

Monte Carlo Historic Rally 2013

By Peter Moss



The Chairman has kept you up to date in previous magazines with our preparations for this year's event, and I will take the story up from our recce at the beginning of January. It makes a good break from car preparation and route planning and it is a help to have a feel for the roads, nevertheless the recce is quite an intensive exercise. Al Vines and I flew out to Grenoble and were greeted by sunny but cold weather with the snowline at about 950m. We covered all the tests but our hire car died beneath us, fortunately quite near Nice so we could get a replacement and continue but we were not quite able to do all we wanted.

A week before the off we had a team session to coordinate service plans, courtesy of David Ring who had Monte Carlo veteran Willy Cave alongside him in his Datsun 240Z, and we left a snowy England for our Reims start point on Saturday 26th January. Scrutineering on Sunday was painless except that we were required to fit a door mirror, despite the car never having one in period or since, but Willy lent us a mirror from his vanity case and gaffer tape and cardboard completed the job – it lasted the whole event. We departed at 7pm on the 15 hour night-time Concentration Run to Valence, and bang on cue at 3am the snow started falling, although not as heavily as last year. A Volvo we were following slipped off the road and we almost joined it, but we slithered into Annecy on time to meet Nigel and Lisa, our service crew in the Discovery, who had pulled a couple of cars back on to the road on the way. As daylight broke we tackled the Col du Granier weaving between snowploughs and school buses, and reached the control at Valence in sunshine.

The forecast was for snowy patches on the first regularity but as we only had a choice of studded or studded tyres; it was a matter of choosing 145s or 165s. This and the dry second regularity went fine and we would have been 45th, except that I made the gross error of checking in 5 minutes early at the following control, which dropped us by 3000 points to 179th of the 289 remaining runners. The following morning I compounded this by using the wrong speed setting for the first regularity of the day, costing us a further 3450 penalty points. However Al and the car were performing faultlessly and although we were 157th overall, our times would have given us about 50th place. Meanwhile, our team-mate Ginger Ostile was leading the 1962-65 1300 class and Picquier was the leading Mini, way ahead in 51st position.

It was now Wednesday and we were heading via the Vercors across to Gap with four more regularities, all of which had snow and ice at high altitude. Our approach was to put our heads down and make the best of a bad job, and consistency paid off, so that we moved up during the day to 125th spot, taking the class lead from Ginger Ostile on the way, and we were now leading our team. The last test, the Col d'Espreux, which will be familiar to some Minis to Monte entrants, was a graveyard and we saw at least five cars off the road, including our team-mate David Mustarde in his Alfa Giulietta. The following morning there were two more tests on the way to Monte and on the second of these, where there was only a little ice, we excelled ourselves by doing the 10th best time, and this helped us up to 119th when we reached the Quai Albert.

The final challenge is always the mountain section on Thursday night consisting of three regularities totalling 86 kms in a 5½ hour run of 235 kms. There was little snow or ice compared to last year but the pace was unrelenting from the moment we left at 8.15pm. On the first test there was a climb of 15 hairpins in 5 km and here we caught and passed the Minis of Nakagama and Arnal who moved over in tandem for us. For the second Utelle test, which is high, narrow, and twisty ("Looong way down, no barrier") we had written pace notes which worked well, but we had three 'moments', so Al decided to change the worn out fronts for the Col de Turini. The climb up to the Col was dry and we were on time at the summit but we knew that the descent would be icy, but it was only a brief stretch where we caught a couple of cars. One caught us up again further down the col and gave Al a hard time for a few hairpins. About 2.30am we got back to Monte for a celebration on the harbour side with our team and service crews. Here we learnt that the leading British crew had rolled and subsequently retired, the second-placed had had a poor run with electrical problems, and Picquier in the leading Mini had also had a curiously bad night and dropped behind us.



So we picked up the prize for a class win and were both leading British crew and leading Mini, but were only 10th in the 1962-65 category, which it had been our aim to win. Without my errors we would have been about 44th overall, still only good enough for 4th in the category, and the lack of any winter tyre hampers the Mini in this respect. For those at the front of the field winning is everything (the margin of victory was 2.1 seconds and the first 10 were covered by 90 seconds.) Next year is the 50th anniversary of Paddy's win in 1964, so we will be back to commemorate that and show what the Mini is still capable of.

