exercise it occasionally on journeys of national importance, some as far away as Cornwall.

Anybody who has never experienced it can have little idea of just how intense the pressure of motoring enthusiasm can become amongst a group of young engineers and scientists after five years of total deprivation. Very soon we started to meet periodically at the Ship Inn, Farnborough, conveniently opposite the Farnborough Grange Hostel where some of us were billeted from time to time in considerable squalor. Most of us were motorcyclists either by inclination or because we were not then old and rich enough to have graduated to anything more expensive.

Most people attended these evenings on foot or bicycle except, of course, Jenks who had somehow become a Home Guard dispatch rider with a khaki 16H Norton, a khaki uniform and mysterious duties that took him past the Ship at appropriate times. Also there was Norman Sharp who lived near Woking and had an official petrol ration for commuting to work on two wheels; on a quiet night we could audibly track his unsilenced two-stroke Scott most of the way home from the pub. Bill Arklay was another Scott enthusiast and so was Arthur Fogg who, I believe, is now Chairman of the Scott Owners Club.

Jack Ballett, from RAE Materials Department, was at this time primarily interested in motorcycle trials riding which he had started before the war. There were many others but not all of this Ship group became significant in H&B history because some, when they were released from RAE after VJ day, returned to the North or other distant places whence they came.

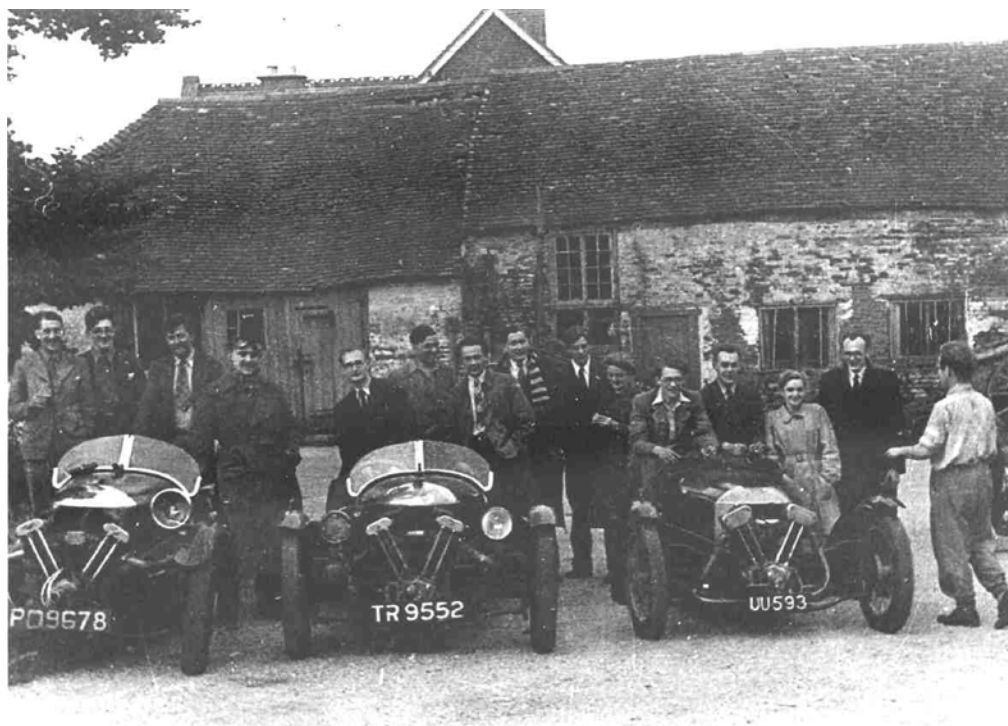
For me the next thread in this story was about to unravel. I must have gained the rigorous Jenkinson seal of approval because he suddenly announced, one day in summer 1944, that he was taking me to see his friend Holland Birkett, the local vet at Fleet. So we set off on our bicycles by the direct route across Fleet Pond, which had been drained to confuse enemy

navigators, arriving at 3 Pondtail Road at a serendipitous moment. Holly, a pre-war founder member of the 750 Motor Club, had been passing through a period of emotional stress following the premature death of his first wife which had caused him, Jenks explained, to diversify from Austin 7s into Bugattis as well. I didn't entirely follow this psychological insight and I suspected the change was also connected with the subsequent arrival of Joan Passini (later Joan Birkett) as his housekeeper. Before the war she had been married to John Passini who ran the famous garage at the Phoenix in Hartley Wintney whilst Tim and Fee Carson ran the pub. Fee and Joan were sisters and after the war Tim became the very successful and long serving Secretary of the VSCC. You can see how rapidly the network was extending.

Returning to 1944, I think that Joan had brought with her a large dowry of Bugatti components, or the knowledge of where to find them, and they were now housed in the dog kennels and securely guarded by displaced and disgruntled Alsatians. However, the Bugatti we found Holly working on that day had a quite different provenance; it was a Type 46 with a crude pick-up body which had done distinguished wartime service as a Home Guard roadblock until it was demobbed and Holly bought it from

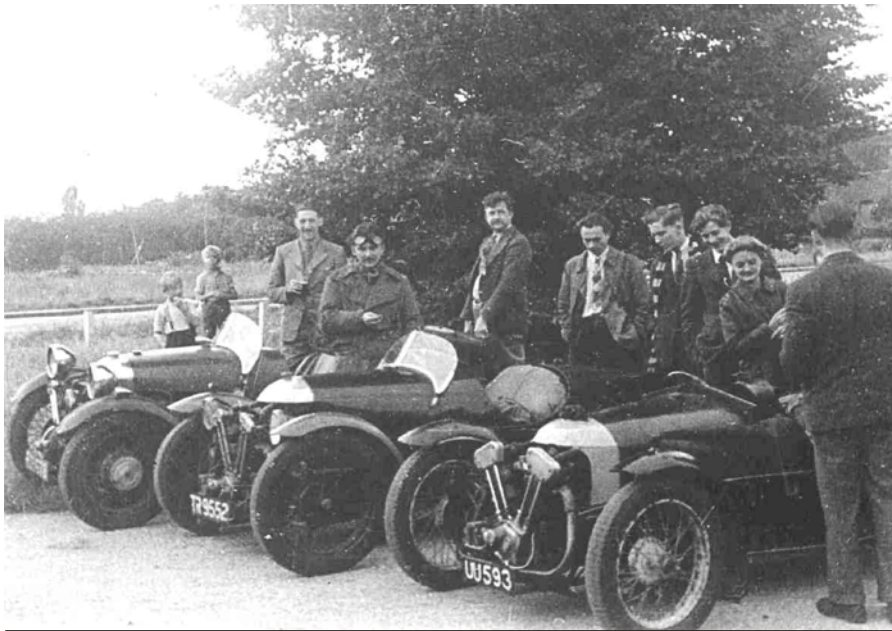
a car breaker for a fiver or so. Now, fully fuelled with surplus petrol from a local Canadian Army unit (it was delivered in 50 gallon drums), he was trying to start it for the first time in many years when a kindly Providence suddenly provided him with Jenks and me.

"We'll all push," he said, "then I'll jump in and knock it into gear - if it fires I can't stop because the clutch has seized - you'll just have to try and jump in the back." It did fire and we were off, 5 litres of straight 8 Bugatti engine at full throttle propelling a chassis with a very light body, unregistered, untaxed, uninsured, practically brakeless, totally illegal and extremely exhilarating. After a few miles Holly decided that we must show it to "the Bod" who lived only a few yards from Pondtail in Wood Lane and whose day job at that time was writing aircraft handbooks for the Ministry of Aircraft Production when he wasn't raising national morale by almost single-handedly keeping *Motor Sport* alive throughout the war. So that was my introduction to Bill Boddy, who later gave the Club so much valuable publicity and support, and to the stimulating and wildly unpredictable Pondtail world which, in the next few years, was to become a focus of post-war motoring life in the south of England and a major factor in H&B development.



The gathering at the Phoenix. L to R Bert Fountain, David Hull, Gerry Browne, Barney Cook, Philip Bateman, Anon, Anon, Anon, Arthur Fogg, Barney Cook's girlfriend, Bob Newton, Charles Bulmer, Nellie Arklay, Bill Arklay, Denis Jenkinson.

Most of us were working on some vehicle while we waited for petrol to reappear. At weekends and holidays I was doing a major body-off overhaul of a Riley Gamecock at my parents' home in Cheshunt and Bob Newton was doing the same with a Singer Le Mans in Barnet. My search for spares and tuning parts brought me into contact with Davidge Pitts, a well-known Riley



Another view at the Phoenix, Morgans are those of Bateman, Lowrey and Newton/Bulmer. Beyond lies the verge on which Jenks's ashes lie scattered

afield – we had got as far as the Crown and Cushion at Minley on bicycles but with petrol we could reach the Phoenix at Hartley Wintney, revered as the pre-war spiritual home of the Vintage Sports Car Club. And that is how we all came to be photographed there one day in June 1945 with three Morgans and numerous motorcycles.

What this doesn't explain is the presence, on the left hand side of the picture, of Bert Fountain and Gerry Browne. It appeared that they were out and about on vital wartime business

guru who lived in Hartley Wintney.

But when the announcement finally came that a basic ration would be restored in June 1945, for motorcycles and non-reversible tricycles only, neither of us was ready. Bob and I made haste to the Station Hotel in Farnborough behind which was a row of lock-ups, two of which Jenks had filled to the roof with bits of motorcycles, cars and three-wheelers. He unhooked a bare Morgan chassis from the wall, found some suspension parts, wheels and brakes and rummaged under a vast pile in search of an oh water-cooled V twin JAP engine. That lot, he claimed, constituted an extremely fast 1929 low chassis Super Sports Morgan with competition ancestry – £25, buyer assembles.

It was certainly terrifyingly fast when we eventually got it to go, a process greatly aided by a huge and very knowledgeable Army Sergeant who materialised mysteriously on a motorcycle and sidecar at critical moments when we got stuck. He explained that, because a V twin had unequal firing intervals, it was essential to time the ignition on the correct cylinder. We hadn't thought of that, being used only to singles and fours.

Meanwhile, Joe Lowrey and Philip Bateman had bought more civilised ready made Morgans and very soon the Ship Inn group decided that we could now venture further

on behalf of their employers, the signalling department of the GWR in Reading, and had unexpectedly found this hallowed pub yard full of interesting machinery. Hiding their car discreetly round the back, they joined us. That was how Hants was first linked to Berks and the second link followed shortly.

Most of the Farnborough contingent flowed continually through the premises of Jim Petty in Cove, an amiable, skilled (and very cheap) welder and paint sprayer who was also the father of Ray Petty who worked for the famous Norton tuning specialist Francis Beart. A few years later Ray was to become the foremost Norton tuner for the 500 cc racing car movement.



The Jenkinson lock up whence came the Newton/Bulmer Morgan

Jim was a friend of Eversley *garagiste* Harry Hopkinson (father of Molly Tapp), who was building a Ford Ten special, and they used to enjoy a pint together at the nearby New Inn (now the Tally Ho) at the end of a hard day's welding. When, in August 1945, a basic petrol ration was restored for four wheelers, as well as two, Harry thought it would be a good idea to form a local motor club. Jim said he would float the idea among his Farnborough customers and Harry knew a few people in the Reading direction who might be interested because their own Reading-based Sporting Owner Drivers Club (SODC) was showing no sign of post-war revival.

So it was that on a very cold night in December 1945 Jenks and I drove to the New Inn in his TT Replica Frazer Nash to talk this over with Harry. We were not wildly enthusiastic – we had very little spare time, very little petrol and the 750 MC, the VSCC and the Bugatti OC were beginning to revive even if few others were. However, we agreed that we would invite everybody we knew who might be interested to a further meeting at the New Inn on 10 January, 1946 to see if there was much support.

About 20 to 30 people attended and by closing time it had become clear that there was support but nothing else had actually been decided. So yet another meeting was arranged on 25 January when Harry Hopkinson became Chairman and Philip Hayden and his fiancée Sheila Benke, from Hartley Wintney, volunteered as joint Secretariat. Bert Fountain, who had a Le Mans Aston Martin, was thought to be the only person rich enough to be trusted with money so he was made Treasurer, a position that he was to retain for very many years. There was no Committee because the intention was to hold open meetings once a fortnight at which everyone could express their opinions. Since most of the members came from Farnborough, Reading or Hartley Wintney and the New Inn was right on the Hants/Berks border the club name needed little thought.

The biggest argument was about the annual subscription. A figure of seven and sixpence was finally agreed by everybody but Jenks who considered this quite outrageous – it would buy, he pointed out, a month's ration of petrol. So he never joined the Club even though, for the rest

of his life, he behaved like a member and attended any of our events which interested him.

His opposition was led by Bert Fountain who thought this was much too cheap and would let in the *hoi polloi* – like Jenks, for example. Elegant, distinguished and immaculate in appearance, Bert always had an expensive car, a different one almost every time you saw him, to which the same adjectives applied as indeed they did to his constant companion of early years, Joan Cooper. Joan worked in a secretarial capacity at the GWR and not only had access to, but was able and willing to use, all the ultra-modern communication tools of the day like typewriters, duplicating machines and addressographs which were a mystery to the rest of us. She rapidly became producer and circulator of the Bulletin, of regulations for events and of results sheets. She became invaluable to the Committee in general and Bert in particular as Treasurer; later on she also designed the club badge.

Because of his initials (AHS) Holly couldn't resist introducing Bert very solemnly as Albert Herbert Sherbert Fountain which didn't please him. He looked the sort of person who would never in any circumstances touch a spanner whereas, in fact, he was a brilliant practical engineer who spent much of his spare time modifying his cars, remanufacturing ferrous bits in polished light alloy, making new steering wheels and generally perfecting them, after which he would lose interest and start on the next car. He seldom wore working clothes, remaining mysteriously immune to dust, dirt and grease. I remember one occasion, many years later after he was married, when he returned home from an upstage social function in evening dress and, without bothering to change, finished wallpapering the room he had started earlier in the day.

That meeting on 25 January, 1946 marked the end of the beginning – the Club was now launched with a rather tentative Committee of volunteers and a bank balance of about £10. The most creative members and those with organising ideas, energy and ability were still standing on the sidelines wondering if the Club was necessary at all. This was very soon to change.

Charles Bulmer

The early club years

Seven years of remarkable growth after a faltering start

Charles Bulmer

There may be an impression that we started H&B because so little was happening in the motoring world at the beginning of 1946 that we all needed something to do. In fact many of us were extremely busy with major overhauls or building specials for trials or racing. There had already been some large gatherings like the Cockfosters Sprint in July 1945, it was known that there would be full programmes at both Prescott and Shelsley in 1946, the Bristol MC was active and the VSCC and the 750 MC were coming to life. The VSCC held a trial at Marlow on 3 February, 1946, was planning a quarter mile sprint at Elstree on Easter Monday and would be involved in the first post-war circuit race meeting organised by the CUAC at Gransden Lodge airfield on 15 June.

So things were happening but they were not local and perhaps they were too formal for young people who were thinking of competing for the first time and who didn't have specialised cars. Harry Hopkinson wanted to find a nearby sprint venue whereas Joe Lowrey and Jack Ballett were fascinated by maps and spent their spare time exploring the local countryside on motorcycles. In a remarkably short time these two came up with a route, regulations, an RAC permit and enough marshals to run the first H&B event on 9 March, the Blackwater trial, starting from the Ely Hotel near Blackbushe. It was a great success and earned a half page report in *Motor Sport* which described it as the first post-war reliability trial to be held south of the Thames. Joe Lowrey will say more about this and subsequent Blackwaters.

Again it was Joe and Jack Ballett who plotted the

route for the second event, a treasure hunt starting at the New Inn on 27 April of which we remember very little. Strangely enough a copy of the route card turned up recently but nobody has yet been able to follow it. I recall retiring after the first mile with a mechanical problem and limping straight to the finish without visiting any controls. This turned out to be a brilliant strategy because we scored nothing whereas most people accumulated large negative marks due to heavy penalties.

But it wasn't only the marking system that was peculiar. Accusations of cheating were made afterwards (cheating hadn't yet been approved for H&B events) and for this and other reasons there was so much discontent that an Extraordinary Meeting was demanded and was held at the New Inn on 10 May. Of the previous officers only Bert Fountain survived as Treasurer, the older and more experienced Davidge Pitts became Chairman, I was elected Secretary and, for the first time, we had a Committee comprising Jack Ballett, Harry Hopkinson, Joe Lowrey and Sheila Benke (who was to retire within three months because of her impending marriage).



Winter 1945/46. Any excuse to go motoring - inspecting the prewar sprint course at Lewes. Holly Birkett's newly finished trials car, Jenks's Frazer Nash and Bob Newton's Singer. Arthur Fogg standing in start line position.



New Inn, March 1950. R to L, Colin Chapman, Hazle Logsdon (m. Ron Willis), Catherine Luff (m. Philip Bateman), Heather Logsdon (m. Charles Bulmer), Hazel Williams (m. Colin Chapman). The car is Colin's first Austin 7 special built from surplus stock after the collapse of his second hand car business

Both Harry Hopkinson and Jenks picked up the gymkhana baton in later years with driving tests at California-in-England, barrack squares in Cove and at Blackbushe.

Jack seemed to play a vital role in all these early events. He wasn't a particularly enthusiastic or knowledgeable motorist but he had a great flair for detailed organisation and a good-tempered determination and ability to get things done properly without upsetting the people who were supposed to be doing them.

Holly Birkett was a surprising absentee from this list because at this time his allegiance was still primarily to the 750 MC which he, together with Arthur Mallock and Bill Boddy, had been trying to galvanise into post-war activity during the first half of 1945. At the end of July he was elected its Club Captain and Bulletin Editor. He was also developing his 750 trials special - a very softly suspended cross country device with swing axle front suspension - maintaining the 2 litre Type 30 Bugatti which was his normal transport, building a Type 38 to replace it, preparing the 5 litre Type 46, mentioned in the previous chapter, to race at Gransden Lodge and starting to build his 3 litre Type 44. On top of all this he was organising the first 750 MC Aldershot Trial for 7 April, 1946, an event which started at The Foresters in Church Crookham and which always drew so heavily on H&B for entries, marshals and spectators that we took it over completely in 1949. This was enough even for him.

The first event after the EGM was a Gymkhana on 2 June, 1946, organised by Jack Ballett on golf club land, soon to be absorbed by the MoD, to the south of the Farnborough-to-Fleet railway line and finishing at the Swan in Hartley Row.

Meanwhile Harry Hopkinson was persuading the owner of West Court, a large estate just up the road from his Eversley garage, to allow us to use its drive (or rather linked front and back drives) for our first sprint, a task complicated by the fact that the property was sold in the middle of these negotiations and the new owner had to be persuaded to honour the deal. It wasn't ideal because the finishing straight of the quarter-mile course emerged on to the A327 and the RAC wisely demanded a large tree trunk across it, 80



1952 Driving Tests at California-in-England
Gordon Madgwick, Austin Ten

yards from the end, to stop those whose enthusiasm might outrun their brakes.

The energetic Jack Ballett became Secretary of the Meeting, Davidge Pitts, who had some pre-war competition experience, Clerk of the Course and a large number of us (membership was now approaching 100) were involved in the preparations, of which the most difficult and potentially expensive part was devising a timing system – you couldn't see the finish from the start so simple flag-waving was out. Philip Bateman "borrowed" a very expensive and highly accurate electrically triggered Venner time clock from its Farnborough laboratory and somebody else knocked up a simple starting shoe with its contacts protected by a length of red inner tube.

But how were we to know when the cars crossed the finish? This turned out to be a simple everyday problem for railway signalling folk and Bert and Gerry Browne (both of whom were also competing) turned up during preparation with miles of electrical cable and a rather vicious spring-loaded switch which was held open by a length of cotton stretched across the finishing line. So, for the price of a reel of cotton – which we could just afford – we had an accurate and quite sophisticated system which, with a few improvements, was later used for several years at Great Auclum until Ray Kingdon built an even better electronic device.

West Court, on 15 September 1946, was a most successful event, as *Motor Sport* said in its two-page report, and received a glowing review from Sir Algernon Guinness, the RAC Steward, which was critical to our future since we were still a new and totally unknown club (Sir Algernon later became a Vice-President). The size and quality of the field was astonishing bearing in mind that it was open only to H&B and the invited VSCC - the 86 entrants included people like Oscar Moore, Sidney Allard, Ken Wharton, Jack Fairman and Roy Salvadori (who made FTD), bringing with them cars up to ERA and Alta grade. We didn't appreciate the significance of this at the time but Eric Brandon and John Cooper brought the very first Cooper 500 and finished first and second in the 1100 cc racing class, ahead of Bert Fountain in his supercharged Q Type MG. Unfortunately the new owner was going to convert West Court into a country club so we couldn't use it again.

All the events so far had followed traditional patterns but something entirely different was about to happen and it was Holly's brainchild. His Austin 7 trials special was also his veterinary practice car and, when visiting some remote house or farm, it was his custom to sling his bag in the passenger seat, load Rex, his large Alsatian, into the stern sheets of the rudimentary open body and examine what in those days was OS Sheet 169. He would then set sail by the most direct route, across fields, hedges and ditches. Rex was not only a skilled, athletic passenger but could also round up any escaping patients on arrival or, with smaller animals, subdue them with a stern look as effective as an anaesthetic.

Thus Holly became familiar with many strange topographical or historical features that few motorists had ever seen before and began to conceive the idea of an event with no fixed route but with fixed points that could only be found (or approached) by skilled reading of an Ordnance Survey map. This may not sound unusual now, but very few people were then familiar with such maps or knew what six-figure references were and whether you should put



1946 The West Court Sprint David Greig in his Frazer Nash

The early club years

Eastings before Northings or vice versa. Holly wrote his own slightly unusual press release and this is how it appeared in *Motor Sport* for December 1946:

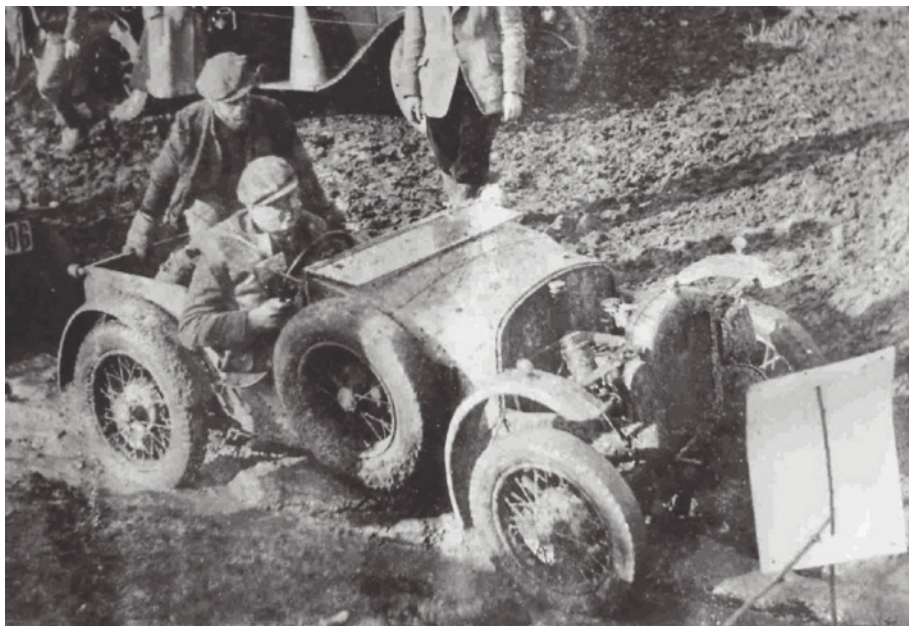
"Knowe ye, alle Charioteerf, ye Automobile Clubbe of Countief of Hampshire and Berkfhire, will, upon the nichte of January 4th, hold a mighty Trial or Tribulatioun, the lyke of never by manne beholden. By invitatioun, ye humble memberf of ye Vintage Sportef Carre Clubbe, ye DCCL Motore Clubbe, ye Motore Clubbe of Southfea, and even ye Sporting Owner-Charioteerf Clubbe may pitt themselves agaynst ye High-born.

