

MONTE CARLO RALLY, 1963

I WAS hoping this year for bad weather and when we set off for Glasgow things didn't seem too bad. Mike Sutcliffe had 'phoned me on Wednesday to say conditions if anything were better even than when we were there. So my conditions were not going to prevail!! The ride up to Glasgow was uneventful except that we were very late—Peter Roberts had called to collect the car at noon and eventually arrived at my house at 9-30 and we had to get to Glasgow that night, for scrutineering next morning, "otherwise we'd a stayed at whom". We arrived at Glasgow at 2 o'clock in the morning, there was no snow and the car behaved quite well except for the back suspension which kept bottoming.

Fancy starting a Rally at 6 a.m. It's not too bad staying up, but getting up to stay up not so easy. However, we managed it and eventually left Glasgow down the ramp and away. Finding ones way out of Glasgow could be a problem without the police. As long as we could see a police car in our mirror we knew we were on route—no, that's not quite true. We did get followed by a police car but the men on point duty for our benefit (at 6 a.m.) did a grand job, and let's face it, perhaps the Z Car was not attempting to pick us up for speeding, at this early stage in the Rally we should not be unbenevolent.

We ran into bad conditions—the weather was fine but the road surface was packed with snow and very slippery and soon the leading car was into a telegraph pole. Unfortunate for him to be the leading car, it could have been any one of us, but he warned us and further more, as we arrived 10 minutes later, the crew were busy gritting the road to save the rest of the Rally a similar fate. It was a tricky bit of road, downhill left and right under a bridge—just after the brow of a hill.

We plodded on making as much speed as possible without taking any risks and soon we'd gone through the passage control and were making our way via the West Coast to Birchcliffe, where we'd arranged to have our lunch. We made it by 1 o'clock. My favourite lunch—braised steak in thick gravy. So we motored on, little realising what lay ahead of us.

We had arranged to call at the Reliant's factory to have the car checked before looking in at the Belfrey. We had plenty of time in hand at the works and what little jobs we had to do were done, and after tea and a meal we buzzed off to clock in at Wishaw (The Belfrey).

On the way out the sign reads "USE THE M.1, ALL OTHER ROADS BLOCKED"—and by gad the M.1 wasn't far off. Peter Roberts was driving and I tried to sleep, and probably did doze. I remember waking up to find us on the M.1 and in the worst blizzard I've been in. Peter was having a job even to know which side of the Motorway he was on. This may seem unbelievable but we definitely couldn't find the centre island and we just had to hope for the best, with both of us concentrating like hell at what we thought was the side of the road. The bridges helped—snow was about two feet deep in places where it could drift and scores of cars were abandoned. Yes, on the M.1, and not off the main road either. About half way along conditions improved a little and we entered London. Quite surprisingly, although we came via London thinking it would be clear, it wasn't, snow was very deep everywhere but we made surprisingly rapid progress—or else everyone else was motoring slowly. All through Kent, although the snowing had ceased, the roads were covered with snow but passable.

Again despite bad conditions we arrived very early. We had a meal and were very pleased to be allowed on the boat almost immediately, which meant we could get our heads down—and we did—for about an hour and a half. Any of you who ever contemplate doing the Monte

want to consider this little break—it does almost make the Rally a night shorter—and so into Boulogne where free soup was laid on, although we were more inclined to try and sleep.

When we set off Peter got his head down and had a good sleep. This for me was one of the most difficult parts of the Rally. We set off from Boulogne at about 4 a.m. towards Abbeville and for a couple of hours everything went fine and then I started to get dozey—Peter was so sound asleep I didn't want to wake him. I knew that it would soon be light and that with the dawn, with more going on, that I would waken up. It was for me a very difficult hour but I made it and was very pleased to arrive at the next control.