Peter Moss

Final positions were:

1st	Brianti	1970 Alpine Renault A110	
2nd	Coppola	1972 Alpine Renault A310	
3rd	Babini	1964 Porsche 911	
86th	Vines/Moss	1964 Cooper S	Team GB
92nd	Picquier/Picquier	1969 Cooper S	Auto-BMC
97th	Ring/Cave	1972 Datsun 240Z	Team GB
124th	Mustarde/Thorp	1961 Alfa Romeo Giulietta	Team GB
133rd	Nakagawa/Morikawa	1968 Cooper S	
142nd	Ostle/Brack	1964 Cooper S	Team GB
143rd	Arnal/Arnal	1968 Cooper S	Auto-BMC
147th	Burnier/Alibaux	1975 Innocenti Cooper S	Auto-BMC
152nd	Hart/Hart	1965 Cooper S	Auto-BMC
176th	Richards/Morrow	1965 Cooper S	Team GB
182nd	McAlpine/Gallagher	1964 Cooper S	



The start ramp for the mountain circuit on the last night



Off up into the mountains on the last night

Rallye Monte-Carlo Historique - A second attempt

By Anthony Hart

Four things conspired to make Rallye Monte-Carlo Historique 2013 extra special for me: my wife, Tessa, agreed to be my co-pilot; Automobiles BMC offered to provide 'Assistance' and Jean-Paul Burnier decided join us by again entering his 1975 Innocenti Mini. The fourth thing was, well ... we finished!

ABMC, as many will know, is an incredibly professional, specialist Mini garage in Vienne, mid-France. For many years, Tessa and I have been fortunate to count as close friends the owner, François Windeck, and ABMC's talented Chief Mechanic, Georges Ruiz. As for Jean-Paul Burnier, it was a pleasure to get to know him and his regular co-pilot, Patrick Alibaux, during my failed attempt at the rally in 2011 and we have stayed in touch ever since.

To complete our informal team of three cars, François rented his 1969 MkII Cooper S to a senior journalist from Echappement Classic magazine, probably France's most respected classic car magazine. The journalist, Pierre Gary, and his co-pilot, Dany Blumenthal, wanted to report on the rally 'from the inside'. Both Pierre and Dany fitted in perfectly.

Rather than run out of allotted space in this article by using it to diarise the entire rally, I would like merely to summarise some things that went right (virtually everything), some things that went wrong (very little) and our enormous good luck.

Firstly some things that went well ...

1. Our car, GTX 158C, a 1965 Morris Cooper S, proved to be in a perfect state of readiness. The car is basically a Simon Drew (The Mini Works, Edinburgh) restored Mini with a 1,293cc engine and straight cut gearbox fully refurbished by Southam Mini & Metro Centre. Importantly my friend from the far north of Scotland, David Dyson, had recently rewired the car, swapped dynamo for alternator, installed an oil cooler, uprated the lamp bar and much, much more. The car ran faultlessly during over 2,000 kms of virtually non-stop, high revving, mostly 2nd/3rd gear driving. Fantastic!

2. Our advice and 'Assistance' from ABMC was absolutely first-class:

- Despite being eligible for the 'low' average speed on Regularity Stages (ZRs) because of our Mini's age/engine size, ABMC recommended we elect for the 'high' average. The speed was only a little more challenging (around 49 kph ... doesn't sound high although you try it in the French Alps!), but it did mean that we would be allocated a mid-field car number (we were actually 129) and thus avoid road conditions

too early in the morning or late at night. It's demoralising running at the end of the rally; I know, in 2011 I was car 319.

- ABMC's recommended start point of Barcelona could not have been better. The razzmatazz was great, the weather was warm and the Concentration Leg to Valence amounted to only 970km (starting from Glasgow, as both Jean-Paul and I did in 2011, would have involved over 2,000km).

- Our recommended tyre choice was perfect. 165 Dunlop R7s performed well on dry or wet tarmac and the 145 Green Diamond Traction tyres which ABMC retail (studded and non-studded versions) inspired confidence on snow and ice, even in a cautious driver!

- ABMC sourced for us detailed Road Books for the entire rally, including the 15 ZRs, and this made navigation less stressful. The books were prepared by self-effacing, ace navigator, Sébastien Chol, who also came to our pre-event practice session to help us calibrate the "ETrip" device, which ABMC had fitted to each car. (ETrip is a sophisticated, electronic trip meter capable of reporting actual average speed against any preset figure). Guess what ... Sébastien navigated the car which finished 1st overall in the 2013 rally!