The route of ye Tribulatioun will be longe, yea and arduous, to be found only by much skille in the ufe of ye charts of Hif Magefty'f Surveyorf of Ordnance. Withall, ye Sectiounf will be paffable to any Gentilman'f Carriage with but a reaonable clearance from ye Earthe. Ye checke pointf will be situate in diverf strange and eerie placef; ye caftle of King Johnn, may ye Lord preserve hif Soul, ye Railway Statioun, vifited by no mortal traine these twenty yearf, ye Roman bastioun and many another spot on blajted heath and in witch's ride.

Yet, ere the crackynge of ye Dawn will be held a great Feaft with much fryng of Saufagef and drinkynge of Tea befide ye Casket of Meade upon ye House.

Thofe who would motore away into ye Nichte, then, to teft their courage and skille in this great Tribulatioun, may send documentf to Squire Birkett, Bridge of Pondtail, in the Toun of Fleet, set in ye county of Hampshire. Praife ye Lord."

There were 46 entries including many well-known rally and racing drivers like Ken Wharton and Eric Brandon (who won) and, as was anticipated with an event so novel, the



Holland Birkett's vet's transport doing what it was designed for - mud-plugging. Jenks, with nascent beard, plays pillion

confusion was immense lasting right through the night and well into the following morning. Many attempted extraordinary routes and got bogged-down in muddy lanes or chose, for reasons unknown, to approach points like the disused Herriard railway station along its disused railway line instead of by the perfectly normal public road alongside it. The theatrical presentation of the points contributed greatly to what became a cult event that was widely copied. In future years it was to become so popular that competitors had to qualify to enter and it was re-branded as the Experts Night Trial.

Some credit for this must go to Michael Burn who had now taken up residence at Pondtail Road and was providing ideas as well as organising the veterinary accounts (someone had to). Michael was driven by the ambition to retire at 40 (which he did) so he had a lot to fit into a short period. At this time he was working on the Festival of Britain organisation but later, after a spell in Rhodesia, he became Sales Manager for Porsche at AFN, then Sales Director of SAAB (GB) and also a successful competition driver, at first with Bill Arklay's Frazer Nash and later with the RGS Atalanta-Jaguar.

So, at the end of the first 12 months of the Club's activities, it had grown to a membership of about 150, had elected an organising committee, mastered the arcane RAC Competition Regulations, run a trial, a treasure hunt, a gymkhana, an important sprint and a trend-

setting night navigation event as well as dealing with all the less glamorous tasks of issuing bulletins, reports and minutes, starting a bank account and beginning work on the Club rules and badge.

The first proper AGM was held at the New Inn on 28 February, 1947. In addition to those already serving, Holly Birkett became Press Secretary, Joan Cooper Social Secretary and the committee was enlarged by the addition of Jimmy Arklay, Gerry Browne and Derek Buckler, a friend of Harry's who was then busy building the prototype Buckler at his engineering works in Caversham.

Our problem now was how to replace West Court and Harry Hopkinson suggested that we might try for Great Auclum which had twice been used for sprints just before the war. This was the private estate of Neil Gardiner, a Director of the Huntley and Palmer Companies, who had competed before the war at Brooklands. He was so enamoured of this experience that he had his drive built with banked corners on which he could and did terrify his guests. It turned out that he was willing to lend us this drive and his adjoining fields, for paddock, car parking and spectator accommodation, on certain conditions.

If it were to be inspected now by the relevant safety authorities I think they would be horrified but in 1947 the RAC was more tolerant. It was Neil Gardiner who insisted that his trees, which lined the twisty course, should be protected

The Club Badge

When H&B was founded, various people felt that a proper motor club needed a proper badge. The natural thing for a club founded right beside the County boundary at Eversley seemed to be to display the heraldic emblems of the two counties. It was, I think, the late Bert Fountain, our Treasurer for many years, who knew a badge maker in Reading and a few car-sized prototypes in black and brass were duly engraved.

There are ancient legal rights to coats of arms, so their owners were duly approached. Alas, whilst one County Council agreed to our design, the other (I think Hants) said a firm NO. The first design had to be changed, with the two county badges replaced by sketches of Winchester Cathedral symbolising Hampshire and Windsor Castle, symbolising Berks, possibly based on designs used by GWR. Thus our enduring badge design was born. JL

from the competitors (rather than the other way round) with straw bales and his greenhouses – in the run-off area from the last corner – with railway sleepers. All this was very sensible but it meant that preparations and reparations always involved our evenings and weekends for over a fortnight.

As time went by these nightly preparation parties became a more and more enjoyable part of the social scene, finishing after dark at the local pub, and of course they depended heavily on local

members, their knowledge, their facilities and their scrounging abilities. Bert Fountain succeeded Jack Ballett as Clerk of the Course in 1948 and continued as this or Secretary of the Meeting for 18 years. Later he was succeeded by Douglas Johns, Jimmy Hogg and Sam Moore. Derek Buckler lent his breakdown wagon and people like Jim Fisher and Charles Lambton lent their tractors. One of my abiding memories is of Sam Moore in perpetual



The downhill start at Great Auclum. Malcolm Chamberlain with the West Court hockey stick timing trigger. RRC Palmer - FN

The early club years

motion on his tractor with a trailerload of large rectangular straw bales.

Less acceptable was Neil's demand that, on the day, the local Conservative candidate should address the assembled multitude for 20 minutes through Antone's PA system. Fortunately this proved self-defeating since after 30 minutes the crowd made it quite clear that the speaker was now the last man they would consider voting for. Great Auclum became our most important event for several years as described in the next chapter.

By this time a pattern of events had been established and the Club organisation was running smoothly. But there were setbacks in store - on November 30, 1947 the basic petrol ration was withdrawn again causing the cancellation of the 1947 night trial and its replacement on 5 October by a point-to-point starting at The Venture on the Basingstoke bypass. Also, during the course of 1947, we lost two Chairmen - Davidge Pitts moved to Warwick and then Group Captain Leathart was posted to Scotland. At the end of 1947 Michael Burn became the Bulletin editor and Holly Birkett became Chairman, where he was to remain for many years.

I won't attempt to cover the next few years in detail but there are still a few significant people

and events to introduce. After petrol returned again in June 1948, Barclay Inglis began his competition career very dramatically in the Night Trial of that year. Although normally an extremely intelligent Scottish accountant, he suffered a strange compulsion to demonstrate motoring enthusiasm by driving his Allard with the windscreen flat and without aero screens. Consequently, neither he nor his navigator could see where they were or where they were going which is presumably why they elected to approach their second point by a trackless route which necessitated crossing an electric railway embankment and a canal. Had they ever reached the point they could have left by the main road, which ran conveniently within a few yards.

The news that they were embedded to the axles reached headquarters at 7 am, just as we were going to bed. Rescue operations took several days on and off and we decided that it would be safer to invite him to join the Committee and help on the organising side, which indeed proved to be his forte.

For a long time we had all been trying to think of a way to promote circuit racing for people who couldn't really afford it and who belonged to clubs which couldn't afford to hire circuits - people like us. Early in 1949 Holly and I spent a day at Silverstone by private arrangement - things were less formal then - looking at various possible circuits and driving several cars, including Spen King's single-seater Rover Special in its early four-cylinder form. Then in July we both competed in the VSCC closed meeting at Silverstone with great enjoyment and all this increased our determination to find a solution. At the time a club with a closed invitation permit could invite up to seven others to its event but this still meant that the task of organising, marshalling and financing it fell on just one of them and so did any potential loss. Could the RAC be persuaded to allow all eight to share the burden?

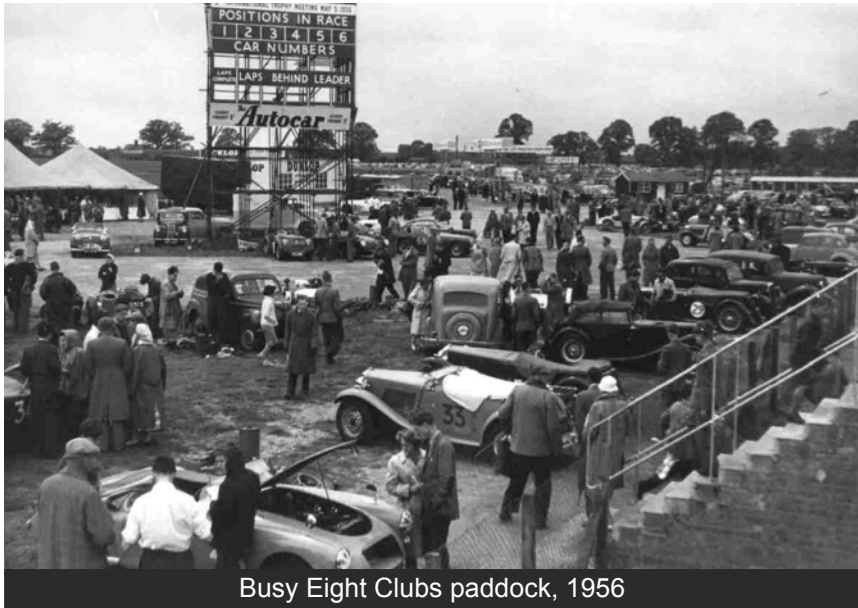
But before we asked we had to find seven other suitable clubs.



1951 Barclay Inglis, still seeking muddy lanes, this time on the Blackwater Trial

The 750 MC, of which Holly was also Chairman, was a certainty. Many of its members were desperate to race and they were also looking for a home for 750 Formula racing (Holly's formula for cheap home-built Austin 7-based cars). The

argument the final and very simple format of the 6-Hour Team Relay Race was settled by the end of that evening although, in the end, it was the 750 MC and not H&B which decided to sponsor it in 1951.



Busy Eight Clubs paddock, 1956

Much the same happened with 1172 racing. We now had a number of members, including Holly, Derek Buckler, Geoff Tapp and David Small who realised that it was much cheaper to abuse Ford 10 rather than Austin 7 components. The 1172 Formula was actually proposed (in the columns of *Autosport*) by H&B but adopted by 750MC. Strictly speaking these examples may not be part of our history but without us they would probably never have happened and our members were very heavily involved in

Lancia Club was run by Julian Jane who was also an H&B Committee member and Barclay Inglis had strong connections with the AC and Lagonda clubs. That left three vacancies which were soon filled by Cemian, Chiltern and Harrow, all of whom were essentially trials clubs but they were reasonably local and their officials were well known to us because trials had been our principal activity in winter for the last three years. All of them, we found, would be prepared to contribute working capital of £20 each and it only remained for Holly, at his most persuasive, to sell the idea to the RAC Competitions Department at their annual meeting of motor clubs in November 1949 - until then the concept of co-promotion had never evolved. We soon received approval and booked Silverstone in July 1950 for the first of the very long series of events described in the chapter devoted to Eight Clubs.

As I recall, the usual Pondtail kitchen table cabinet was in session a few months later - Holly, Michael Burn, Jack French, Jenks, Bill Boddy and probably Arthur Mallock - when someone complained that we now had club level sprints and short races but no long ones. Where was the poor man's Le Mans? Where were the poor men who could afford to race for 24 hours, someone asked, even one hour would stretch their resources. Pursuing the logic of this

their organisation.

By this time Heather and I were just about to get married, we were looking for somewhere to live and I was also increasingly busy with handicapping and several other projects. So after seven years as Secretary I asked to be released and Joan and Douglas Johns (who had joined the Committee the previous year) started their long and very successful stint. That is a good reason for me to end this account in 1953 but also, in retrospect, I think it was a time of change. The earlier emphasis on car technicalities and speed events was shifting towards navigation and rallying. Joe Lowrey, assisted by Michael Burn and then by Douglas Johns, had already devised and run three Versatility Trials (1951 - 1953), an ingenious combination of the two that Joe will describe separately, but they were not supported well enough and were replaced by the Riverside Rally in 1954.

Of the events still to come by far the most important turned out to be the Mobil Economy Run. In 1953 we didn't anticipate that we would soon be involved in this major event to which the talents of our members were so remarkably adapted.

Charles Bulmer

The Blackwater Trials - wallowing in mud

Joe Lowrey

When this club was founded in 1946 it seemed natural to stage events like those which clubs had run before World War 2. Early in 1939 I had driven a quite unsuitable Singer 9 tourer in the MCC London to Exeter Trial so, on the basis of that slight experience, I offered to try to run a "mud-plugging" trial locally. With the aid of my featherweight Royal Enfield motorcycle, sometimes running on alcohol, I hastily did some local exploring for "observed sections" around the valley of the little River Blackwater.



1953 George Robins, Vauxhall Wyvern, 2nd in class

What did Dr Johnson say about a dog which walked on its hind legs? Our event was perhaps not very good but it happened. It started from the Ely and finished near Wokingham after 25

miles in rather flat country never previously noted as a trials district. I recall two very muddy green lanes near Farley Hill and Bearswood; a watersplash where the Blackwater has long since been bridged; a gravel lane near Sandhurst Church on which restarting at the steepest point was fairly difficult; a very steep bank near the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, on the edge of Hazeley Heath, which is now entirely covered by quite mature trees.



1953 David Small, Jowett Spl

The event proved worthy of repetition, going slightly further afield into hillier and less populous Hampshire as petrol became less scarce. It was aimed at normal sporting cars, trials specials being very rare in early post-war years, and indeed that first event was won by John Panton's open Lea Francis (one of only two cars with a clean sheet) with a Riley 9 heading the other (saloon) class.

Crisis arrived when a left wing government decided that post-war Britain could not afford to let "rich folk" motor for pleasure. They completely removed our basic petrol ration,



The Lincoln mystery

In 1951 there was a section called Dippenup, sufficiently descriptive. An improbable equipe amongst the 35 entries was (later) works Lotus driver Mike Anthony's Lincoln Royal limousine, complete with vast crew (at least nine) and "furniture". This behemoth found the section too much for it and sank with all hands. Marshals and crew struggled to free it but without success. How was it, then, that someone was later able to drive it out of its predicament and to the top of the hill just as the rescue tractor arrived, complete with plough?

RMB



1947 Blackwater, Bill Arklay's much campaigned Standard Avon Coupé

difficulty wasn't to keep moving but to remain astride the bicycle right to the finish line.

As a small friendly event for Club members it kept going for about a decade with a number of different organisers, including Philip Bateman, Derek Buckler and Morin Ness, but eventually other sorts of motoring competition began to be more popular with our members and, with some regret, the Club's oldest established event was allowed to lapse. Events needing subtly clever use of Ordnance Survey maps and interpretation of cryptic clues to discover scenic checkpoints

prohibiting any non-essential motoring, but we kept the Blackwater Trial series intact with an event for pedal cycles on Yately Common. Some observed sections amidst abandoned gravel diggings were so steeply downhill that the

became our (initially unique) speciality, enduring for many more years.

The Versatility Trials - a three pronged attack

Joe Lowrey

This club has always done far more than its share of innovation, often with considerable success. Nobody can win every time so let's now record an interesting failure.

As a young man I expected my sports cars to be versatile, my 1100 HRG and Morgan Plus Four providing good everyday transport as well as being entered for assorted competitions. In 1951 I reckoned that there was need for a new event aimed at motoring's "Jack of all trades but not quite master of any". It was aimed at really useful cars, not the freaks built for special sorts of competition.

The committee let me attempt a three-part, one-day event. First of all competitors were to be let loose on a road racing circuit to see how quick they were. Then they were sent around a trials route, with no permitted reduction in tyre pressures to enhance traction. And thirdly, a small panel of judges awarded points for their "amenities" so that spacious and comfortable



1952 The Lovells make it a family outing

models might catch up on ultra-light two-seaters with no doors.

Vital to the first event in April 1951 was the co-operation of the Bristol Motor Club who were the lucky tenants of the Castle Combe airfield circuit. There were 34 starters and we timed them for three laps. We plotted our own trials route in the Wiltshire Downs area, finishing at



1953 The sprint at Ibsley. JD Ackerman leads one of several MGs

performance of the day, conscripting husband Douglas and daughter Maureen as competitors with the family fleet of HRG, Jaguar and Ford Popular.

For the third and final year we moved to Ibsley airfield where the West Hants and Dorset Car Club kindly added an extra morning to their year's racing programme just for us. With some further help from their local knowledge, we plotted an afternoon trials route in countryside unfamiliar to us

Marlborough. Two odd incidents linger in the memory. We took the army officer in charge of local military training areas out for a good lunch in Amesbury and he gave us permission to mark out observed sections in a particular hillside field. Checking possibilities on a Sunday afternoon, I knocked the drain plug out of my Jowett Javelin's sump, fettling a wooden bung as a get-you-home substitute and buying cans of oil to make up for leakage. To our surprise we got back to Farnborough with the dipstick still showing full, the fume-consuming breather presumably having sucked dirty air in past our leaky bung, rather than letting oil leak out.

around the fringes of the New Forest. But there were only 19 starters.

We surrendered. Most potentially successful entrants seemed to decide that there was one section of the event which they couldn't hope to win, forgetting that nobody else was any more likely to be best in every discipline. A bigger club with resources for publicity might, we thought, have built up the event, maybe into a real revival of the once-important RAC Tourist Trophy. We didn't regret having had a go but, for this Club's modest resources, there seemed to be more rewarding uses.

Joe Lowrey

And then, on the day, when half the cars had completed the observed sections, a puzzled farmer arrived to point out that the army had de-requisitioned his grassy hillside land about two years previously. He was terribly nice about letting us finish what we had been doing as trespassers and a modest thank you gift was well deserved.

Alas, the first-year entry was excellently varied but less numerous than we had hoped and the following year the entry was smaller still, despite the Club's rally-driving president, Nancy Mitchell, who made best

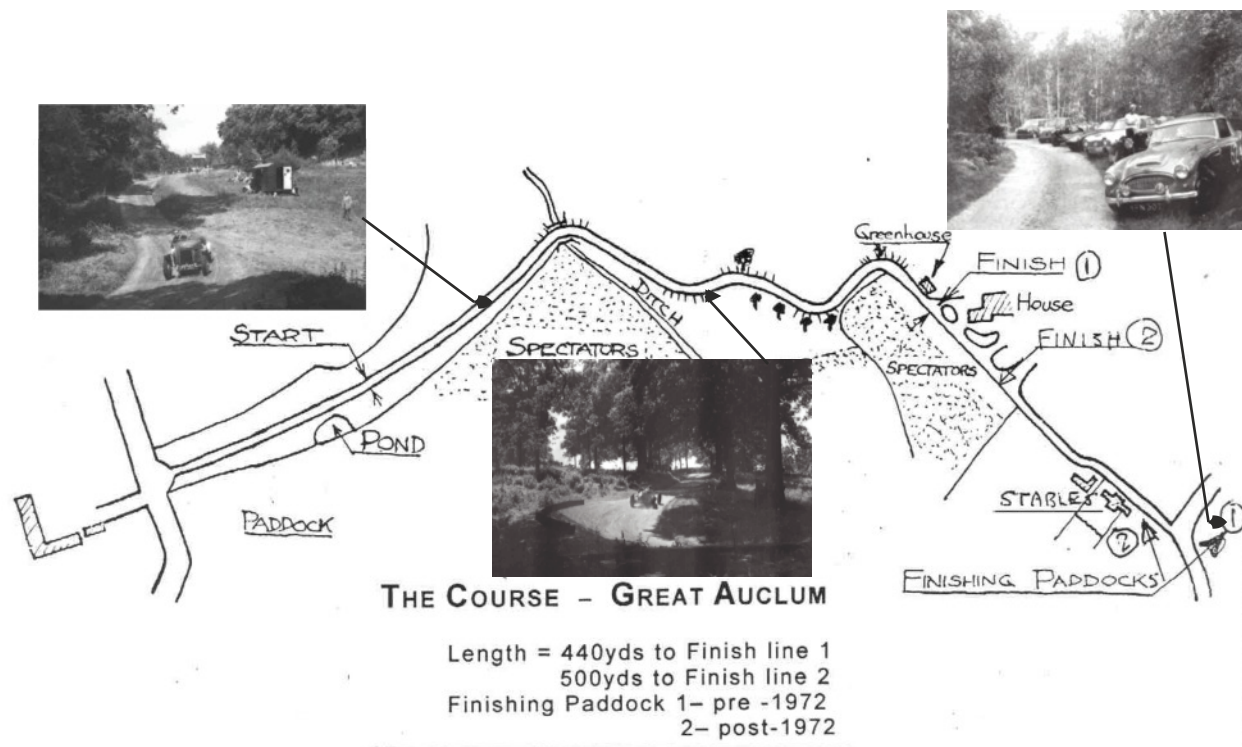


1952 Sprint at Castle Combe; Jeff Chandler in his Chandler Spl. No one hurt and, set back on 4 wheels, he and crew continued

Great Auclum

From West Court substitute to a National Hill Climb

Steve Lovegrove



The first time I ever saw a racing car was at Great Auclum - I was four years old and it was 1962. From then until 1974, when competition stopped, I didn't miss a meeting, not even a practice session. Come rain or shine I would be there watching the cars, drivers and officials. The first signs that the hill climbers were coming back to town was when the large cornfield was harvested and cleared in readiness for the marquees, visible in the distance from our house. The tents would go up on the Thursday or Friday and the drivers would turn up from lunch time on Friday.

Of course, being early August, we were on our school summer holidays and could watch every movement in the field from afar. The first indication that the cars were ready was usually a few throaty blips of the throttle wafting across the cornfield and through our open windows as we ate our evening meal. This was a cue for me to start gobbling my food so that I could nag my Dad to take me to see the cars.

The top paddock was little more than a stone's throw from where we lived and was possibly one of the most exciting parts as you could see the cars flash past the finishing line at full tilt before braking hard as they approached the small, tight finishing paddock, which was nothing more than a gravelled clearing amongst the trees. Directly opposite the entrance to the drive of Great Auclum there was a kind of ditch in which we used to sit or lie to watch the cars approach head on - in these days of safety and security this simply would not be possible. The unsilenced cars made an incredible noise and I can still remember the smells - Castrol R burning on the hot engines as the cars burst over the finish line and came to rest in the finish paddock. Many ran on methanol and that sweet, intoxicating smell would hang amongst the trees.