The road conditions were such that maximum concentration was needed, really I suppose I should have awakened Peter, our strategy was that he'd drive the second night to leave me rested for the last night, so perhaps my struggle paid off. We went further south and then west, forgetting place names. During the day conditions were quite reasonable but early in the evening a drizzle settled as ice and conditions were really treacherous. I was driving and following a Zeyphr, rather slowly. "You're about 10 minutes behind time". Crikey! So we pulled out to pass the Zeyphr only to be outdone by Jimmy Bullough's Rapier going like the clappers, so we stuck behind him. The roads were completely covered with sheet ice and the cars were skating all over the place, none of us had yet fitted studs but were all wishing we had. The Bullough Rapier was going like the clappers and without exaggerating was doing between 80—90 m.p.h. on the straights, yes, still on sheet ice and very treacherous indeed going through the forests. It need 100 per cent. concentration to keep a rigid sports car on the road at these speeds and I was amazed how well Bullough's Rapier held. Unbeknown to us George Humble, who had been travelling with us, spun off during this high speed dice, through hitting a rut in the ice. It threw them off the road, backwards into a wall, back across the road and was ripped in half by a telegraph pole, so you can tell the speeds we were travelling at. It is said that Bobby Parkes' remarks, as he sat in half a car, were "Do you think we'll be able to carry on?"

So we travelled on with my colleague doing most of the driving during this second night. I drove during the day over the Col de Slutch and so we began our journey south again towards St. Cloude and Chambery. Conditions were getting steadily worse but we had ample time in hand at St. Cloude. The road was still wide enough for two cars but we knew from the recce that from St. Cloude onwards conditions would be bad.

They were—out of St. Cloude the road climbs up into the mountains and the snow that gets deeper each kilometer and had throughout the Rally, been catching up various cars around us. Mostly there is no cause for them to hold us up. On this occasion, however, we caught up with a Vauxhall with two or three cars trailing behind, it was obvious that he wasn't going to let anyone pass and it could easily have meant losing time. They all let us pass except the Vauxhall so we had no choice but to push him a little—by the odd bumper nudge, flashing lights and etc. It's obvious to most but it wasn't to him. Eventually he overcooked it and finished on top of a snow bank—we had to miss him—so took to the snow bank also—no damage—back off and away—but NO—our mate in the Vauxhall had other ideas. He opened his door which completely blocked our path, so we had no alternative but to drive straight at the door—needless to say I was furious by this time. However the door was rapidly closed and our way made clear. We arrived at Chambery with about 20 minutes to spare—too much you say. It only needs one puncture in these conditions to make you late.

PREPARING FOR RACING

Part II

IN the last issue I wrote about getting the motor car ready for racing, excluding the engine. Now, if you are lucky, you have arrived at the circuit for your first Race Meeting. I found that there was so much to do on "the day" that I needed to use a list and mark off the various jobs when they had been done. Our policy was always to get through scrutineering as soon as possible. The car should arrive at the circuit ready to go to the Scrutineer. We always found that it was a help if cars presented for scrutineering were clean and tidy, and obviously well prepared, this not only impresses the Scrutineer but also makes his job a great deal easier. And I think that it is worth remembering that these people take on voluntarily a big responsibility and do a job which is often far from easy, and it doesn't help to be awkward and to annoy them. Once through scrutineering, make certain that you are ready for practice—use your list. For instance, if road tyres have been changed for racing ones, then check wheel nuts. Things like oil and water can hardly be checked too often. Blowing up an engine prepared for racing is rather expensive. Make sure that the pit staff take everything they need into the pit with them before the driver goes out to practice. It may be necessary to experiment with tyre pressures, and therefore a pump and a pressure gauge are essential. You may need different plugs and a plug spanner, you will certainly need stop-watches and a signalling board. These are just a few necessary items. Each team makes up its own list as it goes along. The driver must make up his mind what he intends to do in the practice session—is the first essential to put up a really fast time or it is your first time on this circuit and is it really much more important to learn your way round? Bear in mind that unless you have raced very recently on that particular circuit, you must complete three whole laps and be observed to do so before you will be allowed to compete in the race, so don't set off on your first two practice laps like a mad thing and roll the car or break something before you have completed these three essential laps. Once you have done these three laps anything which goes wrong may quite easily be put right before the race begins, but if you have failed to qualify, and practice has finished, then you may not be allowed to race. As soon as practice is over go back to the paddock and get out your list and check everything possible. Is there enough petrol in the car for the race? Has it used any oil or water in practice? Are the correct plugs in? Are the wheel nuts still tight? Check the wheel bearings, and there are several other points worth looking over. When this is all done, do the obvious things like thoroughly cleaning the windscreen and other windows and then the driver should do his best to go away and relax until a few minutes before he and his car are called into the enclosure from which he will go out on to the circuit. Although what is said at the driver's briefing is usually the same old stuff over and over again, I think that it is bad manners and rather stupid to neglect to go to this meeting, you never know when something new may be announced, and anyway there is a purpose behind this meeting and it seems unnecessary and rather big-headed to purposely ignore it. If there is a warming-up lap make good use of this to warm your brake linings, remembering that hard linings very rarely work efficiently on their first application from cold. Make sure that when you get into the car to go out on to the track you have with you your crash-helmet, goggles or sun-glasses, and driving gloves, if required. To those of our members who will be on the circuits this summer, good luck, and come out of your corners fighting.

