

# WHEEL



## The Magazine of EAST AYRSHIRE CAR CLUB

**The EACC  
ANNUAL DINNER DANCE  
& Presentation of Awards**

**EACC CHAMPIONSHIPS  
LOWLAND SPEED CHAMPIONSHIP**

Lochside House Hotel, New Cumnock  
Saturday 5th FEBRUARY 2011

Price kept at £25.00 p.p.

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**ALWAYS A GREAT NIGHT—DON'T MISS IT!**

**ISSUE 2011/1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011**

We understand some members had trouble downloading our first issue and this could be due to the large size of the file. In this second issue we have tried to reduce the file size by minimising graphics and cutting down on the number of photographs. This we do with reluctance but with such an innovation there will be a period of trial and error, particularly as the downloading performance can vary from computer to computer. So please bear with us until things settle down. Meantime, if anyone wants to visit me with a disk I am prepared to download a copy for them.

Our front cover:  
George Bryson taking an unorthodox line going into Paddock Bend at the Charity Sprint at Kames on November 13th.

A full report is included in this issue.

Views expressed in "Wheel" are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors of East Ayrshire Car Club Ltd

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Many clubs must be envious of East Ayrshire Car Club's membership list of around three hundred and fifty, but with this asset comes extra responsibilities and demands. To appreciate the pressures on the EACC administration one just has to have a detailed look at the breakdown of the membership.



**Editorial**

Take the geographical spread for example. Around 126 are resident in Ayrshire, 62 in Lanarkshire, 50 in the Glasgow/Renfrew area, 39 in Fife/Lothians/Borders, 15 in Dumfries & Galloway, 17 in Central Scotland, 17 north of Perth, and 16 in England. The days of EACC being purely a local club are long past.

The object should always be to give value and to that end the Kames facility is invaluable in meeting demand for sprinting, rallying, autotesting and track days. Grass tests have also drawn a following, although the loss of the Drumclog events was unfortunate this season and hopefully this nursery will continue to flourish. At the other end of the spectrum our members fly the flag Nationally and on occasions Internationally on rallies and speed events and their efforts should also be recognised.

With such diverse tastes it could be a problem in knitting everything into one organisation. All too often in clubs one faction or another make demands on resources which can damage the other factions but in EACC the approach seems to be "live and let live".

It is hoped by resurrecting "Wheel" the overall picture of Club activities can be seen and better understood by all readers. At the same time, past experience has shown that while various groups go their own ways during the summer the Annual Dinner-Dance is an ideal opportunity for everyone to get to know one another.

With the spread of membership, is there an argument for the odd Club Night to be held at, say, East Kilbride, as there are almost as many Glasgow/Lanarkshire members as there are in Ayrshire? Recruitment could possibly benefit as a result.

.....

The work of the Club directors is not very accurately covered by the job description of their titles. Each position demands hours spent in varying tasks, many of which, like having someone opening up at Kames for private hires, etc. go unnoticed, but few people appreciate the amount of travelling undertaken by officials attending meetings up and down the country..... Board Meetings, Club Associations, Championships, Galloway Hills and so on. Often these meetings, some of which can be *gie dreich* are held mid-week resulting in late homeward journeys in all weathers.

Having experienced some of these thankless tasks in the distant past I would ask readers not to take it all for granted, and just appreciate how much effort is put in on your behalf.

**RS**

**From the Archives (1966):**

In one of the Route Sheets of the 1966 Countdown Rally, organiser Frew Bryden had given a time allowance which equated to some 87mph. Most crews recognised Frew's typing error but Ian Gemmell just thought "it was a wee bit tight".

**October 31, 2010**

**Solway Car Club**

**DA Autoparts Forrest Estate Stages Rally**

Four EACC crews were in Dumfriesshire for this event which replaced the Solway Coast Rally. The only non-finisher was the Nova of Gordon Alexander/Ian Clark which went out on the last of the three stages. Allan McDowall's Kadett was the highest placed two wheel drive car. Results:

9th Colin Gemmell	Stuart Cant	Impreza
16th Greg Pollock	Michael Cruikshanks	Escort Mk1
22nd George Bryson	Jacqueline Bryson	Escort TC

**October 31, 2010**

**Test Day at Kames**



Some of our older members will remember the name Chris Hawes from Arran Weekend. Now living in Glasgow he was at the Test Day watching son Alistair in a Peugeot 205. Chris's blond locks have been replaced by a wide centre parting.



Derek Connell (left) put in some laps in his recently acquired Locost which he will share with dad David.



Richie Bolton

Among the runners were Richie Bolton from Elderslie who has replaced his singleseater and is back with a Fiesta and Livingston's Kevin Hamilton, whose Vauxhall VX220 has been replaced by a 1380cc Metro. Both were getting used to new cars before the Charity Sprint, Russell Fair was there but the star of the show was Shifty Gibson who gave his arms quite a bit of exercise.