The length of the timed course varied from 440 yards (as printed in the programme) to "about 500 yards" as the event regulations put it. All the corners, including the first bend, were described as "moderately banked" and the regulations also observed that there was "a slight S-bend,

unbanked, near the end of the finishing run, which allows ample braking distance beyond the finishing line". Normally, practising was on Friday evening from 5pm until 8pm and on Saturday morning from 9am until 12 noon. Then came the timed runs. The cars would come up the hill in batches of, say, 20 or 25 followed by a pair of motorbikes which would shepherd them back down to the start paddock. On occasion Denis Jenkinson would ride one of them.

At the first meeting in 1947 organised by H&B the Fastest Time of the Day (FTD) was recorded by Leslie Onslow-Bartlett in the 4 litre Mercury Special in a time of 23.50s. The whole event was run with an absence of red tape and interruptions - a fact that was widely



Jenks waiting to shepherd his flock back to the start

reported in the press - and H&B were commended on their organisation. It was memorable, however, as Charles Bulmer has noted in the previous chapter, for the one and only political address ever attempted there.

Over 3000 spectators invaded the rural tranquillity of Burghfield Common on Sunday 25 July, 1948 to see nearly a hundred cars compete. A local newspaper reported that the course had been lengthened to a full quarter mile for this meeting but, if the truth were told, the distance was still only approximate. With the meeting being held (unusually) on a Sunday, practice had been on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. The small capacity sports car class got things underway. Jim Martin, who drove an MG Special at the 1948 and 1949 meetings, remembered the hill with affection despite



1948 and young Stirling Moss explores the banking

enjoying mixed fortunes there, "The MG seemed quite well suited to Great Auclum. It was a J2 Midget with a J3 engine fitted with a No. 9 Powerplus blower which developed about 18lb of pressure, far too much for the engine and that meant that I couldn't run for long at full throttle before the engine got too hot - or something broke! During practice in 1948 I stripped all the teeth off the crown-wheel and pinion so I couldn't take my timed runs. However, Ken Wharton offered me a straight-cut crown-wheel and pinion - which I duly went to collect from his place in Birmingham - he was a real gentleman."

But the real star of this meeting was 18 year old H&B member Stirling Moss in his Cooper 500 who not only won his class but would have taken FTD as well had it not been for one marginally faster climb by Ken Wharton in his blown 750 Special. In 1949 Eric Brandon set the two best times of

The elusive turbine

One curious feature of the event which I can explain is that, from 1951 onwards, there was a separate class for gas turbine cars that nobody ever entered. We introduced this because our friend Spen King was a frequent visitor to Pondtail Road at weekends and had competed at early Great Auclums. Since he was in charge of Rover gas turbine car development we always hoped he might persuade the Rover Company to seek a guaranteed class win as a publicity stunt but unfortunately this never happened. Probably the insurance would have been exorbitant.

CHB

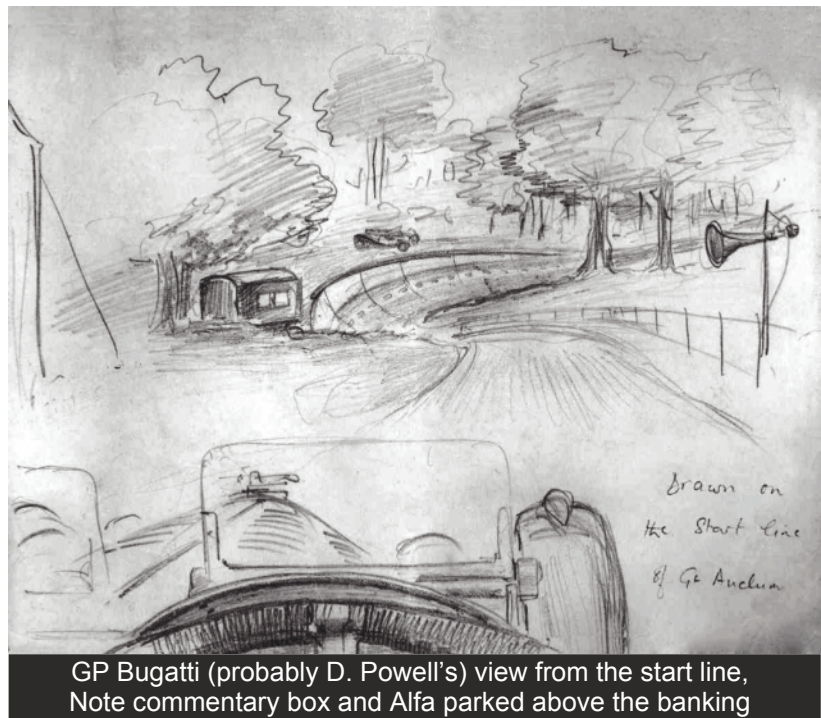
the day in his 994 Cooper JAP and lowered the course record as well.

There were changes for 1950. Neil Gardiner decided to extend the banking on the first corner to increase the height, speed and spectacle. Tony Lovegrove, my uncle, recalls working on this. "We used oil drums filled with concrete to form the base of the new concrete banked section." (The original, shallower banking was surfaced in tarmac.) This work was completed by Jim Fisher, the local garage proprietor and civil engineer who was Vice-president and then President of H&B from 1955 to 1959. It was noted in *Motor Sport* (September 1950) that "It needed real courage to use this banking to the best effect." Obviously this opinion came from Jenks after trying it on his motor cycle.

In fact, three drivers overdid the "Brooklands stuff", Gerry Ruddock getting half his HRG over the top but showing skill in retrieving an ugly situation and holding the subsequent skid, George Naylor hit the rim with one wheel in the ex-Charles Bulmer TT Replica Frazer-Nash which resulted in an epic slide and, in a famous incident, Mrs Thelma Ruffer in a 1488 cc supercharged Alfa Romeo, became well and truly airborne after shooting straight over the banking. Mrs Ruffer, who had apparently been 'imbibing' in the paddock, received a black eye and a bloodied nose and was shown to Great Auclum house at the point of a fire extinguisher by Neil Gardiner.



Mrs Ruffer goes flying



GP Bugatti (probably D. Powell's) view from the start line, Note commentary box and Alfa parked above the banking

1950 saw Great Auclum debuts for Major Arthur Mallock (Austin/Ford Special), Colin Chapman (Lotus) and local man Derek Buckler in his self-built Buckler prototype which he shared on the day with Len Drew. But FTD was made by our Frimley member, Archie Butterworth, in his 4.4-litre, air-cooled, Steyr V8 engined, 4wd Special. Archie worked on military vehicle research at FVRDE Chertsey so you could guess where the bits came from.

In 1951, another local man, David Brake, bravely set FTD in his Cooper twin after overturning his Cooper 500 as he approached the finish paddock in practice. Tragically, David died in a racing accident at Boreham two weeks later. The year after this the meeting was cancelled because of an outbreak of foot-and mouth disease and a Navigational Point-to-Point in the Chiltern Hills was organised "as some compensation". Rain affected the outcome of the 1954 meeting with the surprise result that Michael Burn set FTD (24.52s) in his Le Mans Frazer Nash. The faster racing cars were forced to make their runs just after a heavy shower and could not match his time.

The following year Tony Marsh (on his way to the first of six RAC Hill Climb Championship titles) stormed to FTD in his 1100cc supercharged Cooper JAP and set a new hill record of 20.94s. AF Rivers-Fletcher, well known hill climb regular and

Cameos

The torrential rain chronicled by Steve comes as a surprise. My memories of Great Auclum are all of sun and fields of golden stubble but, above all, the people. As CHB recalls in the previous chapter, there was Sam Moore's Ferguson-propelled train, helpers sitting on the load, legs dangling. Sam, however, was much more than a chauffeur, oiling the wheels with Neil Gardiner who was a business contact. I remember also George Lovegrove, no relation to Steve, wielding a sledge hammer with confidence as a nervous young me steadied the post, Pat Stevens loping around the Start paddock, loud hailer in hand, Ray Kingdon fiddling with the new-fangled electronic timing gear, Frank Lambert, timekeeper and swimming coach who couldn't swim, Heather Bulmer (right) and Pauline Fountain earnestly chalking up times on a blackboard in the Start paddock before tempting workers with a delicious-smelling fry-up in the evening, Joe's gravelly tones coming from the dark green Antone caravan, Derek West, keep fit enthusiast, heaving heavy sleepers with enthusiasm and Stan Chisman touching up his sun tan as he waved



the home-made batons marshalling the punters to orderly rows in the car park. These Day-glo batons had originally been produced by John Higginson for this thankless task in the days before he delegated the car parking duties. And the competitors? David Good, short sleeved shirt unashamedly showing his stump and with a broad grin on his round face as he turned in yet another fast time, vivacious Patsy Burt and attentive Ron Smith, suave Rivers Fletcher, always immaculate in blazer and flannels or pale blue overalls exactly matching the colour of his cars. Then there was quiet Ashley Cleave (left), well used boiler suit contrasting with his shining (and rapid) Morris Special and the shock of seeing Roy Lane with the first of the rear-engined, grand prix car-style specials, all 5 litres of it, just before Great Auclum finally closed its doors to us.

RMB

staunch supporter of Great Auclum, achieved the next best time in his smart powder blue Cooper twin but won just as many plaudits for taking his customary high line round the banking whilst the tidier Marsh took a more circumspect line round the challenging first bend. Marsh set FTD again in 1956 and another outright hill record of 20.62s. However, for commentator Joe Lowrey, the man of the meeting was David Good who won Class 8 in his ERA R1B "despite the fact that his right arm ends a couple of inches below his elbow."

In 1959, Great Auclum became a round of the RAC Hill Climb Championship, a status it retained until the hill closed in 1974. Always a popular event with drivers and the public, Great Auclum now joined the big league with Shelsley

Walsh and Prescott but, at 440 yards, it was the shortest venue to hold a championship round. Few who attended the 1959 meeting will forget the unlikely sight of Rivers Fletcher high on the banking in Leslie Ballamy's supercharged, 1172cc LMB Ford Popular. The specially



Tico Martini and his TT Special



The Start paddock, David Boshier-Jones's Cooper in the foreground

modified car set the saloon class alight and Rivers scored a popular car class win in a time of 24.63s.

Cooper cars had set seven FTDs at Great Auclum during the fifties, which was a pretty impressive record, but the Surbiton marque scored only one more when David Boshier-Jones set a time of 20.49s in his 1100cc Cooper JAP, 0.5s ahead of the local favourite, David Good. Times were changing and engineers were developing new, quicker car/engine combinations. Hill climbing has always been a hotbed of ingenuity and Great Auclum in the sixties saw plenty of new ideas. This revolution was fuelled by the introduction of the 1.5-litre Formula 1 in 1961 which liberated 2.5-litre engines and cars for hill climbing. In 1961, the meeting, where three new class records were set on the newly re-surfaced course, was stopped when Arthur Owen overshot the banking at the first bend and came to grief on terra firma six feet below.

Throughout the history of speed hill climbing there have been few more astonishing tales than that of Renato (Tico) Martini and his tiny TT Special. The record books show that Martini, a Jersey-based Italian, entered and won two RAC Championship rounds in 1962

(Bouley Bay and Great Auclum). What the records don't show is the momentous nature of this achievement. Although hill climbing has always been a friendly sport, the Martini TT Special caused quite a stir amongst the hill climbing fraternity and questions were asked about the eligibility of the driver and his car. This was a great shame since the car was built within the rules in much the same way that enterprising constructors had done before and ever since. The origins of the TT Special

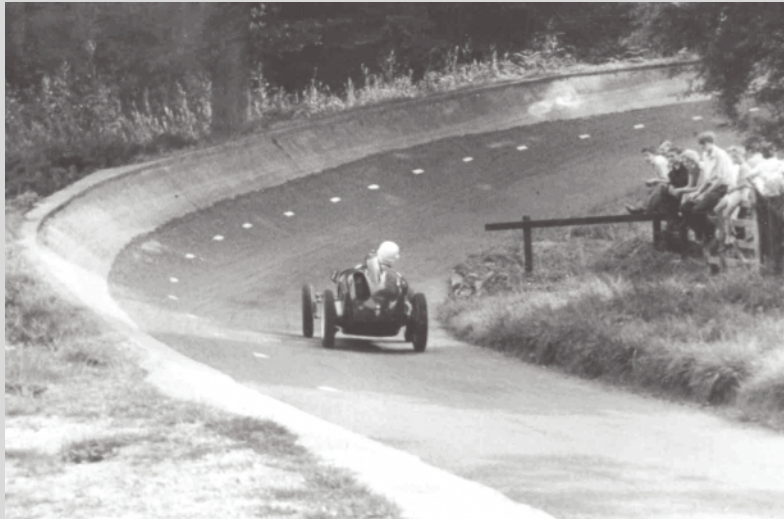
lay in Martini's experience at his local Go-Kart track in Jersey. His interest in competition coupled with his knowledge of Kart technology set him thinking about building a special. His biggest problem was finding wheels and tyres of the right size to fit his design, eventually overcome by fitting Lambretta wheels at the front and Vespa tyres at the rear.

The controversial Special was powered by a 650cc Triumph Bonneville Twin motor cycle engine which developed little more than 55bhp where the Coopers and BRMs had about 250bhp. However, whilst his rivals' cars weighed at least 1000lb, Tico Martini's little Special tipped



1963 Finish paddock Rivers Fletcher in his BB Special, Nigel Arnold-Forster's Delage 'La Torpille' and Peter Westbury's Felday-Daimler. The author examines Peter's tyres

You take the high road ...



The sharp, steeply - banked bottom corner at Great Auclum was unique and we (both officials and competitors) had long arguments about the fastest way to drive through it. As Stephen Lovegrove has noted there were two schools of thought - the minority said hold the car right at the top of the banking all the way round and the majority said bounce it off the beginning of the banking, cut quickly down to a close apex on the flat (like John Bedford (left) in the Monaco Special) and then bounce it off the

end of the banking on the exit. Neither was easy. You approached braking downhill on a left-hand curve, which threw you to the wrong side and, even if you entered correctly, the “lip of the banking” line demanded the highest accuracy, commitment and bravery.

All steep bankings are disorientating, the worst one I know being the Mercedes test track at Stuttgart where parallel straights are joined by a “wall of death” at each end. Instead of the road unfurling from infinity in front of you it suddenly rolls upwards and feeds in from a few feet over your head. Great Auclum wasn't quite as steep as that but the only people I remember who took the top line really well were Michael Burn (right) in his ex-Arklay Frazer Nash, Colin Chapman and the intrepid Arthur Mallock in his U2. Rivers Fletcher always pursued the same course but at a more sensible speed.



CHB

the scales at only 365lb. This excellent power-to-weight ratio was coupled with such compact size that he could take a straighter line through the bends, an ideal combination for Great Auclum. When he arrived for practice on the evening of Friday, 10 August he was met by an H&B official (Bert Fountain?) who, after glancing at the car on its trailer enquired “Have you come to mow the lawn?”

During practice, Tico overcooked the first bend and went over the banking, bending the chassis. This was quickly rectified by putting the car on a large wooden block and hitting it vigorously with a hammer! Another problem in practice was

that the car was too light (or airborne) to generate an adequate pulse in the timing tube at the finish line. The timekeepers suggested that he should brake hard for weight transfer just before the tube. He managed to register a time on each subsequent ascent and went on to set a new hill record of 20.14s.

In 1963 Peter Westbury broke the course record at 19.33s during the class runs driving his Felday (a highly modified Cooper chassis with a 2.6 supercharged Daimler Dart engine) and went on to claim the RAC Championship that year.

Patsy Burt brought her very special 5-litre "Whoosh Bonk" McLaren Oldsmobile to Great Auclum for the first time on 6 August 1966 but the meeting was abandoned during the second runs because of torrential rain. A year later Mike Hawley won the Top Ten run-off in 19.38s (2.0 Brabham BT23 - Climax FPF). David Good withdrew the 4-wheel drive BRM 67 after first gear failed during promising practice runs. The following year Sulhampstead-based GP Roger Willoughby claimed second place in the 1100cc racing car class with his improbable Cooper Imp. Doc Willoughby can still be seen on the hills today in his ex-Dickie Henderson Cooper 1100 supercharged twin.

By 1969, 4-wheel drive was the thing to have and David Hepworth posted two identical 18.84s runs to head the qualifiers for the Top Ten run-offs. It was swelteringly hot on 1 August 1970 and the locals turned out in their droves to get their annual shot of motor sport. Spencer Elton had a scary moment at the first bend when his Brabham got sideways under braking and left the track - landing upside down over the ditch. Years later, Spencer recalled how he was offered a medicinal brandy after his accident and his father Tom Elton admonished the first aider by asserting that it was too much brandy that led to his son's off track excursion in the first place!

Although Nick Williamson was to win the 1970 RAC Hill Climb Championship, his McLaren hit a tree during his first Top 10 run-off which left the way open for David Good to claim top RAC Championship points after Roy Lane also hit a tree on his second run. Lane's consolation was FTD and a hill record of 18.41s set during the



One-handed driving *extraordinaire*, David Good

The Timer

When the Club asked me for a new timing system we came up with a device that had a temperature-controlled crystal oscillator driving a transistor circuit counting the oscillations. Time intervals were displayed on 'Nixy tubes', rather like valves, with the figures that glowed in time with the crystal oscillator. After each elapsed second the circuit triggered an old GPO telephone exchange uniselector which made a loud and very satisfactorily tick, as any self-respecting clock should. It was ridiculously accurate when we had it calibrated against an atomic clock at NPL who certified that it would time to better than a cigarette paper's thickness over our quarter mile. The photocells at the start and finish were vulnerable so I put them inside foot long bits of scaffolding which are quite difficult to crush, though some competitors tried. The system cost the club little more than 10% of the commercial quote in the end and, as far as I know, it still exists in the horologic section of the Science Museum.

RWK

class runs. Chris Cramer - who becomes significant later in the story - set a new saloon car record in his Mini Cooper S.

In 1972 the top paddock was moved back down into a field adjacent to the stables. This was a bigger area and, with hindsight, much more suitable. The cars used to hurtle over the finish line more or less opposite the house and then brake heavily before turning sharp right into the paddock immediately at the end of the drive. There was a five bar gate on this paddock and for a time the marshals used to let us sit on the open gate as the cars drove through! Later this practice was stopped and we sat behind the perimeter fence further down the paddock close to the finish line. In fact, this gave us a better view of the cars as they emerged from the trees at the top of the hill and then accelerated along one of the few straight(ish) parts of the course.

By 1973 rumours were rife that Great Auclum as a motor sport venue was under threat. Plans had been submitted to develop the estate and there was some doubt whether the

1973 meeting would go ahead. In the event, Helen Gardiner wrote to Jimmy Hogg, Secretary of the Meeting, in May 1973 to say that the hill climb could take place as usual. Planning and organising was therefore ramped-up and the circus rolled into town on Friday 3rd August for the traditional evening practice session. The hill record was smashed several times on Saturday afternoon and Roy Lane seemed to have the meeting sewn-up with a record breaking 18.15s run when the Grunhalle Lager sponsored March of Chris Cramer flew up the hill in a remarkable 17.65s, never to be bettered.

At the reunion in August 1998, he spoke of his memories of that day as we walked the length of the course. I was amazed how much he could remember after 24 years and how fond he was of the event, fond enough to travel from his home in Gloucestershire.

By 1974, the writing was on the wall that this would be the last year. The death of Neil Gardiner the previous year had forced his family to sell the estate and the future for the hill looked bleak. The final event at Great Auclum was won by Roy Lane in his F5000 McRae GM1-Chevrolet. Although discussions between H&B and the Gardiner family continued into 1975, there would be no further hill climbs in Burghfield Common. This was effectively the end of Great Auclum as a motor sports venue although, in truth, it must have been under threat of losing its competition licence without significant safety improvements being made.

Neil Gardiner had died in September 1973 at the age of 65. He left wife, son and grandchildren and a considerable estate but the world economy was going through turmoil and in 1974 a family decision was taken to sell the house to meet death duties. Helen Gardiner moved to Guernsey and after several changes of ownership the house was acquired by West Berks Area Health Authority who left it unoccupied for some time pending conversion into a school for disabled children. One morning, at about 5.30am, a milkman noticed flames coming from a window. The house was so badly damaged that it needed a complete rebuild and the owners, by then the School Masters Mortgage Board, built 10 terraced houses in 3 blocks in a style borrowed from the old house.

On a sunny July afternoon in 1999, a racing car was again driven at Great Auclum for the first time since 10 August, 1974. Meridian Television was filming a series of programmes covering interesting walks in the Meridian catchment area and contacted me for information about Great Auclum. I started thinking about what could be done to bring the old hill to life again. After a good deal of plotting and planning, the film crew arrived in Burghfield Common on Monday, 19 July to meet David Gardiner (Neil's son), Roger Willoughby and Tom Brown (son of former Auclum competitor, Richard). Tom brought along his father's very quick red Mallock which was unloaded in the car park of the farm shop opposite the old entrance to Great Auclum and wheeled across the road before being pushed down the hill towards the start-line. After the film crew had set up the shot, Roger Willoughby set off towards the famous banked bend, where he was interviewed and David Gardiner spoke about the history of the event.

That people still remember Great Auclum with affection was shown by the number who attended two reunion events organised by the author in recent years. Many ex-drivers, marshals and spectators turned out to see film, slides, trophies and cars. As the Mallock was loaded back on to the trailer and the film crew left in their people carrier, Roger Willoughby cheerfully shouted to me, "see you at the next Great Auclum event!"

Maybe, some day.

Steve Lovegrove



Richard Brown's Mallock recreates the adventure of the bottom bend for Meridian TV

Eight Clubs

Another Birkett brainchild - a racing consortium

Joan and Sam Moore

In the chapter about the Early Years Charles Bulmer has described the events which led to the conception and formation of the Eight Clubs group in November 1949. It was regarded by the RAC as an Association and not a motor club and the first permit for the initial co-promotion event was issued to the Hants and Berks Motor Club. The RAC classified it as a closed non-invitation event, a concession which gave a useful reduction in the permit fee. Organisation was facilitated by the power given to the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer to seek assistance directly as and when required rather than having to operate through consultation with the committees of the constituent clubs. All the same, the many tasks that were originally distributed round the member clubs tended to remain with them for a number of years and were only changed when there were major alterations in the format of the races or within a constituent club or to the circuit itself, originally a lap of 1.608 miles.

There was no written constitution but various objectives were discussed and informally agreed. They reflect Holly Birkett's view that the ideal (but unattainable) motoring event would have no rules and no regulations at all and included resolutions to run the race meetings primarily for the benefit and entertainment of competitors; to introduce or enforce no restrictions on competitors or spectators beyond those required to avoid danger to life and limb; to minimise the intervals between races to avoid tedious spells of inactivity; to keep strictly to the advertised starting times of all events; to encourage the beginner in the everyday motor car by excluding racing cars; to have a number of High Speed Trials in which no-one was seen to be first or last and to abandon the then universal convention of grouping cars in capacity classes and instead to seed scratch as well as handicap races by bringing together cars of the same anticipated performance.