1963 CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

Competition Secretary

THE only event to have been run since the last issue was the Yorkshire Rally which is the first event in our open championships. Members competing scored the following points:—

B. Hughes	10	G. J. Allen	10
D. Barrow	9	R. McBride	9
T. E. Rowland	6	R. Jones	6
M. Kempley	3	D. C. Astle	3

The next event should have been the Shunpiker Rally but due to the wonderful weather conditions and the shortage of helicopters to go round, the event was postponed. The Black Trophy will now take its place. The next event in this championship will be the Express and Star National Rally and The All Fools Eve Rally, so let's see a few more Knowldale crews out, and don't forget there are also points awarded for teams.

The first event in the Closed Championship will be the TRIO to be held on the 20th/21st April. After seeing the route for this rally and knowing the amount of hard work put in by Horace Beighton and Ron Hobro, it promises to be a right corker! This is soon to be followed by the TRIPOLETTE Rally which is mainly for the up and coming rallyists of the club, to be held on the 25th/26th May. We have 40 entries for this event, but we would still like more. By then I think I can rely on all the snows being clear so you need not worry about bending your car.

COMMENT

I HAVE often had passengers in my car, usually who themselves drive, gasp at the gaps through which I managed to take my car, sometimes without even slowing down, but it was my turn to be impressed the other day. I was in the cab of a very large furniture van being driven through traffic like a Mini in a driving test. The driver explained that he develops such fine judgment because he has to go through wherever possible; if he waits as some private car drivers do then everyone behind has to wait too. He did point out that a large van cannot be driven close to the kerb or else the road camber would cause the top of the van to hit lamp posts and similar obstructions.

A friend of mine has just been on a sales course and one of the instructors made play on the words conscious, unconscious, competent and incompetent. They are very apt when applied to driving. A learner is consciously incompetent. If he learns his lessons well he becomes consciously competent, but if not he remains unconsciously incompetent, which is the worst condition to be in. After quite a long time a driver becomes more and more unconsciously competent. Now this is not always good because it leads to trouble.

Example. I was following a lorry through the streets and was being unconsciously competent because I was consciously thinking of something else when a light appeared on the rear offside of the aforesaid lorry and it pulled out into the middle of the road. Without more ado I nipped up the inside and got passed just as it swung left up a side street. No doubt the lorry driver swore whilst I sweated and did a mental post mortem. The light I had seen must have been red and that too common phenomenon, one working stop light. Had I been consciously competent I would not have had such a narrow squeak.

Q.E.D.