

THE FIRST MANX TROPHY RALLY

24th, 25th, 26th May, 1963

The hard work of John Hopwood, Roy Fidler and Rodney Goodchild culminated in 50 cars and crews travelling on the Manx Maid to the first Manx Trophy Rally. The crews had been promised a tough 120-mile night navigation, a few hours sleep, then 40 miles of special stages during Saturday. Sunday morning being set aside for driving tests on the promenade at Douglas.

The worries of the navigators were halved when the O.S. produced a brand new 87 for the occasion, in which numerous previously white roads became yellow, brown and even red.

The crews arrived in the Isle of Man at 3 p.m. and a number set off to recce the obvious special stages before they were due for scrutineering at the Pier Head, Douglas, at 7-30 p.m.

Scrutineering, although usually a formality, caused a few harsh words between competitors and organizers regarding the efficiency of hand brakes. (It is rumoured that Don Grimshaw is having drum brakes fitted to the rear wheels of his Healey.)

After scrutineering, the full route was handed to the navigators who had ample time to plot it. After the route had been plotted it became apparent that Manx miles were measuring in the region of 3,000 yards, and that it was going to be a very tough night section . . . as promised.

The first car, Vic Elford with a local navigator, Mike Butler having failed to cross the sea, set off at 10 p.m.

The first section was an easy run out of Douglas to the north side of Onchan, but this was the last easy section for many miles to come . . . 'til the finish.

The next section setting the pattern for things to come—being narrow, rough and requiring the full attention of both driver and navigator.

The route wound its way north up the east side of the island. The first victim of the rough roads was Don Grimshaw/Tony Mason whose "big banger" collected a stone between the fan blades and radiator, damaging the radiator beyond repair. The cars thrashed their way up and down the narrow Manx lanes (ideal rally country) until it reached the T.T. course just outside Ramsey. Then followed an easy run to the Bungalow giving the competitors an opportunity to sample the T.T. course.

Off the T.T. course and down Tholt-y-will (to be a special stage the following morning) to what proved to be the toughest night sections through the Curragh's, everybody dropping time and causing Vic Elford to retire, the power output of his Vitesse being too much for the differential. Several other cars did rather a lot of agricultural motoring.

The organizers then let up the pace for 32 minutes (20 miles!) again giving the competitors a sample of the T.T. course. This section took in Creg-ny-Baar which proved to be a popular viewpoint for spectators, with the first car on the road, McBride/Barrow, taking it sideways, Dixon/Ralphs clipping the grass and Bertorelli/Warren spinning off besides the many other spectacular efforts. Soon after this a bridge outside West Baldwin caught John Oldham by surprise and terminated his Manx Motoring.

From then on the pace became really hot and the main problem besides time was whether one was carrying enough petrol.

The marshals, who proved enthusiastic, found certain aspects difficult due to their inexperience. They found difficulty with their map-reading and it was unfortunate that the last three controls had to be scrubbed owing to the fact that they had been set up in the wrong positions and the clerks of the course, Fidler and Hopwood, being unable to correct this as McBride was hot on their heels. This proved fortunate for at least two crews as Sprinzel/Cave lost their way and the Anglia of Dixon/Ralphs lost a rear tyre on a tight right.

Soon after competitors began to arrive at the finish, it became apparent that McBride/Barrow were leading with a drop of 17 minutes from Sprinzel/Cave and Dixon/Ralphs who had both dropped 23 minutes.

With Saturday morning came the special stages. These were all in daylight and were on closed roads at a 50 average. Mist and rain kept down the times and helped to make some interesting motoring for the spectators.

Stage 1 — was over Glen Roy with a bogey time of 2 mins. 45 secs. Fastest over this was Roger Clarke in his Cooper with Geoff. Allen some 6 seconds behind.

Stage 2 — the full descent of Sulby Glen was set at 6 mins. 30 secs. Roger Clarke cracked bogey but also spun and collected a telegraph pole bending his rear end slightly.

Stage 3 — was over the very loose surface of the Curragh's at an impossible time of 4 minutes. Nearest to this was McBride with 5 mins. 50 secs. and Geoff. Allen with 5 mins. 52 secs. It was on this stage that the Hanson/Donovan 1100 left the road, thus ending their rally.

Stage 4 — brought another unbeatable bogey of 9 minutes through Injebreck Hill. Fastest time going to Tony Fisher (Mini) 10 mins. 33 secs. with Pete Baldham (Cooper Mini) 10 mins. 40 secs. and Phil. Simister (Allardette) 10 mins. 44 secs.