- Our on-event Assistance could not have been better; I cannot stress this enough. ABMC provided a truck full of spares and equipment, a Land Rover Discovery and a car trailer. More importantly, François brought with him the mechanic I've come to trust totally, Georges Ruiz, and two others in support: Frederick and Bastien. What a relief it is to have native French speakers on the team; one of whom is fully bilingual! The crew serviced the car thoroughly twice or three times each day and changed tyres as necessary. To relax and watch people you trust work on the car is a real pleasure. You simply have to listen for the familiar words "Tout va bien. Allez-y".

- Not only did ABMC support the three cars throughout the event, François also supported the humans. He organised convenient hotels, snacks and coffee during the long days and the best of restaurants for delicious dinners in the evening. A complete treat!

3. My Co-pilot was first-class. I say this unreservedly. Tessa, my wife for over 25 years, did brilliantly, even when quite fairly concerned at the speed we were doing at night on ice. The navigator's job is by



Typical driving conditions in the Vercors Region

far the hardest in the car and I thank her so much for making our rally a success and such fun.

Secondly the few things that went wrong ...

1. Barcelona was warm and yet I stupidly still had a grill muff fitted. I noticed the car getting hot while driving through the city to Documentation and Scrutineering but I hadn't prepared myself for the side effect - a massive drop-off in oil pressure at idle. I panicked, fearing something terrible, but taking the muff off and letting the car cool turned out to be all that was necessary to restore normality. Relief!
2. The Pyrenees Mountains were relatively mild and very wet when we arrived on the evening of 27 February and this led me to keep Dunlop R7s tyres fitted. Mistake ... as we gained altitude we met 20cm of snow for about 10km. Finally we ground to a halt in the pitch black and eventually joined forces with another stranded rally crew to push each other over a col. We made slow progress down the other side of the mountain and this incurred us a total of 38 minutes of time penalties by the time we reached the Valence CH (Time Control) on the morning of 28 February.
3. The Automobile Club de Monaco regulate their extraordinary rally by fitting each car with a GPS transponder (the 'Tripy'). Each entrant is required to make available a separate, uninterrupted 12volt supply direct from the battery in order to power the Tripy. When our Tripy was fitted and tested in Valence there was a bottleneck of rally cars and we were asked to move away before the device could be properly secured. Unfortunately our live supply created an unfused dead-short with the bodywork and within seconds the sheathing of the wire melted and the car filled with toxic smoke. We were fortunate not to create a serious fire and lucky to have the wherewithal to recover, but this incident cost us another 34 minutes of time penalties.

Finally, our enormous good luck ...

1. The weather was generally kind to us. By comparison with recent Rallye Monte-Carlo Historiques, this year's event was relatively snow free. For me, keeping to time over alpine roads in relatively benign conditions is only just possible and I have little idea how one does it when everywhere is snowbound.
2. We actually ran out of petrol twice (each time my fault)! Fortunately, the first time was literally only meters after we'd made an on-time entry to a CH. The second time was, equally fortunately, only meters after finishing a ZR. Each time we had a 5lt can of petrol in the car but, in each case, had we ran out minutes earlier it would have cost us heavily in penalties.
3. I'm not sure whether MCR Treasurer and navigator of car 287, Peter Moss, actually knows this yet, but he singlehandedly saved our rally. On the last evening, just before the restart from Monte-Carlo to tackle the final 3 night ZRs, I bumped into Peter at Parc Fermé. He surprised me by saying that he and his driver Alastair Vines were due out of the CH quite shortly. Peter and Alastair's car was scheduled only a few cars in front of us at that stage and we thought we were due out in a couple of hours. It was only when Peter mentioned that cars departed at 30 second intervals on the last night that the 'penny dropped' ... we were working on the usual 1 minute intervals. Thank you Peter!

I would have willingly settled for 'just finishing', so to find ourselves 152nd overall (314 cars started but only 252 made it to the end) and 4th in class is everything I could have hoped for! Thank you Tessa, thank you Automobiles BMC and thank you GTX 158C. Great rally!



Team Automobiles BMC at the Valence CH



Some blissfully dry tarmac - superb!



When studded tyres are more than just 'useful' ...



The finish: 129 with a plate from its friend/teammate, Car 147

Anthony Hart