During a discussion at Kames recently, Jock Miller took his mobile out of his dungarees to make a call, telling onlookers..

"You know, this is the third phone I've had this year!"

"What happened to the other two?"

"In the washing machine!"

That must be the third washing machine Jock has had this year.

In his acceptance speech at the Charity Sprint, winner Eric Kiltie said he enjoyed coming to Kames and he considered East Ayrshire the friendliest club in the country.

No doubt that's why the Aberdonian's name is on the EACC membership list.

John Frew Memorial  
**CHARITY SPRINT**  
**Kames (clockwise)**  
**November 13, 2010**

LEADING TIMES

Eric Kiltie	80.48
David Loomes	83.25
Stephen Alexander	84.02
Scott Sheridan	85.73
Russell Macfarlane	87.90
Lesley Sheridan	88.84
Murray Marshall	89.11
Melvyn Hartley	89.89
Graham Hutchison	91.88
Allan McDonald	92.21

Running a speed event in November is asking for trouble yet this fundraiser for John's favourite Charities, Over The Wall and McMillan Nurses was one of the most enjoyable meetings of the season.

Maybe it was because the preceding days were windy downpours which changed on raceday to fine crisp autumnal sunshine that spirits were lifted so much, but the sport itself was full of interest.

The competitors were amazed by the amount of grip, so much so that David Loomes, Mike Murchie and Jock Ramsay all set personal best times. David's Westfield was clocked at 100.9mph and Jock was only 0.39 outside his class record.

FTD was set by our Aberdonian member Eric Kiltie in an OMS2000M, but it was the rally drivers who stole the show.

George Bryson was the most wayward and Chris Abel the most successful, but marshals voted for Alister Watson to receive the new trophy donated by John's mother who attended the hilarious prizegiving. For once every winner waited for his award, even though the budget for trophies had become part of the fundraising effort and winners had to be content with leftovers from events earlier in the season.

**Class A1 (Record 100.55):** Kevin Hamilton 103.58.

**Class A2 (Record 92.48):** Melvin Ross 97.72, John Roddick 98.13, Gary McDermaid

**Above: Alister Watson (Car 31) receives the trophy from John's mother and sister Annette.**

**Right: FTD was set by Eric Kiltie in an OMS 2000M**

98.91, Peter Locke 100.68, Richy Bolton 102.26.

**Class A6 (Record 82.09):** David Loomes 83.25, Stephen Alexander 84.02, Melvyn Hartley 89.89, Russell Fair 95.96.

**Class A7 (Record 93.52):** Jimmy Crow 95.49.

**Class B2 (Record 93.19):** Jock Ramsay 93.58, Jock Frew 105.82, David Alexan-

der 107.08.

**B3 (Record 85.41):** Graham Hutchison 91.88.

**Class B4 (Record 81.74):** Scott Sheridan 85.73, Lesley Sheridan 88.84, Murray Marshall 89.11.

**Class B6 (Record 83.98):** Philip Rowlands 98.17, Nina Baker 111.09.

**Class C0 (Record 92.21):** Mike Murchie 96.35.

**Class C1 (Record 75.77):** Allan McDonald 92.21, David Baker 96.48.

**Class C4 (Record 75.77):** Russell Macfarlane 87.90, Donald Ross 97.50.

**Class C5 (Record 71.11):** Eric Kiltie 80.48, Steph Kiltie 102.46.

**Rally Class:** Rally Class: Chris Abel 93.85, Alister Watson 96.99, George Bryson 97.85, Duncan Ferguson 103.41, Duncan Campbell 104.14, Ian Clark 105.32, Gordon Alexander 107.29, Ian Gemmell 108.76, Davy Drummond 109.43, Derek Connell 109.99, David Connell 110.25.



Ilan Gemmell

CHARITY SPRINT



Russell Macfarlane



Gordon Alexander



Graham Hutchison



Jock Frew



John Roddick



Russell Fair



Chris Abel



Duncan Ferguson



Derek Connell



Allan McDonald

Bon Jour Ian (Gemmell)

Les Dalton here in France. After three years of sweat and tears of frustration, my book called FLY ARMY has now been published.

The book tells the story of the ten years that I represented the British Army International Rally Team, and is choc full of superb action photographs of my rally prepared Austin 1800s, Mini's and of course the Land Rovers, even the awesomely fast Land Rover prepared for me by the great Alan Allard that I used in 1979 and 1981.

The reason that I have sent this email to you is because during the 1970s I had a terrific rapport with EACC, indeed two of my special friends that I kept in touch with for many years after leaving the army were Brian and Helen Carling.

There are some super photographs of the club in my book, perhaps you were on one, and it was taken at the Ayr Race course just prior to the start of the 1976 Scottish International rally.