H&B's Barclay Inglis was appointed Honorary Secretary of the Meeting and he was able to call on a pool of experienced marshals and bring together a group of officials of outstanding ability. The first meeting was held at Silverstone on Saturday, 3 June 1950 and, for the first few years until costs mounted, the organisers, by using most of the modest profit from car parking fees, were even able to repay a substantial proportion of entry fees. The first event proved to be a success and the motoring press was enthusiastic about the combination of informality, effective race control, entertaining racing and strict adherence to the timetable. *Motor Sport* was particularly supportive and a few years later sponsored one of the handicap races which became a qualifying round in the magazine's 'Club Challenge Trophy' series.



After you ... Peter Jowitt, scrutineer, gives way to Joan Johns, laden with paperwork as ever. Douglas observes

Many members of H&B were involved from the outset. Holland Birkett ensured that the fledgling association could present a club race meeting wholly within the co-operative principles set out above. Julian Jane became chief marshal, Charles Bulmer had the vital

The Secretariat's tale

An enormous amount of work was done during the year prior to race day by the handicappers, Secretary of the Meeting, paddock control, programme compilers, etc.

Together with Margaret Inglis, my earliest recollection on race day is having to circulate all information to the Clerk of the Course, Secretary of the Meeting, timekeepers, handicappers, paddock, commentators *et al* at the double - no mobile telephones or electric gizmos in those days - and in between times keeping up with typing of results so that competitors could go home with a copy.

After the first year or two I co-opted a team to keep the Master copy of the programme up to date so that paddock marshals could come in to see the latest update. We then found that Race Control was getting too congested so we issued a corrected copy programme each time a marshal needed it in return for his present copy which was corrected for the next race. We later had a full time typist and the luxury of a Xerox machine! Thinking back on those early days it was fun and practically no aggro. I suppose one can at least see some of the racing with all the modern gadgetry! JM

position of performance assessor and handicapper and Bill Arklay was chief scrutineer. Members of the Eight turned out in strength either to marshal or to compete. Everyone was impressed by the efficient administration of the meeting, another H&B responsibility. Copies of the printed programme were sent out a week before the event with a list of competitors' names and addresses and an index of car numbers. Duplicated results of races were promptly displayed at race control and all competitors were able to take home a full set.

How was this achieved? There were then no facilities of any kind at the track. The circuit was marked out mainly by old oil drums filled with ballast and a few gaunt scaffolding structures

that comprised spectator stands left over from the previous Grand Prix. Sanitation was primitive with no concessions to the prim. Electricity and water had to be brought to the site by the event promoters! H&B ran Race Control from a timekeepers' hut using the Club secretariat's typewriter and a hand turned duplicator. For the first year or so the ubiquitous Joan Cooper was in charge but when she retired Joan Johns (now Moore) and Margaret Inglis continued without assistance for some years until the ever-increasing entry list necessitated further help. The ever-enthusiastic one-man business of Antone (Anthony Curtis) brought sound equipment for the commentators, amongst whom was Joe Lowrey, and a local pub, the Sun Inn at Whitfield, provided on-course refreshments that first year, not to mention a bacchanalian retreat for marshals on the Friday and Saturday nights. More respectable (or richer) folk chose to patronise the classic English inn ambience of 'The Green Man' at Brackley Hatch.

Nearly all competitors drove their competing cars to the circuit, not because they eschewed the use of trailers but simply because the motor car that they had entered was their only conveyance. Many were home built and spare parts usually filled vacant seats. An impressive atmosphere of co-operation prevailed in the paddock with drivers willing to help each other with everything from a spare engine to a grub screw. In cases of dire need it was not unknown for cars of the same model and performance to be borrowed from anybody at the event. In later years such a give-and-take climate was upset by the arrival on the entry list of much more expensive machinery. Nevertheless, the collaborative efforts of those days will long remain in the memory of all who took part. The meeting inspired great loyalty and officials, marshals and competitors had only to come once to become devotees almost for life.

The next year, 1951, the BRDC took over the circuit lease from the RAC and the Daily Express agreed to sponsor that year's Grand Prix. There was a very gradual improvement in track facilities as income grew. The BRDC became a limited company and eventually purchased the circuit and six hundred acres of land, subsequently devolving the management of circuit and estate to a subsidiary company, Silverstone Circuits Ltd. Meanwhile, the annual

day's racing of the Eight Clubs continued with Charles Bulmer firmly established as handicapper. Holland Birkett now represented the 750 MC at Eight Clubs meetings and, much to the satisfaction of people like Derek Buckler, Geoff Tapp and David Small, an 1172 formula event (later to become the 1300 formula) was added to the existing 750 race in the programme. That same year Birkett had also initiated the 750 Six Hour Relay Race but that's another story, concerning neither H&B nor Eight Clubs. In 1954 Barclay Inglis became Clerk of the Course and handed over Honorary Secretary duties to Pat Stark. The following year this responsibility passed to the capable hands of Douglas and Joan Johns, who continued until 1966. Barclay became President in 1957, a post which he adorned until 1969.

H&B continued to put forward successful handicappers. Charles Bulmer had been the doyen of them all and had unerringly been able to spot any false performance claims from entrants (there were one or two!). He relinquished the post in the early sixties to Denis Loveridge and in 1969 Robin Birchall took over, later co-opting Allan Lupton and handing over to



Now where did I put that yellow ..? Laid back marshals hardly seem to notice as Pat Moss goes grasscutting (1956)

him completely in the late '90s. All of them discharged the exacting job with distinction.

As facilities at the Silverstone Circuit were improved so were minor changes made to the races. In the High Speed trials a 'Le Mans' start was introduced for a time, together with compulsory pit stops for changing sparking plugs and front wheels. Informality was still the keynote. Competitors did not enter for specific races because of the diversity of the machinery. They simply told the Secretary of the Meeting what car they would drive and in what sort of races (scratch, handicap or high speed trial) they would like to compete. The handicappers then sifted the entry into up to sixteen races, each containing cars of as near the same performance as possible.

In 1963 John Gott, then President of H&B, gave a President's Cup for the H&B member recording the fastest time of day at Silverstone and won it himself in 1967! In 1965 Bert Fountain became Chairman. The Press Officer of the day sought sponsorship and was occasionally successful, attracting Chandy, Whitbread and HoverLloyd. 1967 saw Les Needham as Chairman with the control of the paddock in the strict organisation of Sam Moore and Pat Stevens. This responsibility had become more demanding as the result of increasing numbers on the entry list. The best ever entry was 350 for 14 races in 1980 but entries of around 300 were typical for many years and persuading them to form up for grids was not helped by shortcomings in the PA coverage. In 1973 the Eight Clubs became a Limited Liability

Scrutineering

I rarely found anyone who had tried to bend the rules. Most of the time all I had to do was pull people up for safety infringements. Over the years I've found a number of vice grips still attached to the undersides of cars.

Motor sport was very enjoyable in the fifties and sixties but I began to lose interest in scrutineering when everything started to get too professional. It took up a lot of my spare time too. I got fed up with the people. Gone were the days when drivers were their own mechanics. The camaraderie was very strong then. It was common for drivers to tow home the broken cars of their competitors after a furious day of sport. More often than not the guy who drives these days doesn't know what's going on under the bonnet. The last of the old style events was Eight Clubs, Silverstone. I always enjoyed that.

DHS

Company and, as Bill Bonney explains in a later section, subsequent H&B involvement (apart from handicapping and competing) became largely that of paddock marshalling.

The Eight Clubs meetings motored noisily and triumphantly on to the fiftieth year celebrations in 1999 and many predicted a further half-century of success for the event. The member Clubs had changed over the years. The ACOC and Lancia OC had been collected under the umbrella of the Combined One Make CC and Lloyd's MC and Herts County A&AC had joined. President for this fiftieth year was Les Needham who had been continuously involved in the meetings since 1950. The Chairman was Robin Birchall who had been elected in 1987. Sad to say, few foresaw major expenditure looming on

the horizon but as we shall see, the days of the Eight Clubs were numbered. If enthusiasm alone could have saved the series the future would have been assured but big business accountants were on the scent of more money.

Memorial Trophies in abundance had been donated over the years including those in the names of Holland Birkett, Barclay Inglis, Douglas Johns, John Moon, John Gott and George Whiteaway, H&B members all. Yet there were still others, one notably the Trophy of The International Police Association, a particular interest of John Gott since he was Chief Constable of Northants.

Joan and Sam Moore

as related to John Higginson

The whys and wherefores of the decline and fall

Robin Birchall

Mike Eyre had been Chairman of Eight Clubs since 1970. When he decided to withdraw completely from motor sport in 1987 and retire to the attractions of the Essex coast, he asked me to take over. In accepting, I regarded it as a great honour, little realising, any more than he did, that it would turn out to be a poisoned chalice.

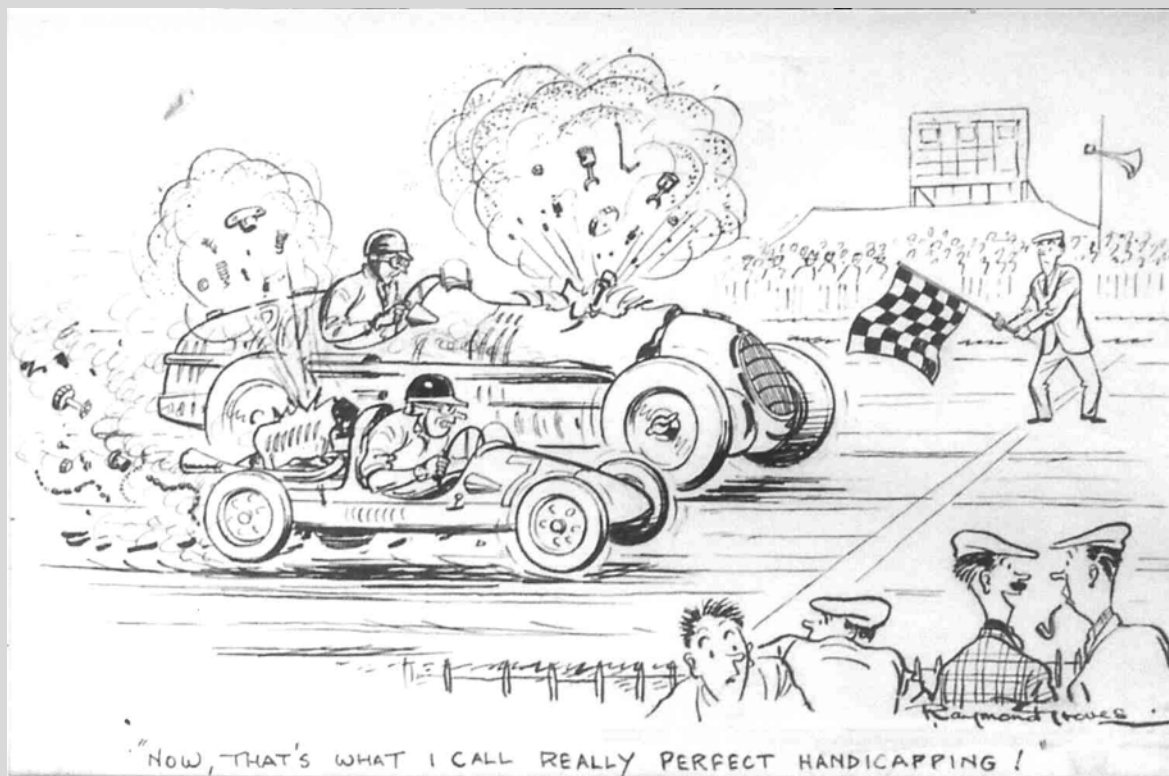
But first, a word about Mike who, after all, was an active H&B member. A senior MSA timekeeper, he had, despite his considerable bulk, raced Austin Sevens of which he had a baker's dozen, some very rare. Not surprisingly then, much like Holland Birkett before him, his main allegiance was to 750 MC, a club which continued to provide a large proportion of the Eight Clubs competitors. As far as H&B is concerned, he will be remembered by most members for his larger-than-life presence on many a Mobil Economy Run.

During his tenure clubs like Cemian and Chiltern began to fade (although the latter kept an honourable presence in the person of the Secretary of the Meeting). We had perforce to consider whether they should be replaced by clubs which, like the original constituents, wanted to go racing but could not afford the financial risk of running their own meeting. One-make clubs like Porsche GB, Alfa Romeo OC and BMW CC were considered. We'd had

a brief flirtation with CSMA but, despite a vast membership, they had contributed little to the grids so we were wary of bringing into the fold clubs which might not further the tradition that was Eight Clubs. Moreover, the motivation for change was not great with grids still frequently oversubscribed and a healthy bank balance so the opportunities passed without any action.

Club motor racing had changed markedly over the half-century since the formation of Eight Clubs. Gone were the simple A7- and Ford Ten-based specials to be replaced by affordable mass produced sports cars of which the archetypes were the Spridget and MGB. The effect of these was that owners, wishing to make them faster than their peers, tuned them, upon which the unmodified variety cried foul. Thus was born a series of highly specialised classes of such close performance potential that the need for handicapping disappeared. Single marque club racing became dominated by championships and scratch races. This evolution was not confined to production sports cars but spilled over into historic sports and saloon cars and club racing became a highly regulated sport, with the honourable exceptions of VSCC and Bentley DC - and Eight Clubs.

The effect on Eight Clubs was twofold: First, few competitors were willing to risk their expensively and highly developed sports cars in mid-season



Handicaps

Like many things in early motoring from chassis design to styling, racing took its cues from the equine world and attempts to equalise performance were no exception, initially (as now in BTCC) with additional weights but later, in the wide expanses of Brooklands, by adjusting the distance to be covered.

Neither of these options was considered practical at post-WWII circuits so time delays were imposed dependent on the expected performance over the race length. This was more flexible and worked well while performance differences were small but, once the overall spread exceeded the lap time, credit laps had to be introduced. However, it was clearly not safe to allow the slowest competitor to arrive on the grid just as a faster one was starting. A safety margin had to be built in and immediately, any accuracy the method might have had was compromised. Further, as safety awareness increased, Clerks of the Course grew increasingly nervous about the risks and insisted on yet greater safety margins. To compound the problem, events like Eight Clubs took their entries from an ever widening field to the further detriment of the accuracy of the handicap as it became harder to keep or even find records on every competitor..

To offset this at Eight Clubs Allan Lupton and I pioneered computerisation of the records and the arithmetic, initially with programmable calculators, finally with PCs. RMB

Cartoon by Raymond Groves for Charles Bulmer to mark his retirement

while they were still contesting their favourite championships and second, the so-called grass roots competitor bought himself a production sports car as first choice or, if he was really serious, took to karts. So, although the competitor base had in theory greatly increased, this was offset by specialisation. Gone were the days when a competitor would bring a hire car to the circuit and race it (I last saw that in 1980). Apart from everything else, safety regulations had, very properly, been extensively tightened

and it was no longer possible to borrow mother's shopping car to go racing without her noticing additions like welded-in sun roofs and external ignition switches. Nevertheless, Eight Clubs continued to thrive on its combination of informal efficiency and grids with an extraordinary mix of machinery but this sort of ad-hoc racing was only saleable if it was cheap.

In December 2000 BRDC, owners of Silverstone, accepted a merger agreement with



Mid-range sports car scratch race about 1963.
Note well-filled stands and early appearance of E-type

Octagon. Immediately, the alarm bells sounded since Octagon already owned Brands Hatch and their hard nosed commercialism was well known. By contrast, BRDC had encouraged grass roots motorsport, allowing clubs running non-revenue race meetings to hire the circuit at an advantageous rate. It looked as though this was likely to change. Sure enough, hire costs for 2001 tripled, giving us an increase in overall costs of some 65% which we dared not pass on to the competitor entirely. The meeting that year made a substantial but not crippling loss. There was now clearly a finite limit to how long Eight Clubs could survive under these conditions. In 2002, with yet higher entry fees and the country in mild recession, the entry fell to its lowest level for 30 years and the resulting loss left us so short of funds that we were unable to underwrite another meeting. When the story got into the specialist press there were offers of support from entrepreneurs and circuit owners but the strings attached were unacceptable. In March 2003 Eight Clubs was dissolved and the surplus funds invested in a bursary to support safety-related projects in club motor sport. So ended a glorious history.

Could the disaster have been averted? As may be imagined, there was much discussion about alternatives. At an earlier stage we could have embraced the fashion for championship scratch races but ended up, as Les Needham noted at the time, with 'just another race meeting'. Delegates were agreed that this was not in the spirit of the consortium. We could have gone to a cheaper circuit but there was strong emotional resistance to leaving a circuit which had been

our 'home' for more than half a century. Alternative circuits, in any case, came at a price. If they were cheap then they were remote like Pembrey or Snetterton and that brought problems of ensuring adequate marshalling as we had found to our cost in an abortive attempt at a second-string meeting at Lydden some years back. It had been abandoned after only two years..

The disquiet over Octagon's takeover of the prime racing circuits in England, which gave them five out of 18 but 75% of the revenue, was such that the Competition Commission was asked to investigate whether the acquisition

was against the public interest and in mid-2001 Eight Clubs was invited to send a representative for interview. There I pleaded that the lack of concessions would spell the end of grass roots motor racing but the Commission eventually concluded that the merger was not against the wider public interest although questioning some of Octagon's financial practices. I had also put our case to a senior member of Octagon but he took the line that conditions should be the same for all clubs across the board. Larger clubs like MGCC could ease the cost by using cheaper circuits in the mix. Clearly we didn't have that option and Octagon's final offer of a cheaper rate if we took a late calendar date proved an empty promise - but by then Octagon itself was in serious financial trouble.

Some good came out of the crisis. The Commission had questioned the wisdom of having such a fragmented sport (there are about 600 registered motor clubs) and, in response to the Octagon threat, the smaller racing clubs met to form an association which was at least partially responsible for pushing MSA into recognising the need for a concerted voice. The whole group, including BARC and BRSCC, met in April 2002 to form the Association of British Motor Racing Clubs. That body, of which I was the first Secretary, has done invaluable work in ensuring that there are now proper lines of communication between circuit owners, circuit users and legislators. It's nice to think that the voice of Eight Clubs continued to be heard even after its death.

Robin Birchall

Thirty years of Eight Clubs – a personal view

Bill Bonney

My first Eight Clubs meeting was in 1972, the 23rd annual Silverstone meeting. At this time H&B were still providing key event officials, with George Whiteaway as one of the two Club Stewards, Mike Eyre, the Chief Timekeeper, Dr. John Nelms, the Chief Medical Officer, Robin Birchall, the event Handicapper and Pat Stevens, the Chief Paddock Marshal.

Having just joined the Club, my work colleague Mick Harris suggested I should accompany him to Silverstone where he would be working with Pat Stevens in the paddock area. I did not need asking twice, just the thought of having access to the hallowed heart of this famous circuit prompted a very positive "yes". I had previously been to the circuit to spectate at the annual VSCC meetings and, as a member, had often walked around the paddock area admiring the exotic machinery but to be involved with the running of such an event was just a dream in those days.

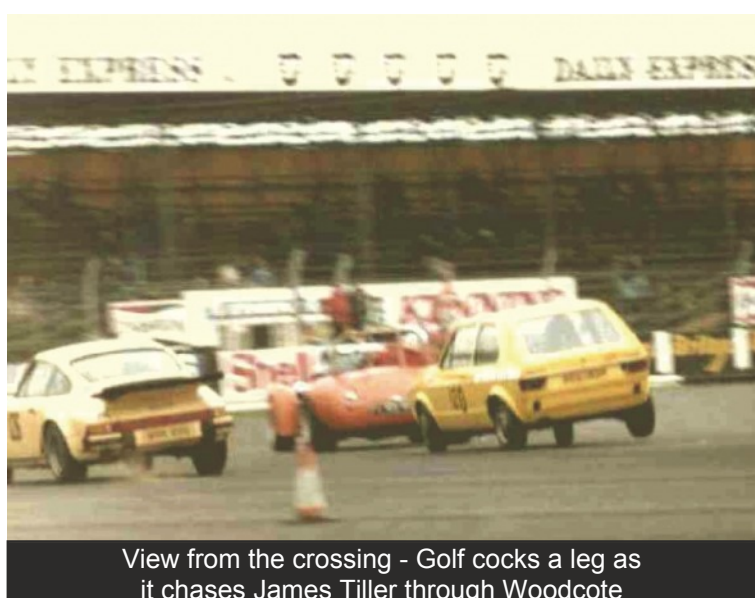
On Saturday, 6 May I arrived at the circuit and met Mick and the other marshals for the briefing by Pat Stevens. Mick would be marshalling the track crossing just south west of Woodcote corner. In those days, before the bridges had been built, access to the paddock meant that all cars with track passes, both competitors and officials, had to cross the Club circuit so we moved our cars near to the crossing. The routine was straightforward. After each practice session or race, the Clerk of the Course, having driven the circuit, would stop by the track crossing and signal for us to open our barriers and direct waiting cars across the circuit into the paddock. Once the barriers were again closed we were able to watch the competitors form up on the grid and had a really spectacular view of the competitors coming down the Club straight and exiting through Woodcote. This would be the first but certainly not the last time I watched cars such as Golfs lifting their inside wheels.

For the next six years our routine would be the same, with time during the lunch break to walk around the

Paddock and talk with the drivers. This was one of the friendliest race meetings in the calendar and, although there was fierce competition on the circuit, drivers were ready to help each other in the Paddock. Often you would see several helping another who had some form of mechanical problem, all mucking in to try and get the car ready for its next race.

A similar story could be told of the marshals who were there both to assist with the safe running of the event and to enjoy some excellent motorsport. I well remember the occasion when there was a cry for help for someone to assist in the race control telephone exchange. Silverstone had the old type of exchange where you plugged the jack plug into the appropriate socket to redirect the call. Apparently one of the regulars who always did this job had not turned up and, before the event could start, someone needed to volunteer. On other occasions word went out for additional help as track/flag marshals. Often members of our team in the Paddock and at the track crossing found themselves doing another equally important job on the day. But that was the true essence of the Eight Clubs experience, a relaxed but expertly run club event.

By 1980 I had nine years' experience and had been promoted from the Track Crossing team to running the Paddock exit. In those days this consisted of a simple dual purpose swing barrier which allowed competitors on to the track and cars with track passes to enter. The next year it



View from the crossing - Golf cocks a leg as it chases James Tiller through Woodcote

was all change following the sad loss of Pat Stevens, I took over the mantle of Chief Paddock Marshal and became the H&B voting representative in Eight Clubs Ltd. We still maintained a strong H&B presence with the provision of the team of paddock marshals with responsibility for calling up competitors on the Tannoy, lining up the grid for each race and despatching them to the circuit. We had the opportunity to see every car and talk with the drivers who were as enthusiastic as we were about this annual meeting.