Stage 5 — was a sharp 3 minutes over Glen Rushen Mines with Phil. Simister putting in the fastest time of 3 mins. 27 secs., just 1 second ahead of Reg. McBride.

Now came an easy run back to the Curraghs with plenty of time for a bite to eat.

Stage 6 — was again the Curraghs but this time run in the reverse direction.

Stage 7 — Tholt-y-Will which was a little "dodgy" at the finish as there was a lot of low cloud and the finish was just through a gate, which had the 1100 of Arthur Ridy rather worried. Fastest here was the Sebring Sprite of Brian Culcheth.

Stage 8 — at last the final stage, Injebreck/Druidale for which fastest time went to Phil Simister who was 8 seconds up on Reg. McBride.

Now came a pleasant run back to Douglas via Ramsey and Groudle Glen. On this run one or two of the circus were to be seen parked outside certain public houses—I'm sure Mr. Marples would not approve! By the time the results had been worked out and checked—which was a very short time indeed thanks to Messrs. Fidler, Hopwood and Robson—the local bars were rapidly becoming dry.

The results showed that Knowldale members were on top form, there being no less than 8 in the first 10.

- 1st — Reg. McBride/Don Barrow (Allardette).
- 2nd — Phil. Simister/Barry Potts (Allardette).
- 3rd — John Sprinzel/Willy Cave (Allardette).
- 4th — Geoff. Allen/Barry Hughes (VX/490).
- 5th — Frank Grange/John Middleton (Anglia 1500).
- 6th — Tony Fisher/John Brown (850 Mini).
- 7th — Roy Dixon/Dave Ralphs (Anglia 1200).
- 8th — Brian Culcheth/John (Verglass) Davenport (Sebring Sprite).
- 9th — Dennis Sisson/R. Etheridge (T.R.4).
- 10th — Roger Clarke/H. Patton (Cooper Mini).

The awards were presented in the All-American Castle Mona and the festivities carried on throughout the night and only finally ended when the bar closed—at Liverpool.

Sunday, for those that were still standing, was driving test day on the front at Douglas. This was a close fought dual between Rodney Goodchild and Pete Baldham, both in Coopers, with the final verdict going to Goodchild.

The general opinion was that it was a "damn good thrash" and should be even better next year . . . A must for the boys.

To all those concerned — well done.

AMY.

MANX MUSINGS

John Brown likes rough roads . . . he can't stomach calm seas. It is rumoured that the Seigle/Morris Lotus Cortina is having push rod trouble?

Rosemary Smith was missed by the boys at the start . . . who found the girls at the finish?

Who gave John Brown the Out of Bounds?

Strange — D.K.W.s having trouble with valve springs.

As the boat cast off John Sprinzel was heard to say "It's throbbing, can't you hear the keys in my pocket".

Has Geoff. Allen left Knowldale for Cavendish?

Barry Hughes lost his ticket on the way over. Yvonne Hilton found it . . . No, it was not second-hand.

I hear the fast boys are taking a leaf out of the springs on their Minis!!

What's this? Knowldale bought the Manx Maid on the way over and Castletown Brewery on the return trip.

Roy Dixon has decided he would rather stick to a wheel than a map board . . . He can talk better when he doesn't have to do any plotting.

John Oldham has decided that the only way to deal with the wrong doings of the Americans is to buy out the Casino or put Barry up for Governor.

Well done Mike Hailwood, 106 m.p.h. average with a standing start . . . roll on next year's special stage?

The TR gearbox works well in the Vitesse . . . the differential doesn't.

G.A. tried to stand in for the "Baron" but retired very early.

It is no longer the Isle of Man but the Isle of Knowldale.

Poor Barry got so hot under his collar that he had to be cooled down . . . with a fire extinguisher.

Next year's event should be well supported but let's have a decent finish — without the Americans.

Willy Cave fell asleep in PMO 200 on the return trip . . . and woke up on the top deck.

A new championship is to be arranged for next year . . . can anybody beat 8 yards.

Ah well! roll on next year's Quatre Vingt Heure du Man . . .

Can anybody lend me a Ferrari?

D.W.R.

Tit Bits

Start tuning, it's our own hill climb on 18th August at Baitings.

Geoff. and Ruth have gone away complete with works support!!

Keb Lane was a let-down—come on lads support the social committee, they're doing a damn good job.