By the late 1980s the addition of the Luffield complex and changes at Becketts increased the length of the Club circuit from 1.608 miles to 1.913 miles. Later changes, including adding the vehicle bridges and moving our Paddock exit compound to behind the circuit medical centre, decreased it again to 1.649 miles. We now had a further challenge; our Tannoy system could not be heard by competitors who were at the far end of the Paddock, so it became routine to send runners out to find competitors for most of the races. We also had problems in communicating between the exit gate and the far end of the assembly area but this would be solved with the use of rather ancient two way portable radios which were especially important on those occasions where we experienced really murky conditions and it was impossible to see what was happening at the far end of the assembly area.

During the 1990s the RAC Motor Sports Association introduced a licensing system for Clerks of the Course which brought about changes of personnel to Eight Clubs and, by the end of the decade, all track and paddock marshalling had been taken over by members of the British Motor Racing Marshals Club. We still assisted but our role changed significantly to managing the competitors through Scrutiny and then taking on the role of Paddock safety observers during the rest of the meeting.

In 1981 I attended my first Eight Clubs committee meeting. At this time Eight Clubs was chaired by Mike Eyre and twice a year Robin Birchall and I would make the pilgrimage to Mike's office in St. John's Wood where we would

meet in the boardroom. These meetings were quite different from those I had experienced before. Every February or March we would attend the AGM which would be followed by an ordinary committee meeting with a fairly short agenda, the main items being to decide whether or not to run an Eight Clubs event later that year and agree the date. The second meeting was held after the event and served as a review meeting. The AGM usually took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete an agenda normally containing eight items. It was a demonstration of the how well the whole Eight Clubs experience was organised. However, the ordinary committee meeting took a lot longer. By the end of the decade Robin Birchall had taken over as Chairman and our meetings were held in the High Wycombe area, saving that trek into the capital.

Robin has explained how the meetings came to be dominated by the question of survival. At the meeting on 19 November 2002 Robin asked us to vote on whether we would run an event in 2003, the 2002 event having made a loss of £10,000 and the Club now having insufficient funds to underwrite a further event. Of course it was very sad but the answer had to be no. It was the end of 30 years of involvement on my part but many more for some of the others. Sometimes one has to wonder if progress does take us in the right direction, but of course the world has moved on since the 1950s and perhaps I have to accept that there is no longer a need for such a grass roots event.

Bill Bonney



Martin Davies accepts the George Whiteaway Award from Bill Bonney (R) as he presents it for the last time (Nov '02)

2CV Cross

A French experiment

John Horne

2CV Cross began in France in 1972 and was introduced to England by H&B at Blackbushe Airport in June 1975. Further meetings were held in June 1976, and in June and August 1977. The events were sponsored by Citroën Cars Ltd, with additional sponsorship from Total Oil in 1975 and 1976.

Total, who were funding the annual Economy Run (now the Total Economy Drive), introduced H&B to Citroën who were seeking a UK organiser for 2CV Cross. Pat Stevens, Dick and Nan Cawthorne and Sam Moore were taken to Le Pêcheureau near Argenton-sur-Creuse to see a French event and were set the task of organising a similar meeting in England. Each one occupied a weekend with competitors camping at the race venue and costs were kept very low with no entry fee for competitors and no performance-enhancing modifications allowed on the cars. Citroën organised the International 2CV Cross Championship, five countries in '75, seven in '76



Pam Roper and John Horne (back view) surrounded by appropriate cross country machinery

and eight in '77 but everything else was to be done by the organising club. Normally, for this, the club would keep the gate money but, to get the event off the ground, Citroën met the costs for the first three events. An International RAC permit was required.



602cc grid

The H&B venue was a gravel and sand pit at the northern end of Blackbushe Airport close to the Kart track. A tortuous 700 metre circuit was bulldozed into shape by a Farnborough DMC member with a JCB and was then honed into precise imperfection by spade-wielding H&B volunteers during the week-end before the meeting and the evenings of the next five days. Part of the course fitted into a gully and the rest was marked out with piles of old tyres painted with white stripes. Rope barriers were erected to keep spectators at a safe distance from the track. In addition we had to construct a paddock cum village to accompany the circuit. Marquees were hired to accommodate scrutineering, stores, the Press, a dining area (complete with tables and chairs) and the odd spare in case we had forgotten something. Mobile toilets, complete with hot showers and



Rockin' and rollin' - the smaller category field

The competing cars were all Citroën 2CVs, modified only for safety. There were two categories - 425cc (16 bhp) or 435cc (24 bhp) and 602cc (28.5 bhp). Saturday started with scrutiny followed by three practice laps, then heats of eight laps leading to semi-finals for each category and a mixed final of 12 laps. On Sunday there were more heats, finals for each category and a Super-Final. Grids were of 18 cars for the finals, somewhat less for the heats. The track was rapidly torn up, resulting in spectacular dust clouds, and driving was gladiatorial in style with no quarter given; some even tried to drive over cars bogged down in the sand. The attrition rate was

high with about a third of the field failing to finish each race but they were soon rebuilt for another bout.

hand basins were installed; a GPO telephone line was run to the Club caravan and crowd control barriers were erected in an attempt to channel the anticipated crowds of spectators into entering by the pay-gates. In 1976 we took advantage of a short gap in Her Majesty's programme and borrowed these from Buckingham Palace on the Friday afternoon, then dismantled them at 5 pm on Sunday to do service at Holyrood Palace on Monday. A caterer to feed competitors, marshals and spectators and policing, ambulance and first aid facilities, and even sewage disposal were all arranged.

high with about a third of the field failing to finish each race but they were soon rebuilt for another bout.

In 1975 89 H&B members marshalled the event over the weekend with others, relatives and friends, pressed into service too. In 1976 this fell to 73 and, by August 1977, only 57. By then it was also apparent that gate receipts would never pay the expenses of running such a meeting and 2CV racing dropped out of the Club calendar.

John Horne

The Commentator's Story

When I was asked to write about 2CV racing at Blackbushe, I realised that time had dulled my memory but a few photographs in an old album helped me recall a highly enjoyable weekend. I do remember the tireless effort that so many H&B Club members put into ensuring that the meeting would be a success and would show the professionalism of the Club.

Committee members, particularly Dick Cawthorne, were responsible for much of the planning and the link with Citroën Cars. Sam Moore was made Clerk of the Course, a job of which he had ample experience, Ray Kingdon did excellent work with the timekeeping and my wife, Maureen,

assisted Scrutineer, David Small, with translations so that technical problems with the

Derek Argyle



1976 Earthworks, start line, timekeepers' tent & commentary box



The French student jazz band

cars of the French drivers could be kept to a minimum. Others organised the pre-event publicity and, on the day, acted as parking attendants, programme sellers and message takers. I had plenty of experience after years of autocrossing so I took some time off work and helped plan the layout of the track and then direct the bulldozer in contouring it and shaping the safety banks. The track itself was over sandy, stony soil and dust was always a problem when fields of twenty or so cars circulated the track so the use of a water cart quickly became a necessity.

On race days, I hardly had time to mix with Club members as I had been roped in to share the commentary with a fellow who commentated at several of the autocross meetings I had attended. Not having been behind a mike before, I found it took time to recognise each gaily-coloured *deux chevaux*, to speak to the drivers for background information and to select music tapes to fill in the gaps in our commentary. I remember that Chuck Berry's 'Ridin' along in my automobile' went down pretty well with our audience. In a delightful touch, Citroën had invited a large group of student musicians who entertained the crowd with their traditional jazz band.

2CV racing at that time was fairly new to the Brits and the enthusiasm and the creditable turn-out was most impressive for the first International meeting in the UK. Unfortunately, most of the British competitors still had to learn the tricks of the trade when it came to making their lightweight mounts withstand the rigours of rough bumpy tracks but the skills of the welders kept most of their fragile cars mobile throughout the weekend. Like the Superally rules now, 2CV

racing allowed those who trailed or broke down to race again later, so we always had full grids. Racing all day Saturday led to the finals on the Sunday and showed that the overall winner in the heats leading to the final race of the day was often not the driver who led the field each time but the one who gave a little more consideration to his car over the suspension-breaking course. Of course it invariably turned out to be a French victory but the Brits had done surprisingly well.



Interviewing the winner (right) Derek's the one with teeth

I really did enjoy the weekend enormously and was very sorry when the sound of twin cylinders revving their heads off was not heard again at Blackbushe.

Night watchman

Bill Bonney

Unless you have watched 2CV Cross, it is difficult to imagine how different it is from normal motorsport.

My own recollections revolve around three quite separate incidents during our 1976 and 1977 events at Blackbushe. We were enjoying a hot spell and the biggest problem we were anticipating was dust causing virtually nil visibility for the intrepid pilots of these small French cars. My official job was Assistant Paddock Marshal working alongside Mick Harris and in those days our area of Blackbushe was unfenced allowing unhindered access to all and sundry. We were concerned about the security of the whole site so it had been agreed that Mick would bring his caravan and we would undertake night watchman duties. As it happened this turned out to be useful in more ways than was intended.

By late evening the entire British entry had arrived but we were still short of the 15 cars due from France and Belgium. All we knew was that they were all on one transporter and it was somewhere en route. By about 10 pm we had eaten and were ready to try and get some sleep before an early start when in rolled a huge two tier transporter. Our continental friends had experienced a number of delays and were only interested in getting to their overnight accommodation in Camberley as soon as possible, so we got them to turn around, took them to the exit on the A30 and told them to drive due east towards Camberley. The transporter steamed off on the wrong side of A30 for as far as we could see, and that must have been a good three miles. We stood there in utter amazement waiting for the noise of the collision. When we saw them return next morning all in one piece we could only assume that, at that time of night, the road had been completely deserted.

To describe 2CV Cross as agricultural is, if anything, an understatement. Most of us have walked around the paddock of motoring events and watched drivers and mechanics fettling their highly tuned vehicles with gleaming tools and



Skilful overhaul with crowbars

occasionally, perhaps, a hammer to knock out the odd dent. The paddock area at a 2CV Cross event was quite different. There appeared to be just two pieces of equipment needed to keep these cars running, a large hammer to reshape the bodywork following regular inversion and long steel bar used with precision to lever the front suspension away from the engine to allow the drive shafts to be re-inserted.

My third recollection must, I think, have been in 1977. Even though we had done all the work in bulldozing and preparing the 0.7 km course, the owner of Blackbushe, Air Vice-Marshal Bennett, still required payment for its use and it was one of my jobs to deliver it. He insisted on cash, so £250 was withdrawn from the Club's bank for me to take to his office at Blackbushe late one afternoon. When I arrived his secretary said that he was out somewhere on the airfield in his Rolls-Royce but it would be alright if I left the money. She pointed to an attaché case on a chair in the office and told me to put the money in it. On opening the case, I could not believe my eyes. There must have been tens of thousands of pounds all in well used notes; our small contribution would make little difference to the total. I insisted on having a receipt which she signed for me and off I went slightly bemused by it all.

The Economy Runs

How H&B joined forces with Mobil

Joe Lowrey

The "greatness" of this expensive, commercially sponsored event was virtually thrust upon us. In 1951 I had competed quite successfully in a Cheltenham rally, run by a charmingly eccentric Pole called "Joe" Dembowski in which, besides speed and navigational skill, fuel economy was also important to success. In the next three years, that rally became a pure fuel economy contest in which others of the H&B Committee also competed.

Alas, sponsorship of those economy runs, by the News Chronicle and by Esso, shrank and the Cheltenham Motor Club decided regretfully to abandon their unique event. The ex-competitors on the H&B committee felt that somebody should organise a replacement and that they were competent to do this.

I had read about Mobilgas economy runs in California, staged with much razzmatazz, so I wrote to the Vacuum Oil Company (as they were then called) in London asking if they would help us to stage a petrol economy contest in Britain. The response was astonishing. Their American owners had just decided to introduce Mobilgas petrol on the British market and had told their UK Company to stage an economy run as launch publicity. I had contacted Mobil just as they were scratching their corporate heads about how on earth to do what their American bosses demanded. Things then happened fast.

It wasn't exactly a marriage made in heaven. For one thing, Mobil staff worked 9 till 5 on weekdays whereas we ran our club during evenings and weekends. The solution for them was a not-very-senior chap called Peter Bedwell who was ordered to work lots of overtime. We, in H&B had the youthful Bob Gotts whose

parents' business (oddly enough selling lubricants as a very much smaller Mobil rival) allowed him to take time off for motor club activities.



First H&B Economy Run, Joan Johns/Joyce Chesterton. Car is Buckler prototype, rarely seen with hood and full windscreen

At a meeting on 24 February, 1955 we finally agreed to run the event on 18/19 June - a date for which we already had a national permit - and Mobil would sponsor it to the tune of £1000 over and above their own contribution in time and materials. At later meetings in March it was decided that it would start and finish at Great Western Motors, Reading, run via Silverstone for a speed test (to catch out any freakishly detuned cars), then over the Long Mynd into mid-Wales, south across the Wessex hills to Bournemouth and back to Reading - about 600 miles. It was well supported (44 competitors) and it was won by my colleague, Dick Bensted-Smith of *The Motor*, who averaged 71 mpg in a Triumph TR2.

So we had got the show on the road in its first year but, as a Technical Editor of *The Motor*, I didn't want to endanger my commercial independence and it was left to others in H&B to continue the series while I became a competitor.

Joe Lowrey

The growing organisation behind our biggest event

Charles Bulmer

During the post mortem on the first (1955) event it became very clear that the views of Joe Lowrey and Bob Gotts on future development could never be reconciled with those of the Mobil Company. Committed to the pattern set by their parent company in the USA, Mobil wanted standard cars, rigorous scrutiny, a 1000-mile route, no coasting and maximum advertising and publicity which, they felt, demanded results which should be impressive but credible. They also wanted us to aim for an International permit so that we could invite competitors from countries like France and Italy where there were similar events.

Given all this they were prepared to spend real money and throw in the considerable resources of their marketing, commercial and catering departments. They were aware that they knew nothing about the organisation of motoring competitions. We, of course, had only limited experience of economy runs - I had competed in three and Holly Birkett in two - but we formed a new organising committee in which Holly was Secretary of the Meeting, I looked after all technical matters (scrutiny and fuel measurement), Pat Stevens became Chief Marshal and Bert Fountain had responsibility (in conjunction with Mobil) for the start and finish and some route stops.

This committee remained largely unchanged until 1962 when Pat Stevens became Secretary of the Meeting, still leaving Holly as Clerk of the

Course until his death the following year. Mike Igglesden was co-opted as Technical Secretary as scrutiny became ever more elaborate and the preliminary paper work grew with it and, when Bert Fountain also died in 1966, Stan Chisman joined the committee. He and Mick Harris progressively did more of the route finding,

We were well aware that Mobil were not sponsoring us for the good of motor sport and the entertainment of H&B members. To them it was just a marketing exercise whose cost could only be justified by column inches of press coverage, so the announcement of results and the accompanying press releases had to be very carefully timed to meet the rigid deadlines of the national press. If we ran at all late because of fuel measuring or scrutineering problems or unresolved protests, the value of the event was nullified for Mobil. We were conscious that we had to plan everything deliberately to minimise this possibility.

The Company put considerable resources into the organisation. Under Board Director Peter Bancroft, their principal liaison man was the amiable Peter Bedwell, whose job gradually developed into an almost full time occupation, while Commander Henry Barnes negotiated the commercial side of hotel accommodation and catering. His rigorous naval standards of smartness and disciplined behaviour were severely shocked by some of our scruffy members and scruffier competitors and he never

understood Holly's sense of humour but, apart from a few sticky patches, our association was a happy one and grew more so as we came to know each other better.

In 1958 Colonel Stanley Barnes, the post-war head of the RAC Competitions Department, was the RAC Steward on the event. He then retired and Mobil engaged him as an expert consultant to watch their interests. This was unfortunate because, although he was a man of vast experience, he knew absolutely nothing about



Fuel measurement: defuelling rig in action.
Fuel pump is on the right.

economy runs and had very rigid ideas of what you could and could not do which didn't match our innovative approach. To us he was another handicap to overcome.

Fuel measuring

However, in 1956 much of this was still in the future. First we needed a better method of fuel measurement. During the first two events the fuel level in the tank was measured by establishing a sight gauge (in effect an external and visible U tube), an ingenious method inherited from the Cheltenham Motor Club which, unfortunately, sometimes gave anomalous results difficult to detect. We set up an experimental working party – Holly, Bert, Brewster Cobb and me – and spent several long, fume-laden evenings at the Mobil depot in Wandsworth, working with Colin Cook, a young graduate engineer from their technical staff.



Scenic route check, by Buttermere. Overdrive could be freed after locking on downhill stretches to prevent free-wheeling

Under controlled conditions we confirmed the sight tube anomalies and we also confirmed that the simple topping-up method of filling the tank to a visible mark in the neck could produce large errors with certain shapes of tank, even if the car attitude was accurately controlled. In some cars there was a variability of 2 to 3 pints in successive refillings, even when the car wasn't moved between them, and twice that if it was disturbed. Although the topping-up system had been used from time immemorial in the US Mobil run, their 3000 mile coast-to-coast route and thirsty cars meant that each consumed 100-200 gallons which concealed the start and finish errors.



Powerful suction pump and condenser. We had to be sure to select the car's supply pipe rather than the return to suck from

We thought of various better systems and rejected them all because of cost, reliability or time (over 40 cars had to be processed in a few hours at both start and finish) and by default we finished up with a system based on the powerful suction pumps we had been using in Wandsworth to drain the tanks to outlet pipe level. With various refinements (levelling, etc) we eventually had a system that matched the 1% claimed accuracy of the commercial pumps used for refuelling en route (which all had to be checked and tested before the run). Several of these devices were built (for parallel processing) and presided over by Brewster Cobb from 1957 until he died in the late sixties and then by Dick Cawthorne and Rowland Smith who made further improvements in 1968.

Scrutiny

As the event developed in importance and advertising value we knew that we couldn't rely on the cars being presented in completely standard form, as the regulations demanded, and that the most ingenious cheats were likely to be the car manufacturers themselves. I spent a lot of time thinking what I would do to improve economy if I were a competitor and then I extended this thought experiment to include what I might do if I were an inventive but thoroughly dishonest and disreputable competitor.

In the end there was a very long list and absolutely no hope of checking many of them in 1956 - we just selected a few which were easy to monitor and then added a few more each year, adopting a flowline system which progressed through a series of specialist checking stations for comparison against the details pre-recorded in each car's Technical Record Book. Even by 1963 this had become a major operation, described later by Mike Igglesden, involving vehicle hoists, a rolling road, a fuel laboratory for checking specific gravity



A hurried bite in Wales - Pat Stevens and Peter Lear

and a very large number of people including a number of paid professionals.

The Route

To spread the event around the country, Mobil would suggest different regions each year. The route finding team - mainly Holly, Pat and Joy Stevens, Mick Harris and Stan and Vera Chisman - after prolonged study of Ordnance Survey maps, hotel guides and lists of Mobil petrol stations - would then set forth. It took an immense amount of work to piece together a whole route and after that to write the elaborate route book, get it checked and finally get it re-checked at the last moment because something always changed. Bill Bonney has more to say about this later.

Over the course of the years this team developed an amazing knowledge of the most obscure districts and you would often hear Pat and Mick, who had photographic memories, looking at their maps and plotting a new route from their armchairs. "Do you remember," Pat would say, "where that road comes down the hill past Jones's farm?" "Yes," Mick would reply, "you pass three haystacks on the left and then it turns sharp right opposite the mountain rescue hut." RAC regulations didn't allow us to set an average speed higher than 30 mph on the public roads but, by incorporating large cities and long sections on obscure and hilly minor roads, even that speed could be made challenging to drivers who were trying not to use the brakes or the lower gears.



The Bulmers in the Lotus XI, 1956. The floor was too well sealed and wouldn't let the rain out

However, since we could set any average we liked on private circuits, we decided to incorporate a one-hour section on the Goodwood circuit in 1956. It was essential that we didn't ask the impossible and so we spent a whole day there timing a wide variety of cars to find out what was the best they could do and then, of course, scaling this down by a large safety margin. I later found that I could achieve the sports class schedule in the aerodynamic Lotus 11 Climax with only three bursts of top gear acceleration per lap, remaining in neutral with the engine switched off the rest of the time. In subsequent years we used Oulton Park, Silverstone, Mallory Park and Brands Hatch.

We already knew that peculiar driving techniques were highly advantageous because petrol engines are usually at their most efficient when working at about three quarters of full load in the middle rpm range. In practice this meant accelerating in the highest possible gear and then switching off and coasting in neutral as far as possible - sometimes repeating several times a mile. We found that driving like this for a thousand miles demanded prodigious anticipation and concentration but could reward you with a 50% increase in mpg. It was a technique that we had ourselves developed and refined for the Cheltenham MC events, in which Joe Lowrey and I had averaged over 60 mpg in a Jowett Javelin. But this was definitely not the sort of result that Mobil wanted so, ironically, we now had to find some way to prevent it.

Where are they now?

We seem to have outlived most of our Mobil colleagues except Colin Cook who escaped from executive stress by opting out at an early age. He and his artist wife Carol became close friends of ours until they emigrated to Tasmania in the seventies. They now live a relaxed life in a hippy district on the East Australian coast.

I asked him for his Mobil reminiscences and he replied that his only really abiding memory was the horrified look on the face of his boss (Bert Perkins) whenever we met at a restaurant and he watched Holly chew his way rapidly through that month's expense allowance.

CHB

The only answer seemed to be to carry impartial observers, but who would suffer this job in return for little more than bare subsistence? Technical students might regard it as an enjoyable adventure, we thought, and we had a supply close to hand at the RAE Apprentice School. Holly persuaded the School authorities that it was a necessary part of a liberal technical education and a deal was made. There were some difficulties like morning sickness and the occasional tendency for them to bond enthusiastically with the team whose car they were in, rather than policing it, but this will be recounted later by their erstwhile leader, Dave Wilson, who used to carry reserve observers round the course.

There were four or five travelling officials apart from the refuellers and timekeepers. The pilot car (usually Pat Stevens), starting one hour ahead of the first competitor, ensured that the marshals were in place (the right place), waited for them if they weren't and performed miracles of impromptu re-routing if the local authorities had just dug up our road (which often happened). So the competitors were liable to catch him up. The Clerk of the Course (Holly) and two deputies (Bulmer and Igglesden) would be scattered through the field dealing with frequent crises



1961 Holly's most expensive transport - the Aston Martin DB4
Stan Chisman (R) admires

en route, like accidents, breakdowns and disasters at eating and refuelling stops. Behind the event was the back marker (usually Mick Harris) who followed the last competitor, closed the route checks and collected the time sheets; except, of course, when competitors vanished when he would have to take on the role of St Bernard.

A change was made in 1962 because the Mobil marketing and publicity people were not happy with class winners only. All proper competitions, they said, must have a separate overall winner to make an impact on the press and public. Couldn't we devise some overall figure of merit - like ton-miles per gallon? This led to extensive analysis of previous results to find a formula that was a reasonable fit yet simple enough for the results team to calculate under pressure (remember they didn't even have electronic calculators then, let alone computers). Much of the analysis was done by Mike Igglesden and his Figure of Merit formula was twice adjusted later. If we were still running the event I suppose we could derive a figure simply by comparing actual mpg with the official EEC test results that now exist for every model.

At the end of 1973 Mobil decided to withdraw from the event permanently, a strange decision we thought with the world fuel crisis of 1973/74 bringing acute shortage and the threat of petrol rationing, but it was the global decision of all the oil companies.

Later Events

Total Oil (GB) then took over sponsorship, starting with a one-day "holding" event on 17 September, 1974, confined because of lack of time to the Brands Hatch short circuit. The various classes ran for one hour each and pre-event scrutiny and fuelling was done the day before - we had bought the necessary equipment from Mobil. With more time for organisation the events in 1975, '76 and '77 reverted to a 3-day, thousand mile format, starting from Harrogate, Central London and Coventry respectively. But nothing was quite so lavish because the Mobil budget had been some £70,000 per event (excluding post-event advertising) and the Total budget about half as much.

Of the original organising committee only Pat Stevens (as Chairman) and I still remained - Bert Fountain had died in 1966 - but we had been joined by Dick Cawthorne, Stan Chisman, Mick Harris, Mike Igglesden and Dave Wilson, with Stan now playing a major part as Technical Secretary and Chief Marshal. As an innovation for the 1975 event there were two new classes for modified cars in addition to the four for standard cars and in 1976 an attempt was made to broaden the base with a series of regional club events in October and November, acting as qualifying runs for an H&B Club Final in December which was organised by Dave Wilson over a 200 mile route.

After the 1977 event Total withdrew - I think they had begun to realise not only that the heyday of economy events had passed but also that they remained indissolubly linked to the name Mobil. But H&B still had the expertise and the equipment and we tried to keep things alive with an unsponsored 400 mile overnight event, based on Aldershot, in September 1978 and then the 3-day BP Petrol Stretching Run based on Donington Park in October 1979. This comprised a day of track tests and then a traditional road route with a night stop at Sandiacre. Competitors were not enthusiastic about the track sections and the whole event was not very well funded.

In 1980 Pat Stevens died. After Holly's death in 1963 he and Joy had carried the main burden of a very demanding year-long job - Secretary of the Meeting, Clerk of the Course, chief route finder and liaison with our paymasters, the sponsors. Some of us on the Economy Run organising committee were beginning to think that after 25 years his death also marked the end of an era. Paradoxically, as the critical importance of fuel consumption continued to grow after 1974 and manufacturers were forced by legislation to take it more and more seriously, its attraction as a sport and its publicity value seemed to diminish. Fuel economy had turned professional.

The Club Committee was more optimistic and their continuing efforts to attract new sponsors after 1980 are described later by Bill Bonney.

Charles Bulmer

Keeping the competitors honest

Mike Igglesden



1963 Scrutiny Area

My involvement with the Economy Run started with the third event. I helped Charles Bulmer in 1957 at The Royal Ascot hotel (start and finish) and then marshalled a check point in Warwick. Sleeping late on my return home, I had a panic call from Buxton to do an express delivery of Holly Birkett's dinner suit which he had left at Ascot; unsurprisingly to anyone who remembers Holly's size, he couldn't find an alternative to fit him that evening. This led to my being accepted as a useful member of the team, to developing a formula for a Figure of Merit which would give all competitors an even chance of a win, regardless of class, and then to becoming Technical Secretary of the event some years later.

Preparation

At a very early stage the organising committee had to decide on the venue for the Start and the Scrutiny Area. We needed plenty of space and the Harrogate Exhibition Hall and the bus garages at Worthing and Edinburgh were ideal.

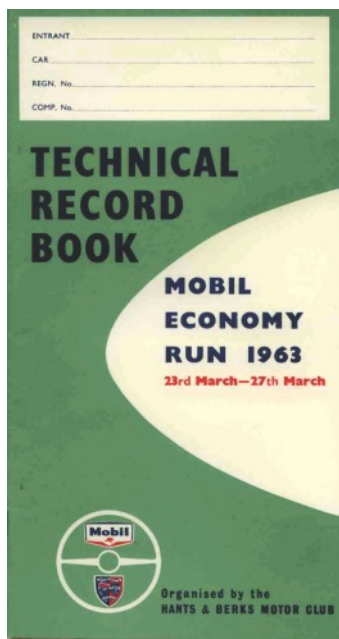
Each year the Technical Committee discussed what entrants might do to improve their performance, from preloading the lubrication system with very thin oil to less honest means such as using soluble plugs to release fuel gradually from a hidden reservoir after the initial draining of the tank; we had to decide how we could check, and what we could do if we found any delinquents.

We were at pains to avoid penalties, which would mean wasted entries, so we tried to forewarn competitors of changes. One example was the discovery that some BMC cars with SU carburettors could gain 10% in economy with 10 degrees over-advance so we introduced the checking of TDC markings on the flywheel to prevent deception of the Crypton timing test. By the time the Regulations came out, traditionally on 1 December, we were pretty far advanced with the planning of the scrutiny area layout, and we had a draft list of scrutineers and officials.

I should explain that the only way known to motor sport law (the 'Blue Book') to specify standard condition, at that time anyway, was to make entrants declare that their cars would comply with "the specification as usually supplied for the UK market with no modifications or additions", and then demand enough details to ensure that we could identify the model precisely. We could then invoke Article 77 of the GCRs of the RAC which said that you must offer the car at Scrutiny to the exact definition given in your Entry Form. This form was in three parts: the first enabled the would-be entrant to offer several different models, the second gave the exact details of the car that had been selected by us and the third covered competition licence numbers and other details that might be available only just before the run.

Unfortunately, some entrants (including manufacturers) didn't seem to be able to fill up their forms very well, and Brewster Cobb, Robin

Birchall and I spent a long time putting them right. Otherwise we should have had Minis turning up without final drives, others with no doors, no carburettors, downdraught distributors and some very odd tyres (one very popular make was "Undecided"). It was surprising how many variations had occurred over the years, particularly on the smaller cars with fixed jet carburettors, which had to be reconciled with each car's production date; sometimes, we began to feel we knew more than the manufacturers did. Finally, we provided SU, Solex, Zenith, Autolite and Crypton with a list of what was actually fitted to current production so they could determine the exact jets and the ignition advance curves.



The next task was to fill up the Technical Record Books, which accompanied each car through

Scrutiny, with all the specific items that would be checked at Scrutiny and might have to be examined after the run. Although we tried to maintain an up-to-date bible of technical specifications, by the time we had checked various items against literature provided by the makers, it took at least ten hours' work to complete the forty books; mostly man-hours, but also a few woman-hours and even child slave-labour hours.

My notebooks were full of flow-diagrams showing how it should be possible to get a car through the whole Scrutiny process in 3½ hours (14 units of 15 minutes each). The stages, some of which occupied more than one unit, comprised:

Draining all oils and refilling with the appropriate Mobil oil.

Looking for changes to tyres, signs of weight or drag reduction, checking all switches, overdrive etc., suspicious

electrical leads, fuel pipes, signs of fuel tank modifications, then on to the rolling road for axle ratio checking.

Checking for signs of ignition trickery, meddling with the carburettor, including manifold mods, air bleeds, automatic choke override and even correct size of battery.

Carburettor manufacturers' experts checked every detail and replaced jets with factory items.

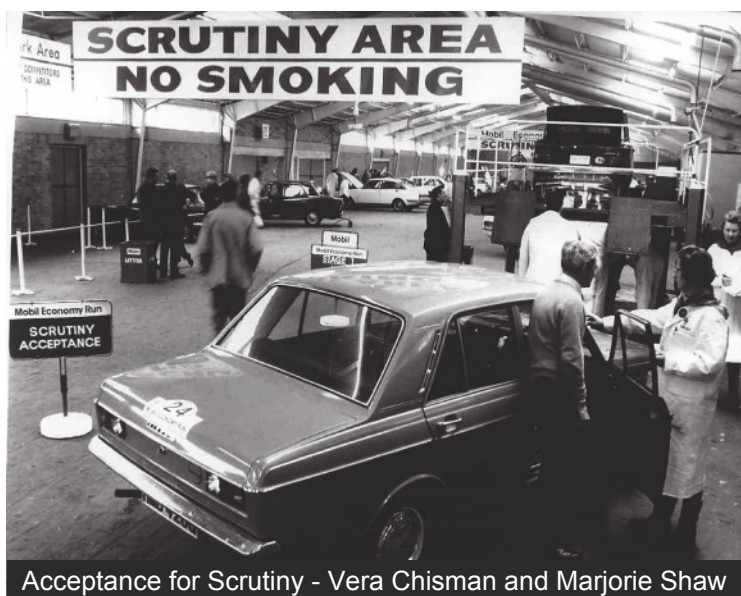
We then did a 10 mile engine warming run and speedo calibration with observer, followed by carburettor adjustment by the expert and a running test when operation of speedometer, instruments, overdrive or automatic transmission and other items were checked on a rolling road.

There followed initial fuelling by draining the tank and refilling with amount requested by the competitor, an engine run to check for leaks and transfer to impound, the car being driven there with an observer and accepted (or not) by the competitor as in satisfactory running order.

At the end of the event, the further stages were:

Fuel measurement by draining and weighing the remaining fuel.

Examination of the car to check against any report of work done during the event, any crash damage and, for potential class leaders, a check on compression pressure. This might lead to dismantling for a full check of valve, cylinder and even combustion chamber dimensions or, in



Acceptance for Scrutiny - Vera Chisman and Marjorie Shaw



Zenith carburettor expert at work

fact, any of the things that we dared not do before for fear of being blamed for spoiling the car's performance.

On at least one occasion, a fuel tank was removed and cut open to find any crafty baffles that might trick the 'empty to empty' measurement system. This was done as a public warning to everyone, not particularly because we suspected the 'victim'.

The Scrutiny days

Scrutiny would begin on the Friday afternoon, in a large covered area like the Exhibition Hall at Harrogate, with 8 cars called to give us a leisurely practice for the system and provide us with a primed line for the Saturday morning. We called competitors to arrive at carefully chosen times so that the carburettor people could be fed steadily with the right type of carburettor - roughly one SU, one Zenith and one Solex every half-hour.

Naturally, in a complicated process practised only once a year, things never went as smoothly as we wished. Ignition checking was a tricky business, involving finding top dead centre before the electronic measurements could begin and it was difficult to prevent the competitors from getting a long lecture on the benefits of electronic tuning while their cars were being dealt with by the expert from Crypton or Sun.

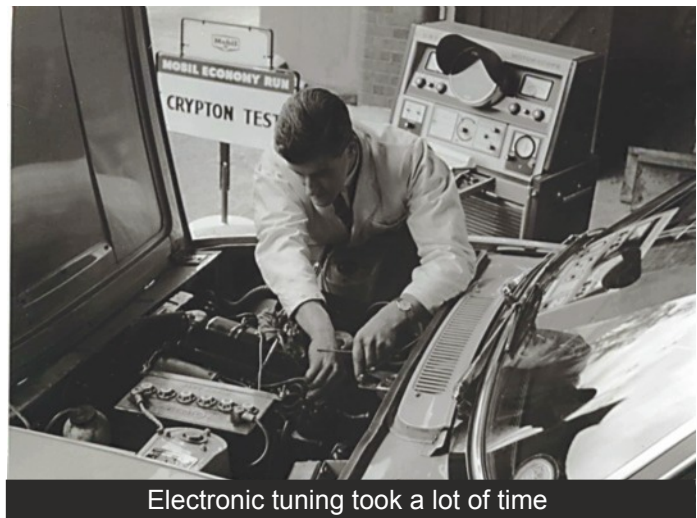
As we improved that process, we found that the bottleneck usually moved to the

carburettor stages. One or two twin-carburettor cars were a real problem (really difficult cars like the Imp Sport could spend up to three hours on the first of the carburettor stages instead of the planned three-quarters of an hour) and it didn't help that some cars came in very bad condition. A few competitors reckoned the organisation would do the preparation for them, which didn't indicate a very serious approach; the shining examples of good preparation usually returned the best results. And every year someone would ask, "Why don't you call competitors at carefully chosen times?"

Eventually we could repair to dinner and I could get ready for my other duty as Deputy Clerk of the Course. With my companion/navigator, I set off to enjoy mingling with the competitors to sort out problems. I usually managed to borrow an interesting car from one of the manufacturers but the real joy was that my responsibilities were quite different and were accompanied by relatively unrestrained driving (my co-drivers might have another description) in wonderful country. But that is another story.

Back to the Finish

At the end, remaining fuel was drained and weighed, overall consumption was calculated by the results team under John Bagley and Anne Wilford (now Jones) and the cars examined as described previously. Potential class winners were thoroughly looked at by the local dealers' mechanics, who stripped, checked and reassembled engines in a very short time - not



Electronic tuning took a lot of time

quite up to modern Formula 1 or World Rally Championship speed but very praiseworthy.

The run was a technical exercise and I believe that H&B was especially well able to organise and handle it because we had so many highly qualified, voluntary Scrutiny staff, nearly all from the RAE at Farnborough plus a few professional experts like David Small. They always coped, despite this being done only once a year without

rehearsal. All were able to act strictly, yet in a manner that always attracted praise from competitors. As one RAC Steward put it, in what other international event could officials and competitors drink together without suspicion of dirty dealings? It gave me great satisfaction to be part of it.

Mike Igglesden

A NOTE ON THE H&B FORMULA.

Since about 1960, Mobil had been asking for an outright winner based on the performance of the driver (not the car) rather than four class winners based on engine size. We had our own technical interest in the variation of consumption with various parameters of the cars. We had long debates and read learned papers. The idea of ton-miles per gallon has existed since the days of Lanchester but others ranged from subjective handicapping (soon abandoned) to very complicated technical formulae unsuited to rapid computation (no electronic computers then). Eventually we developed an idea (suggested by Joe Lowrey) that uses engine size, gearing and car weight to predict the gallons used over, say, 1000 miles:

$$G = aL/M + bW + c \quad \text{where } \begin{array}{l} G = \text{gallons used} \\ L = \text{engine capacity (litres)} \\ M = \text{mph per 1000 rpm} \\ W = \text{homologated weight (lb)} \\ a, b \text{ and } c \text{ are empirical constants} \end{array}$$

In effect, this combines a swept volume and gearing component, ton-mpg and straight mpg. The constants a, b and c were deduced by comparing equally meritorious performances across all classes over several years, giving:

$$G = 145L/M + 0.0035W + 5 \quad (\text{introduced in 1962})$$

Roughly speaking, a mid-range 1.5-litre would use $14 + 9 + 5 = 28$ gall (equivalent to 36mpg). The calculated value of G was compared with the actual consumption to produce a Figure of Merit across all classes. Later, weight was quoted in Kg and other adjustments were made in the light of experience so that, by 1965, it became inverted to give a 'bogey mpg' rather than 'bogey gallons' for the event:

$$\text{MPG} = 1000/(140L/M + 0.008W + 5)$$

Later still, in 1973, the weight-related component was modified again in two respects, to become $0.006W$ where W now had 225 Kg added to the homologated weight to represent the weight of the crew. There it remained to the end.

We never came to a satisfactory adjustment for automatic transmissions. There was no obvious technical parameter, and past results were inadequate in number or quality to permit conclusive analysis. However, it was used as it stood from 1970 to produce the winner of the automatics (Class V) and in 1971, happily, it gave the award to Joe & Margaret Lowrey in their Rolls Royce. They achieved 16.595mpg (Figure of Merit 1.017); this was also the second Figure of Merit overall, less than 2 percentage points below the best (1.031) by an Austin 1800 with 36.69mpg.

However, the Figure of Merit did serve to provide a reasonable measure of performance across and within the classes and, although not enthusiastically adopted by Mobil, it also became the criterion for the H&B Driver's Award (the Holland Birkett Award).

MSI

Adventures of the Chief Timekeeper (1955 to 1962)

John Higginson

I was very fortunate in being able to call on my experienced pals Peter Cole and David Morgan as assistants - we were all about 25! Only Peter was credited as 'Deputy' in the programme (he sadly died twenty years ago) but fortunately David Morgan still survives. This illustrates how friends (and in some cases friends of friends) had to be 'volunteered' in the early years to make up the manpower required. By year five or six, Pat Stevens was turning volunteers away.

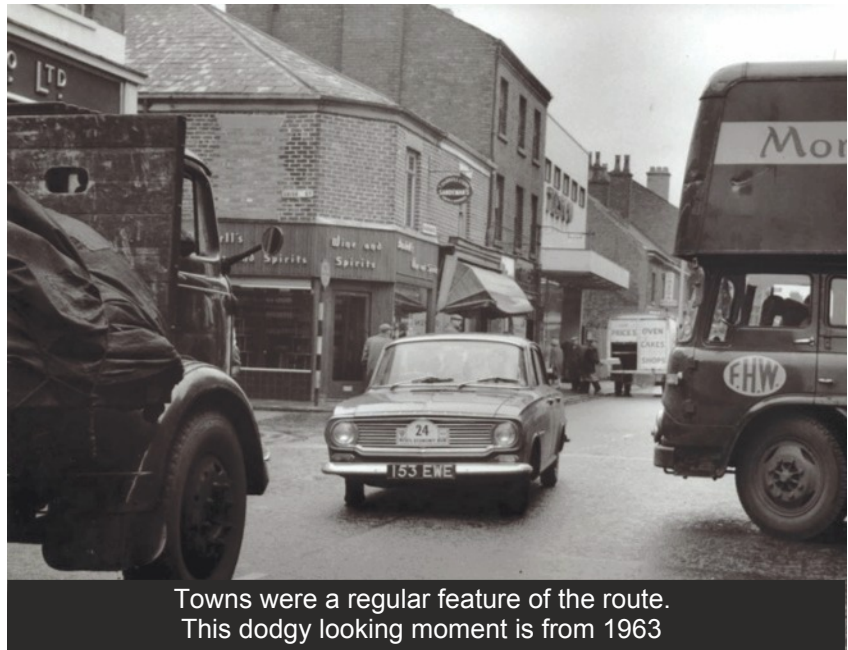
Smiths Instruments were providing suitable timepieces and, as I was working in Westminster, I had the task of collecting and returning the clocks to their Cricklewood factory. Three clocks were supplied for each timekeeping team and for the first year Smiths, with considerable experience in supplying rally competitors, provided their standard and accurate 2½ inch black faced dashboard instruments which required little or no adjustment during the run. Mobil thought these clocks were insufficiently prominent in 'action' photographs of competitors booking in and out

of time controls so Smiths were later asked to supply larger timepieces - 'cabin' type clocks with white dials of about 6½ inches diameter. A similar but still larger model was supplied for elevated display by the start line banner under which, 'personalities' or civic worthies waved the Mobil Pegasus flag. The accuracy of these was appalling and they required constant adjustment by reference to the Greenwich time signals but publicity, of course, was all-important to the Company and sometimes conflicted with the regulations of the event, as will become apparent.

The large 'prestige' Mobil station on the A4 at Shepherds Hill, West Reading was used for scrutineering and fuelling before the start of the first run and the Company insisted that the petrol filler cap and bonnet of each competitor should be ceremonially 'sealed' for the benefit of photographers and the motoring press in particular. The roadbooks had check boxes for

'seals intact'. I recall Bob Gotts almost screaming with frustration as the lengths of black Bostik sealing strip carefully applied and 'stamped' would in some cases immediately fall off in the hot sunshine of that June afternoon. The later introduction of RAE apprentices as observers circumvented the problem.

The Mobil publicity machine was slow to start that first year. Time controls were sited at filling stations of various sizes, some inconveniently small as the result of the Company's headlong



Towns were a regular feature of the route. This dodgy looking moment is from 1963

rush to acquire as many outlets as possible, but each station received the same quantity of red, white and blue bunting so the smaller ones were ridiculously over-dressed. They had appointed a small firm of contractors from the Black Country to put the decoration up just before the arrival of the competitors and remove it once they had passed through. This caused the following dialect clash at a time control in Weymouth, Dorset:

Contractor to assistant, "Have you got the pussy's ear notice, Fred?"

Assistant, "Right then, the pussy's ear?"

Contractor, "Aye."

We watched in amazement as a domestic stepladder was produced and a large banner

Timekeeper's transport

I went to a business conference where one of the speakers was the Sales Director of Ford Motor Company. We got talking and I told him of my exploits with H&B on the Mobil Economy Runs. He offered us an ex-works Capri to use for marshalling on the Mobil. Considering it was 3 litres it wasn't very fast. Next time we had an ex-works Escort RS 16 valve. It was claimed to have a top speed of about 135 mph but I only managed to squeeze 133 out of it. The only thing that gave the game away was a badge on the side, and by the time you'd seen that it was too late. On another occasion we borrowed an Escort Mexico, an ex-Monte Carlo race car in 'yuck green'. John Hadnutt and I did timing at the Start of the Mobil and then drove a hundred miles to time in the runners at lunch with a passage control on the way. One fellow asked if all the marshals had the same cars, "You seem to be everywhere." It became quite a hobby to start off the cars then try to catch them all up by lunchtime. I think we made it to number four on one occasion.

RWK

unfurled and tied securely with string. "MOBIL ECONOMY RUN PASSES HERE", it said. This firm did not reappear on subsequent runs.

I think it was on the second run that Georges Chatterre competed in his 2CV which had achieved success in the French Mobil event. He was volatile and expressive but adamant that he could neither *parlez anglais* nor comprehend the English spoken or written word. The entire resources of the Club were put to the test to find an interpreter - who was it? At the first time control of his first British Run he was still in a Gallic rage at the organisers and spluttering, "*Il faut, il faut, il faut.*" Why does everything have to be '*il faut!*'?"

The President of Mobil GB, J.C. Gridley, was much in evidence in the early stages of that event. At the half way point he attended the competitors' dinner at the Grand Atlantic Hotel, Weston-Super-Mare and spent the night there.

Arrangements had been made for the timekeepers and other start line personnel to be served with an early breakfast and at the appointed time we were sitting around waiting for hotel service. None was forthcoming - the kitchen and reception areas were deserted.

Enter John Gridley with hand luggage. He had been promised breakfast before departing for an important early meeting at Westminster. Frequent expeditions set out to the hotel kitchen. We banged doors and rang bells without result and eventually President Gridley decided that he would have to cut breakfast and leave for London. We helped him with his luggage to the hotel entrance. This time he was baffled as well as hungry - the hotel doors were securely locked.

A furious President now sought a way of escape. The lounge had huge double hung sash windows to give guests an uninterrupted view of the Bristol Channel and six marshals eventually managed to lift a bottom sash. We watched in awe as the expensive suiting of the President collected salt encrustation and grime as he slid over the sill and dropped to the ground while his luggage was passed down through the open window. It was the photo opportunity of the entire run but, fortunately for the Company, no cameras were at hand. We never got any breakfast that morning since, by the time the last competitor had been flagged off, service had finished in the dining room. This hotel was not used again.

The year that Holly Birkett, as Clerk of the Course, wangled an Austin Healey 3000 for his transport he managed (exceptionally) to visit



Timekeepers could get cold, 1965 at Harrogate

most of the time controls. The scene is a large Mobil station on the outskirts of Harrogate with the timing crew expecting the first competitor in late afternoon. Enter a be-capped Birkett grumbling at his conveyance. "It's going squeak, squeak," he said which seemed a churlish comment from one who invariably drove vehicles with pieces of bodywork that could be heard squealing in protest. As an afterthought he added, "Everyone has found the course through the Dales very difficult and some will



A few hills helped to keep figures sensible, 1970

be extremely short of time. Mobil do not like anybody to be late, John, so please don't record them as late." I took a dim view of this and told him so but Birkett could be inscrutable at times and chose to be so at that moment. Would he have condoned breaching the regulations? We never found out and never discussed the incident again. In fact two or three crews were penalised and their fuel consumption figures suffered accordingly.

It was also in the Harrogate area on another run in the late fifties that I was nearly immobilised. Both timekeeper crews usually worked to a very tight schedule with hardly any spare time but, on that particular Sunday morning, we had two or three hours before we had to leave for our next control. I thought I would like to photograph some of the surroundings in the early spring sunshine and drove the Magnette northwards until the engine stuttered and expired. It was fuel starvation - the SU pump in the boot was too hot to touch and it had obviously seized for good.

Pegasus or lady luck took pity - a passing police patrol stopped and quickly summed up the problem. "There is a spare parts shop next to the (police) station and the owner lives over it." We drove some six miles to Hebden Bridge and, with my police escort, the shop duly opened for me on a Sunday and produced a spare pump. Back to the Magnette and in fifteen minutes I was on the road again, accompanied by a strong smell of petrol. I have had several brushes with the police in succeeding years, none of them at all helpful, but my criticisms have been much

softened by that Yorkshire incident. Ever afterwards on our BMC vehicles I carried a spare petrol pump and never needed it.

My hard worked Deputies, Peter Cole and David Morgan, were naturally given all the time controls in Wales, the Marches and generally everything west of longitude 2° 30'W. However, on the Run in question, this crew had to deal with an early morning seafront control at Worthing. The scene now becomes that town centre at about 3am. It is raining heavily and from the northwest enters the timekeepers' travel-stained Hillman Minx which had motored non-stop through the night from some remote location. David slowed to study the route instructions. Suddenly a police constable appeared in front, arms waving from under a soaking wet cape. David wound down his window and the following dialogue ensued:

Wet police constable to tired driver, "Can you tell me where you are going sir?"

Tired driver, "We are looking for a filling station."

W.p.c, "They are all shut this time of the morning."

T.d., "We know that."

The policeman reached for his notebook, his worst suspicions aroused and then fully alerted when he saw the three clocks on the back seat. It took a little while for the timekeepers to convince the law of the legality of their journey

but eventually they parted on good terms. The constable had come on duty at midnight and the Minx was the first moving vehicle he had seen.

Years later, after Sheilah and I had moved to East Yorkshire where we were isolated from participation in Club events for twenty years, I had an unexpected call from the Club asking us to marshal at an Economy Run daytime route check. The location was Emley Top, a wild moorland height between Huddersfield and Barnsley which we knew. The only structures to be seen on the summit were a communications mast, a telephone box and a very good pub, the Three Acres. We were miffed to find that the control opening times didn't fit those of the pub but packed a thermos instead.

We duly dealt with the competitors on a cold, drizzly and windswept morning with the top of the mast lost in mist. There was a note attached to the bottom of the check sheet, "please telephone central control to report that all cars have passed through". Off I went to the telephone box. That was the year when the sponsors had decided to base the event at a hotel in Kensington. I dialled the number from

the cold, damp and draughty box and gave my message. An elfin female voice answered.

"Nobody ever bothers to telephone us or tell us anything at all and we are so terribly bored, why don't you come up and see us?"

I grinned as I put the 'phone down, partly because the contrast between Emley Top and Kensington was so great, and partly because I was certain that I would never again get a similar invitation. I forgot that central control knew very well that I was at a safe distance, nearly two hundred miles away up the A1.

Today, the Club Committee seems to have forgotten that the healthy Club bank balance is largely the result of the members of those days working so hard on those Mobil Economy Runs. The events relied absolutely on the efficiency and expertise of the technical members and none of the Runs could have been mounted without them. Fortunately, I never got mixed up with any of the politics of Company v Club.

John Higginson

Travels with observers – and promotion to the Pilot Car

Dave Wilson

My involvement with H&B started in 1956 when the Club was 10 years old and I was 19. With a friend who wanted to join the 750 Motor Club, we called on Holland Birkett (then President of the 750 MC) at his veterinary surgery in Fleet, looking for entry forms. We admitted that we were apprentices at RAE, Farnborough and Holly said he had written to the Principal of our college asking to use RAE apprentices as riding observers on the Mobilgas Economy Run. He had had no reply. My friend was good at politics and suggested that Holly should ring our Principal and tell him that the matter was urgent and that Imperial College would be asked to supply the observers if Farnborough couldn't. This ploy produced instant agreement and, within the week, notices went up

around the college asking for volunteers.

That year, 1956, was the first time that observers were used. The start was from Phyllis Court, Henley and the event ran continuously, including an hour on the Goodwood circuit



Anxious competitor waits as his remaining fuel is weighed



Results maestro, John Bagley works out diversion allowances - snow, perhaps. Observers' reports were evidence

where the observers were allocated to different cars, and then via the Cheddar Gorge to Weston-Super-Mare, where they were changed. Those who had ridden the first half were relieved by others who had been taken by bus to Weston. The warm beds vacated by the "second shift" were gratefully taken up by those who had completed their duties at Weston. Competitors had to drive down to the West Country and return to Henley with no more than the odd meal break.

My memories are of a wet start at Henley, of being allocated to a Borgward Isabella Combi, the crew of which smoked incessantly and refused to open the windows because they were trying to save fuel, of being driven at irresponsible speeds through hill fog over the downs to Goodwood, of watching Charles Bulmer circulating at Goodwood in the rain in a Lotus XI, of having a terrible headache, of being driven down the Cheddar Gorge in a VW Beetle by Bill Bengry, of being most grateful to be taking over a bed of any sort after my experiences and of being treated to caviare in the back of a garage in Wells Road, Bath (a route check for the returning competitors) on the way back to Henley by coach. I also remember the shiny new leather wallet with Mobilgas logo and the two crisp new £1 notes inside it and feeling very ill prepared for my ONC exams the following day back in college.

The next year, I was promoted to Deputy Chief Observer (because I had become the

Chairman of the College Motor Club and the Chief Observer didn't drive) so I was the one putting up notices seeking volunteers. This was my first experience of management and it has stood me in good stead ever since. I was privileged to attend meetings of the organising committee and to witness the endless trouble of very able H&B volunteers to ensure that the event ran smoothly. I did route plotting expeditions with Pat Stevens and spending weekends driving around the biggest hills we could find and living in posh hotels was a great

pleasure. The route that year took us to the Yorkshire Dales and was particularly destructive to the competing cars. I tried to pick up the stranded observers from badly damaged cars and finished up, in the middle of the night, returning to Buxton for a Mobilgas reception with 12 of them in a Mk.2 Ford Zodiac. Other memories include being overtaken at very high speed by John and Sheila Higginson in an MG ZB Mquette and filling my car with Esso in Ambleside (with Mobilgas Economy Run messages emblazoned across all the doors) because no Mobilgas could be found within range.

For several years afterwards I was the Chief Observer, all references to the Students' Union having been abandoned. Leaving the college and my apprenticeship in 1959 meant that to continue my involvement I had to join the Club. I still had some function at every event but almost missed the 1960 one (based in Worthing) when I couldn't get time off a Royal Air Force



Another delay allowance - closed level crossing

course (I had joined for three years to avoid National Service). I did, however, manage to do a late evening stint as a car park guard in company with Derek Buckler.

As my time in the RAF was spent predominantly in Norfolk it was convenient to help Holly by collecting from the Lotus works the primrose coloured Elite which he was to use as Clerk of the Course. On returning the car to Cheshunt, I found that my Ford van had been broken into and the radio stolen. Lotus asked to keep the van in case it contained any evidence that might help in catching the thief - they had things missing as well. How was I to manage without my van, I asked? Perhaps I could manage with the Lotus, they said. Eventually, I had to pester them to give me back my van, as the Elite was wearing out rapidly but there was a certain kudos in appearing at work in it each day and it did wonders for my image.

After Holly's flying accident in 1963, Pat Stevens became Clerk of the Course and I drove the Pilot Car with Peter Lear. My successors as Chief Observer included Graham Rood and Tony Bedingfield (later to become our Club Chairman). My job required me to move around the country, limiting the time I could spend on Club duties, so I really was, for many years, an "Economy Run" member. Then, just as fuel economy was becoming a big issue, Mobil dropped their support and Total took over, then BP, then Redex and, improbably, Memorex. Bill Bonney has more to say about this phase later.

The Economy Runs were all fun in their various ways but the organisation and participation in the Mobil years remains the high point for me.

Dave Wilson

Plotting the route – apprenticeship with Mick Harris

In the late 1960s my employer, the SEB, moved me from my home town of Portsmouth to Aldershot where I was to undertake my first management assignment. The group with which I was to work included Mick Harris, a long-term Club member and, as I was soon to find out, one of the leading lights of the Club's Economy Run organising team.

Mick's enthusiasm for all things motoring linked with my own interests which, at that time, revolved around ownership of a series of sports cars, membership of several one make clubs and annual pilgrimages to VSCC Silverstone and several hill climbs. Within a month of joining H&B in November 1971, I was volunteered for active service on the Mobil Economy Run planned for the following April. Little did I know at this stage the impact my involvement with H&B would have on my next three decades.

Bill Bonney



Another scenic route check. Heather Bulmer (R) chats with John and Beryl Nelms, ready for anything with trailer and camping gear

Mick explained how the economy event was planned and run. Once the 1000 mile route had been decided in outline and marked on Ordnance Survey maps, it was split into four sections and he, along with other Club members, went off to drive and detail their sector. That all makes sense now, but then I only knew what OS maps were because I had been introduced to

them during my training when working with the company's surveyors planning new sections of overhead electricity lines. Mick asked me if I would co-drive with him on this route-detailing exercise over the weekend. The plan was that I would meet him at his house in Church Crookham on the Friday and we would then drive north, making for the Scottish borders and spending Saturday and Sunday working our way around the last 250 miles of the route back to Harrogate.

This turned out to be a real adventure for more than one reason. First, we drove on roads and through parts of England and Scotland that I had never even heard of. We seemed to find and climb every hill on each of the maps we traversed and I soon got a good grounding in navigation and map reading and mastered the route detailing shorthand that had been developed over the years.

The next module of my economy run apprenticeship took place early in 1972 when we were off again checking a different 250 mile section of the route, detailed by others in the team, to make a last check on the route and look for errors in the (now typed) Road Book. We had already driven over 1000 miles and this was before the event had even started.

At the pre-event scrutiny at Harrogate on 8 April 1972 I found myself working with Jack Booth, a fellow electrical engineer from our Aldershot office, and club member Jack Shaw, alongside several Crypton technicians armed with their latest engine testing equipment. Our task was to undertake a detailed check on the cars' ignition systems, including static timing, centrifugal and vacuum advance curves and resetting to manufacturer's specification. The bonus for getting all the cars through promptly was to have your own car checked over and set-up by the Crypton experts.

My last and the most demanding task was to co-drive with Mick Harris as Back Marker - a sort of tail-end Charlie. We had to follow the last competitor away from the start to the first Route Control, collect the route check cards from the marshal and then continue to subsequent controls closing the route as we went. Bearing in mind that they were spaced about every thirty

miles along the route and that we spent three to five minutes at each, we had to average somewhat more than the 30 mph that the competitors were required to maintain. Our ambition was to be behind that last car before it reached each control. This was the task that taught me a great deal about fast driving when in the right hand seat and calling junctions accurately when in the navigator's seat. We found that a maximum of two hours behind the



1963 Crypton rolling road tuning

wheel was about the most you could do and we would then change drivers and alternate on this basis for 500 miles each day.

The other dimension of the Back Marker's job was dictated by the Pilot Car which was driven by Dave Wilson and started about an hour before the first competitor. If the route was blocked for any reason, his task was to erect diversion signs and then arrow the new section until it returned to the original route. We had to dismantle and collect all these signs. As Dave Wilson was six foot four and I was the tallest in our car it fell to me to remove these temporary decorations from all manner of places but generally fairly high up on street furniture or war memorials.

When the 1973 Mobil came around I was well up to speed and again enjoyed the route detailing, checking and back marking. But unfortunately this was the end of the line with Mobil after a partnership that had developed over 19 years. They were pulling the plug on sponsorship of all their economy events worldwide.

The final decade - a variety of partners

Bill Bonney

As Charles Bulmer noted, the death of Pat Stevens in 1980 coincided with loss of sponsorship and perhaps signalled a natural end to the series. Also, the RAC made changes to fixed route public relations regulations, requiring organising clubs to contact all premises used at night on other than A and B roads, giving them details of the event and inviting comment. However, the Club Committee felt that we should try to continue if we possibly could.

By March 1981 we had received the good news that Mobil were prepared to contribute £3500 towards an event but did not wish their name to be associated with it because a home brewed event would necessarily be of lower status than the International Mobil Economy Runs and they didn't want comparisons between them. Stan and Vera Chisman took on most of the route planning work for what would be the second H&B economy run and, as before, many members contributed to the organisation and made their premises available to the event. It attracted just 26 entries, even though the entry fee had been held down to £50 per car. Some thought the low entry was due to this event breaking with tradition and cars not carrying independent observers.

In May 1982 I had an enquiry from a PR company representing the Redex organisation and we prepared outline proposals for them. Within days they confirmed their wish to proceed and to use the event to launch their re-vamped Redex product. It would start in London, with the overnight stop in Manchester, and they wanted it to be run in late October that year which brought real pressures on the organisation.

It was first proposed to re-use a route that had been used in 1976 to minimise route organisation costs and time but after further discussions it was agreed to put the event back to 19-22 March 1983 to give a more realistic organisation period. Although a large number of

experienced marshals took part, the organising committee was completely new, with Keith Simpson as Secretary of the Meeting and myself as Clerk of the Course. By October we had our route approved by the RAC, the necessary Permit had been issued, the regulations were being printed and general organisation was well advanced. This Redex Economy Run put the Club back on the map, gaining good publicity for both the event sponsors and organisers.



Economy Drive 1975 Total ED Dick and Nan Cawthorne

However, by January 1985, no new sponsors had been found and we decided to run what would be the third H&B Economy Run. Past competitors were keen to see a further event, including our own Joe Lowrey who made a number of constructive suggestions, one being the possibility of using the Scatter principle, spacing three points at the corners of a triangle and requiring competitors to visit two of them. The RAC Motor Sports Association said they had no objection to the Club running it as a Scatter under a Waiver of Permit, thereby saving route preparation costs and the PR work.

Coincidentally Keith Simpson had discussions with Memtek (Memorex) who said they might be prepared to sponsor an event for a sum of £5000. After a further meeting with Mr Suri of Memorex, agreement was reached to run a short event, which would have to be in October 1985, with a more realistic budget of £5000 to £7000. It was agreed with the RAC MSA to run the event under a National permit with PR work only required around the Route Controls.

We now had very little time. After a couple of false starts the start and finish location was agreed as the Princes Water Ski Club, Bedfont, adjacent to the Memorex offices, but this location added costs for tentage as there were no other suitable buildings on site for the limited technical scrutiny that would be carried out pre- and post-event.

The Memorex Economy Run took place over the weekend of 19/20 October and broke new ground by running on the Scatter basis. The initial route took competitors from the start to Newport Pagnell Services on M1 via a control at Earls Court to coincide with Motorfair 1985. There was no chance of recording outstanding fuel economy figures on this section through London on a Saturday afternoon and Joe Lowrey calculated that it had reduced his overall economy on the whole event by 3-4 mpg.

Competitor feedback indicated that this new format provided crews with a reasonable challenge but in no way compared to the traditional fixed route. However, it did prove that a reduced cost event was still possible with a budget of just over £7000 compared with the £40,000 spent on the last 'proper' event. Although Memtek was very happy with the



Spoils of victory. Graham Hill presenting prizes to Economy Run stalwarts Stuart and Hugh Bladon. Total 1976

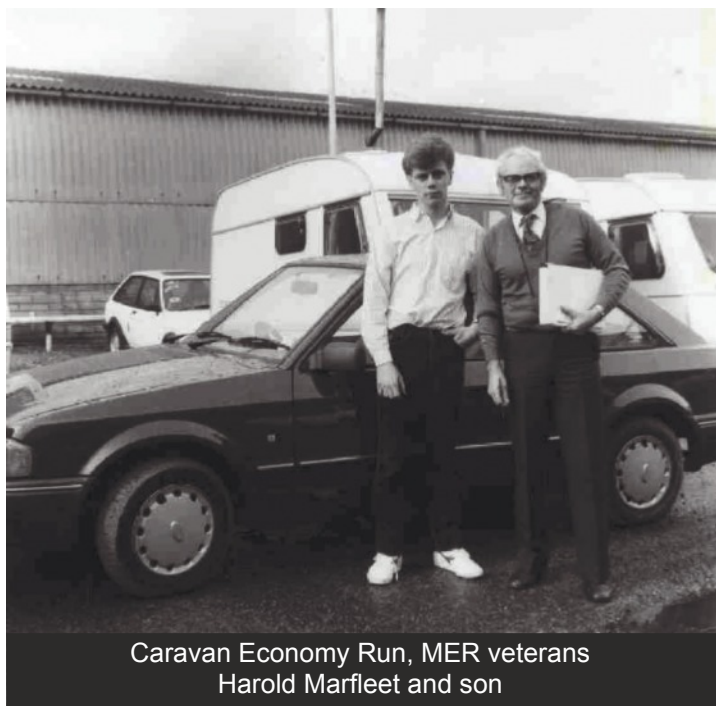
Club's organisation, their PR machine was hardly wound up and Mr Suri said that, if he were to sponsor a further event, he would take over the publicity himself rather than use a specialised PR company.

The follow-up event didn't happen but we found that the Caravan Club was still interested in a joint event if it provided a class for car and caravan combinations and by December they reached a tentative agreement with H&B to run a 500 mile fixed route event. They would pay £1000 towards the event and provide a further £600 for awards in the caravan classes. They had been involved in the legendary Caravan Road Rally and were keen to get a competitive event into the Club's annual calendar again. It would be known as the 1987 National Car and Caravan Economy Run.



Another successful regular, Ralph Stokes (R), receiving his award from Dick Cawthorne, 1983 Redex

The start and finish was at Isis Motors, Farnborough and the route would take both cars and caravan entries to Llandrindod Wells for a supper stop. Then the cars would take a longer route out to Tregaron over the Devil's Staircase whilst the caravans would take a main road route to Llandovery where the two events would merge and continue over the Brecon Beacons, then south and east back to Farnborough.



Caravan Economy Run, MER veterans
Harold Marfleet and son

Although he was well out of time, a huge cheer went up when he pulled into the finish in Farnborough at about lunchtime on the Sunday. The marshal incident, I learned at the finish, was that Dave Wilson, marshalling just west of the Devil's Staircase on the Tregaron road, had become marooned as his BMW automatic lost traction on the snow covered inclines but he did finally make it as road conditions improved.

In 1988 the Caravan Club decided to run its own event and H&B provided assistance for which it received a fee. They continued to run an annual Economy event using our scatter principle for the next five years, maintaining contact with H&B through my role as the event's Clerk of Course.

The one thing that will always stick in my mind was the problems just a few centimetres of snow caused to at least one caravan outfit and, as I would learn later, to at least one of our route marshals. As Clerk of the Course I found no problems before the supper stop but, coming out of Llandrindod Wells, I decided to follow the shorter caravan route to get to the finish in good time. As we left there was a slight sprinkling of snow on the ground and adhesion was fairly good but as we started to climb the Brecons conditions rapidly got worse. On a left hand bend in the road, following a long straight, my headlights picked up what appeared to be a caravan hanging over a fairly steep drop but luckily still tethered to its tow car, a substantial Volvo.

We slid to a halt to be greeted by the driver, long-term economy competitor Alf Charlton. I suggested I would drive to the next refuelling point and summon help – no mobile phones in those days. Alf would have none of this, "You carry on; we will soon have this sorted. See you at the finish." Alf held a very senior rank in his police force and apparently the local bobbies were soon in action and his outfit recovered.

Finally, at the November 1988 Club committee meeting, it was reluctantly agreed that much of the economy run equipment was now redundant and that it should be sold to save the ongoing burden of storage charges. This would be the end of the road as far as economy events were concerned until Stuart Bladon asked the Club to assist with the Mileage Marathons in the late 1990s.

Bill Bonney



Ending on a high note - Edinburgh 1962

The Legacy - MPG Marathons

Ironically it was just at the time when the motoring public was beginning to take interest in fuel economy that the long series of Economy Runs organised by the Hants & Berks Motor Club came to an end. But at the Geneva Show in 2000 I was approached by Ross Durkin, Editor of *Fleet World*, and asked to arrange an economy run to be called the MPG Marathon.

I responded at once that we would need staff to do the job properly, and added that I thought I would be able to produce the man (and woman) power to do it. Finance was no problem, replied Ross, and it turned out that he was tackling the fund-raising matter with a massive entry fee of £2,000 per vehicle.

When the entries started pouring in he was over the moon, with a final total of 35 vehicles.

My wife Jennetta and I had a lot of fun plotting the route, which I would do first on the OS Landranger maps, and then she would drive it while I dictated route instructions into a tape recorder. Then I would key out all the instructions and we would drive it again. I copied the long-established H&B system of route directions and abbreviations (L at RJ; SO at rbt).



We didn't have the wonderful printing capabilities of Mobil or Total, so everything was put in a large loose leaf book for each competitor with one sheet as the fuel log, and another as the time record.

Stuart Bladon

A small request in *Sidelights* for what I always called 'Marshal Aid' - evoking memories of America's war-time help - soon brought the offers tumbling in.

The start was based at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon, where the vehicles had all been filled the day before and the first day's run went



Ann and Dave Wilson taking it easy at the control above Machynlleth by the Wynford Vaughan-Thomas memorial

up to Buxton then back to Gaydon. In addition to three non-club marshals we were helped by John Higginson, Sam and Joan Moore, David and Ann Wilson, Mike Bloodworth, Gordon and Deirdre Madgwick and John Horne. The two overnight stays were at a hotel at Stratford.

On the second day, the route gave a lovely run across to Malvern where Mike Bloodworth ran the route check. I was using a Volkswagen Golf 4-Motion which went extremely well and enabled me to tear along by a more direct route and set up the route check at Clywedog reservoir, in a clearly marked car park.

Gordon Madgwick and John Horne ran the route check at Dinas Mawddwy, where a fine lunch was provided.

The event was rated a success, and having more time I was able to do a better job for the 2001 event, which again attracted a big entry of 37 vehicles. This time we would use an intermediate hotel instead of having to drag back to the start after the first day, and scrutineering and fuelling were done at the RAC's headquarters near the M6 just north-west of Birmingham.

On the first day the route went up to the Lake District, and in fine autumn sunshine we had a magnificent run over the Hardknott and Wrynose passes, then across to the Hotel Majestic at Harrogate evoking more H&B economy run memories.

Again there was an enthusiastic response to the call for Marshal Aid, and we had the help of Robin and Fiona Birchall, Bill and Janet Bonney, John Horne, Gordon and Deirdre Madgwick, Sam and Joan Moore, Mike Pearman, and Pam Roper who ran the control at a coffee stop pub in the Lake District charmingly called 'The Drunken Duck'!

The weather deteriorated for the second day, and Bill and Janet Bonney did heroic work manning the control at the top of Holme Moss in torrential driving rain. Later, Jennetta and I manned one of the controls in the dark near Skipton and enjoyed sitting in the Rover 75 Tourer which I had borrowed and watching the car's very effective built-in television while waiting for competitors.

For the 2002 event we again used the RAC headquarters at Bescot then went across to North Wales over territory very familiar to me, passing the old family home at Llanbedr, through Harlech and then across past Chester to overnight at Mottram Hall near Shrigley. Our Marshal Aid team that year comprised Bill and Janet Bonney, Mike Pearman, Gordon Madgwick, Dave and Ann Wilson, Sam and Joan Moore, Robin and Fiona Birchall.



Most successful of several H&B entrants in the MPG Marathon, David Madgwick and Ashleigh White with their VW Lupo 1.4 TDI after their class win in 2002

This time I had worked out a complicated spreadsheet for computing the results, which eliminated all the boring subtractions and divisions, and only had to be fed the appropriate data to give instant results.

Why did the MPG Marathon collapse? Despite the generous funding, there wasn't the follow-up advertising of results, so manufacturers felt they weren't getting publicity value for money, and VW pulled out. Others followed. Also, the RAC and Esso declared that they would not support an event in 2003. It missed four years but then

in 2007 *Fleet World* ran a simple and much shorter economy run, but I was not involved and was told it was a pale shadow of the great 2000-2002 events. Also, the support of the Club was not required for this and subsequent years since the route was all on main roads and on-board data loggers checked that co



Robin and Fiona Birchall in charge at the Brondanw Arms tea stop, with Jennetta (L)

Night Trials

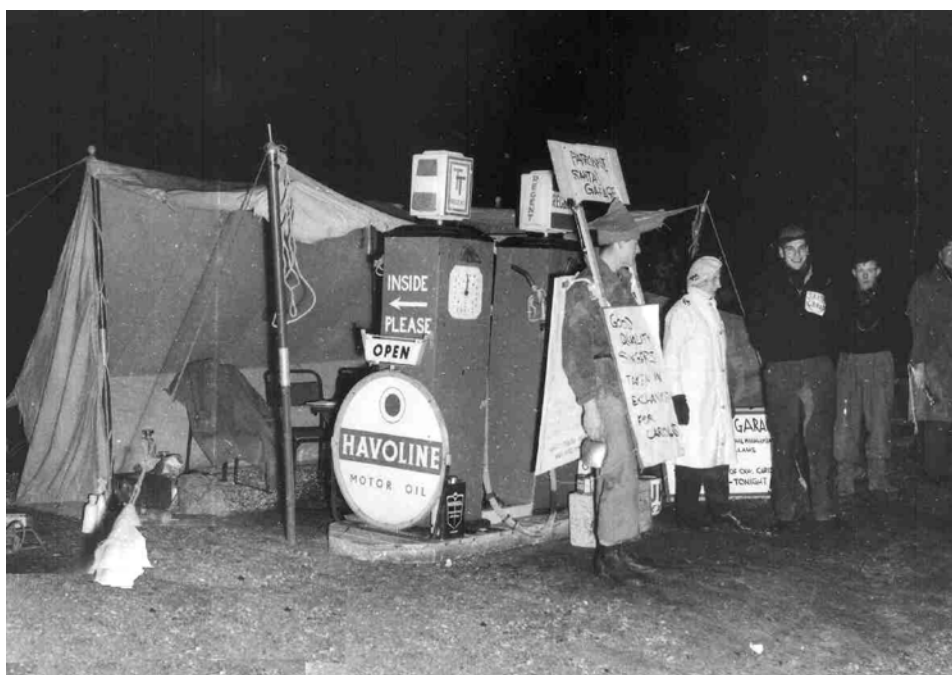
Some good came out of wartime training

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

My 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.

CHB

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

We'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.

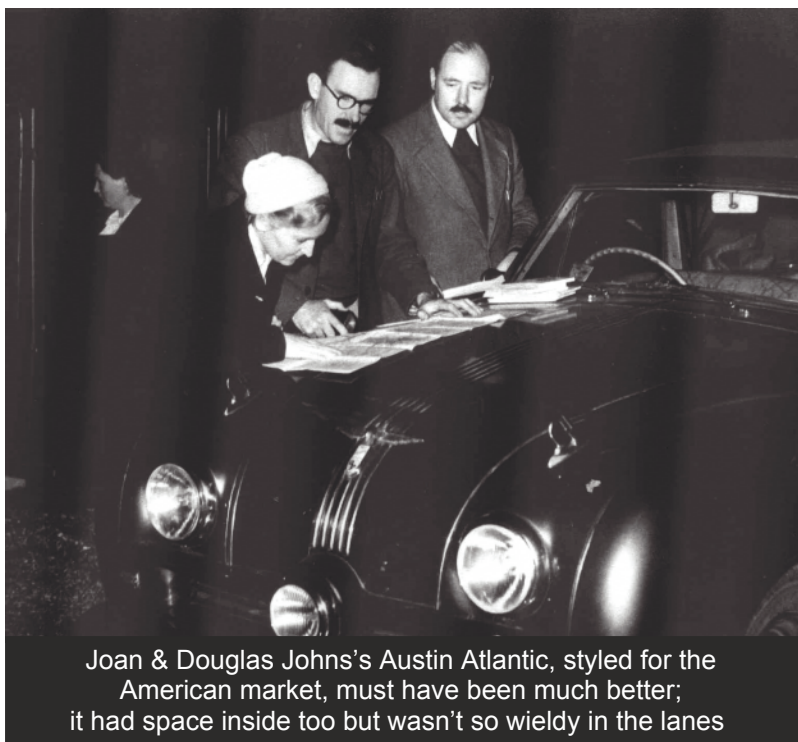
Weather can make or break a competitive event but I enjoy battling against the elements. One



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

Why 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.

Simple treasure hunt turned classic, the Pairs

Joe Lowrey

Once 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

The 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.

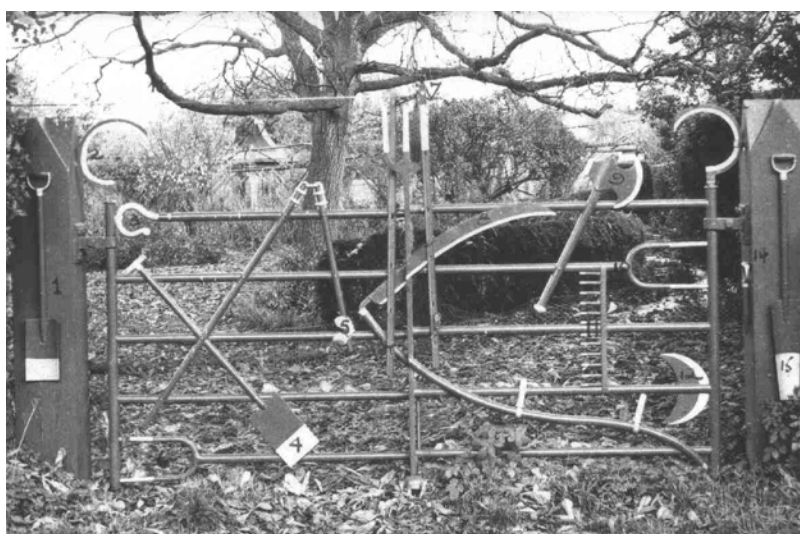
Development over the next 15 years was steady but unspectacular, such were the solid foundations laid by Jack and Joe initially. We played tunes on the lunch controls, confusing

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

The Pairs - add simplicity and survive

In 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

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

When 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.

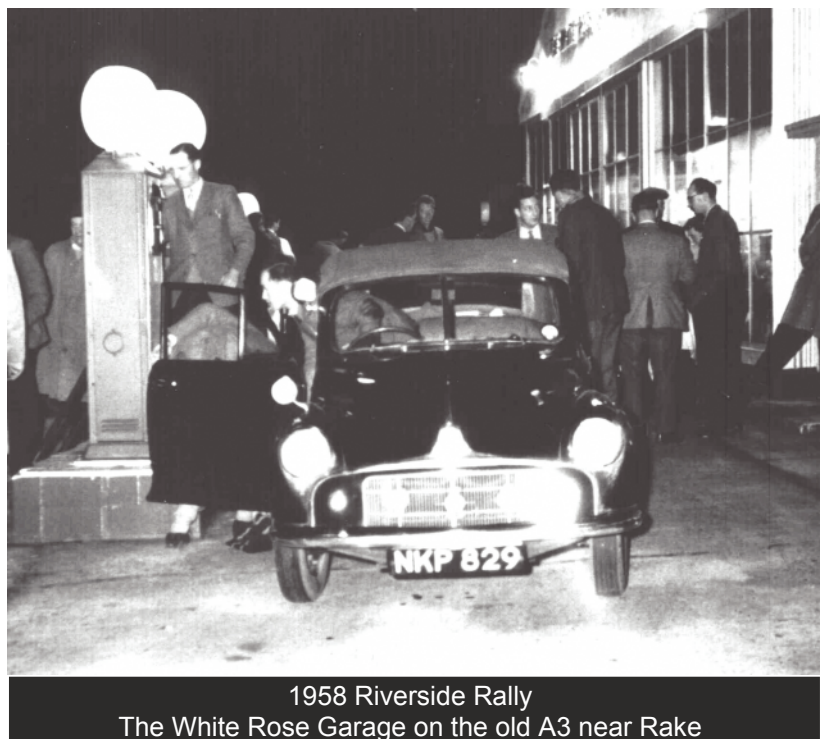
In 1958 the event start and finish was moved to the Royal Ascot Hotel. This was by no stretch of the imagination a riverside venue but Joe Lowrey's half serious suggestion that the rally should be renamed 'The Racecourse Side' was ignored lest such a title should encourage some folk to drive in accordance 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

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.

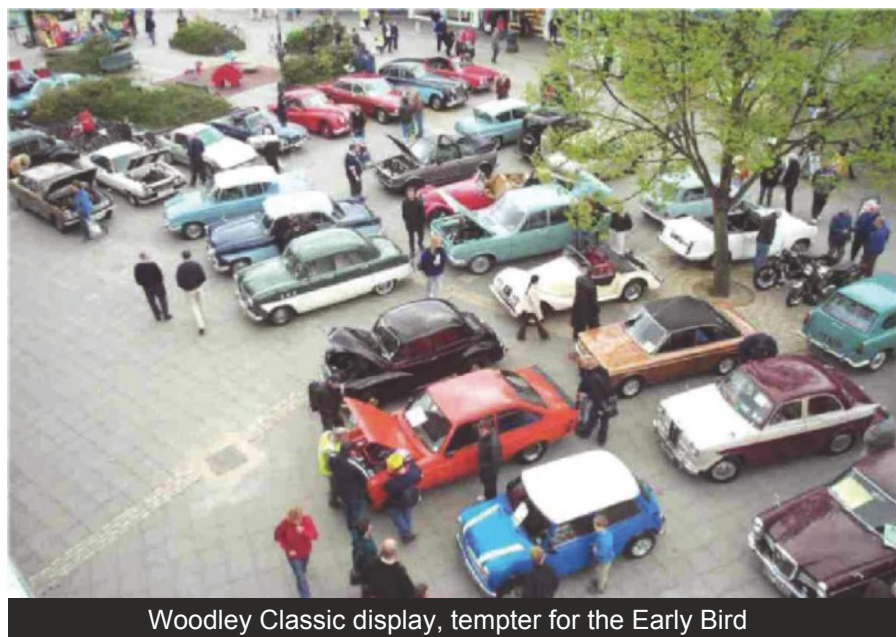
A motor club is not unlike any other business venture in that, if it is to survive, it must maintain a reasonable number of customers (members) and to do this it must be able to offer a reasonable level of service (events). Also it must be able to offer attractive events before it is able to attract 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 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.

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



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

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 Noctivigation 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

Our private Motor Show, the Floggin' and Patter

John Higginson

In 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 dicky-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!"

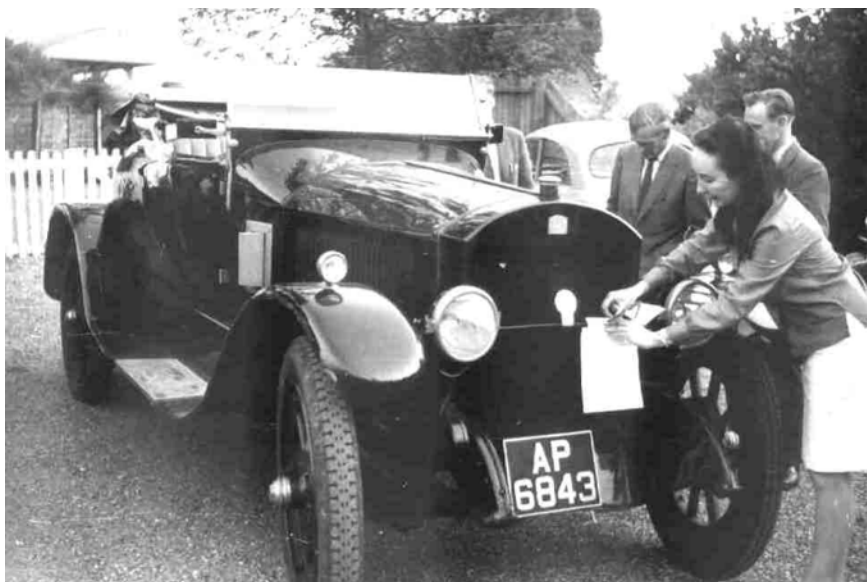
"Fragments of Forgotten Makes" used to be the title of a section in *Motor Sport*. I am tempted to borrow it. Do you remember the Goggomobil which J. Fitzpatrick brought? And the Daf - as exhibited by Dudley Steynor? And what about a "Yimkin" Mini - Sheridan Thynne or a Steyr Puch from John Higginson? 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

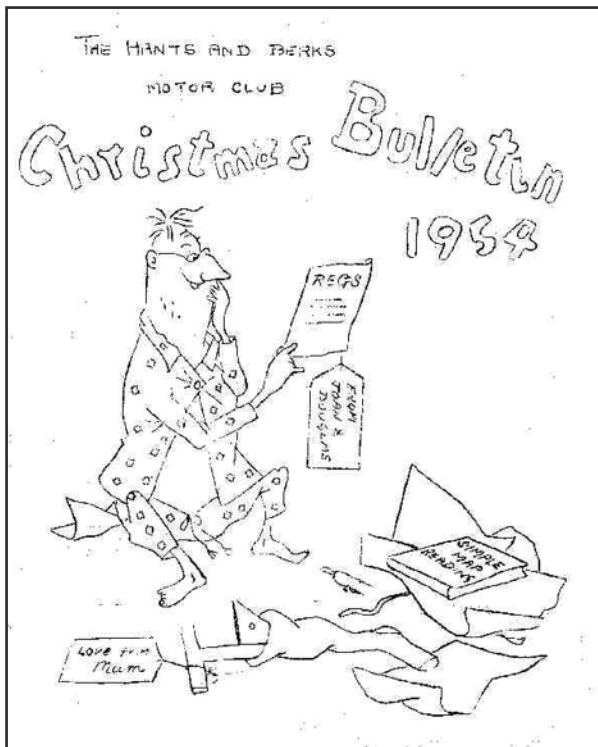
journalism. This, for instance, appeared in the Bulletin for September 1946:

"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?

THE HANTS & BERKS MOTOR CLUB

<p><i>Hon. Secretariat:</i> JOAN & 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>
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MID-FEBRUARY, 1954 No. 51

BULLETIN

OH! WHAT A SURPRISE

The arrival of a professionally printed Hants & 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!

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.

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!

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.

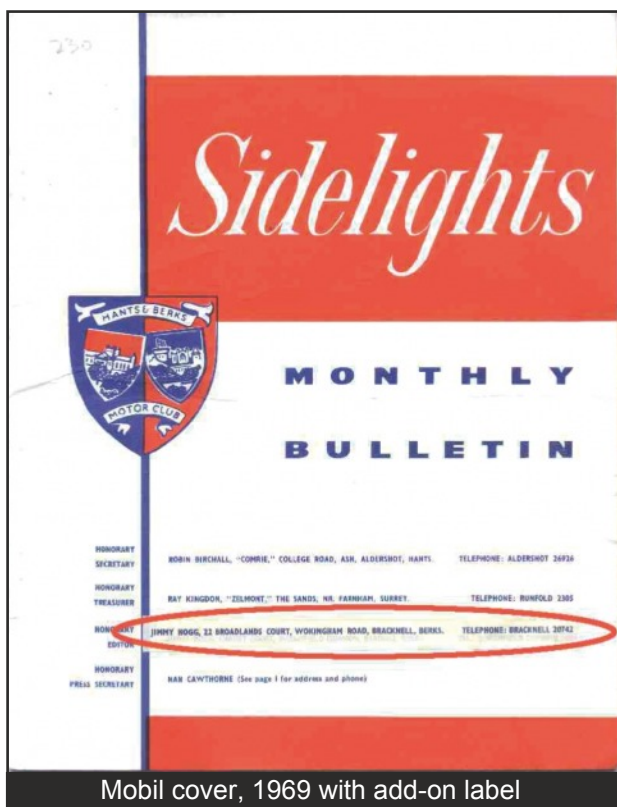
Another request which has been made, and which the Editor is delighted to pass on, is for articles on other subjects than Rallies and Navigation Events. If you say "hear hear" to this request, then YOU are obviously one of the folk who ought yourself to do something about it—who ought to record quite 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!

COMING EVENTS.

February 26th, Friday evening. 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.

February 27th-28th, Saturday night. 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.

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.

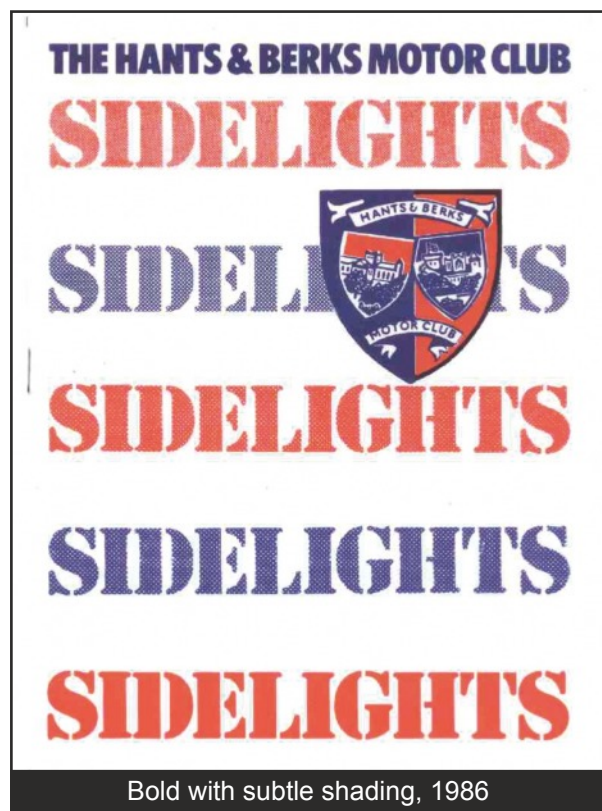
In October 1973 Jimmy resigned as editor and was replaced by George (Topper) Brown and a little over a year later the supply of Mobil covers dried up. The format changed to its present folded A4, centre stitched in a card cover. An interim design was done by Tony Bedingfield before the approved version 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



Bold with subtle shading, 1986

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.

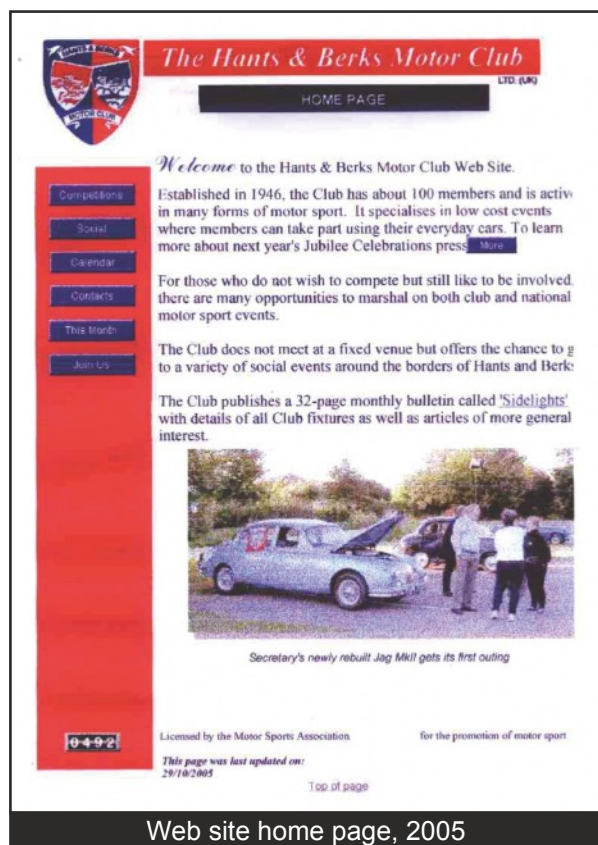
The screen duplicator

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.

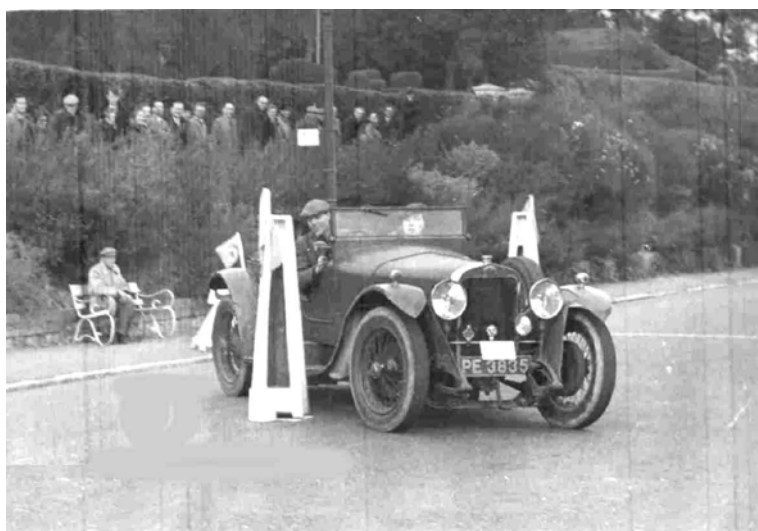
Rallying was essentially the name for a gathering of cars, although the Royal Automobile Club ran a number of National Rallies from 1932 with no outright winner. The competitive nature of these events was usually some form of manoeuvring test, sometimes similar to today's Autotest.

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

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

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

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		