A laugh here was that going up the start ramp, Helen was walking beside me sowing the EACC badge onto the sleeve of my race overalls, when we had a rest halt some eighteen hours later, I found that I could not get my overalls off because Helen had stitched the badge onto my flameproof underwear, and so we had to cut it off before I could have a wash, I still have that badge 34 years later.

Your club also made a couple of cartoons of me on your rally help brochures during that time.

If you could let your members know about the book, they can get information from my web site which is here: <http://www.flyarmy.co.uk>

Kind Regards, Les Dalton

Les was in charge of the Army Land Rovers on the Scottish Rally and was one of the sport's most colourful characters. Every year he would billet his crews in the nearest army barracks while he booked in to the same expensive hotel as the works teams. At one time Les had a Commanding Officer whose only real pleasure in life was knocking back Les's expenses claims and the various wiles Les would pull to circumvent the problem was always a major talking point in the rally bar



I have started reading the book which is full of interesting tales, including when at Aviemore EACC's Drew Gallagher and Hammy Hannah made unauthorised use of the new artificial ski slope.

Left: A photo from Les's memorabilia

Drew Murray from Lesmahagow has sold his Fisher Fury to John Lowe but is keeping one of his 1300cc Hyabusa engines to install in a Chassis which Graham Miller (of Rotor FF fame) is building. The car will be rear-engined and will run in Sports Libre.



At first glance you may not have recognised the top photograph of part of the Ayr-Edinburgh railway line, but look again at the house on the left. It is the Stationmaster's house at Muirkirk Station, now the EACC Clubhouse at Kames which is shown in the lower picture.



There is to be another Re-union of ex-members (and members) in the Lochside Hotel on May 28th. Keep asking Robert Smith or Ian Gemmell for details as the first Re-union in the Lochside Hotel in May 2009 was a memorable evening with 144 attending the Dinner. A sell-out is likely.

The Club History is progressing well. Because EACC will be 50 years old in 2013, we have decided to publish a book on the period 1963-1989 in time for the next Re-union and have the second half ready for the big party which will no doubt take place in just over two years time. We can still make last minute alterations to the book so if anyone out there has any photos, results, etc please get in touch with us immediately or it will be too late.

We believe the History will be of considerable interest to members past and present, detailing the Club's links with personalities like Graham Hill, Andrew Cowan, "Taggart", Miss World, Richard Noble (then fastest man on earth), the MacRae family, etc. and cars like the GT40, Le Mans winning Jaguar, Grand Prix Maseratis, Ferraris, Lamborghinis and so on. The print run will be limited so get your order in as soon as the book goes on sale.

The Forum section of the Guyson Scottish Sprint Championship website has some in-car footage from the Charity Sprint worth seeing. It includes Stephen Alexander's and Allan McDonald's "offs" and David Loomes' Personal Best.

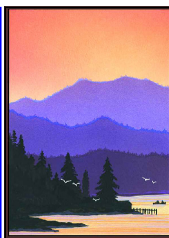
## GALLOWAY HILLS RALLY

SUNDAY DECEMBER 5TH

EAST AYRSHIRE CAR CLUB

SOLWAY CAR CLUB

MACHARS CAR CLUB



### RESULTS

- Jock Armstrong / Kirsty Riddick Impreza
- David Wilson / Dave Robson Evo 9
- Richard Dickson / Sanny Dobie Impreza
- Ian Paterson / Helen Brown Impreza
- Allan Smith / Ian MacIvor Evo 8
- Nigel Feeney / Laura Marshall Impreza
- Craig McMiken / Christine Sanderson Evo 9
- Richard Stewart / Tony Marchbank Impreza
- Andrew Gallagher / Phil Sandham Evo 9
- Andy Knight / Drew Sturrock Impreza

East Ayrshire entries:

- Duncan Ferguson / Janice Ferguson Escort  
*Top EACC crew*
- Bernie Rooney / Scott McMinn Stratos  
*Steady run, no disasters.*
- Greg Pollock / Michael Cruikshanks Escort  
*Several spins but finished strongly*
- Gordon Alexander / Ian Clark Nova  
*Tyre problems*
- Kevin Gemmell / Billy Dickson Escort
- Blair McCulloch / Alec McCulloch Nova  
*In ditch SS4 took maximum penalty.*

Non-finishers:

Colin Gemmell / Stuart Cant SS1, *Gearbox/diff failure.*  
George Bryson / Jacqueline Bryson SS4. *Off twice, withdrew.*

The entry of 51 crews may have been a bit disappointing, but at least the South West escaped the worst of the Arctic weather that hit the country in early December. Nevertheless marshals had a miserably cold session and our thanks must go out to everyone who volunteered their services.

The tarmac autotest scheduled for 27th December at Ballantrae had to be cancelled due to the weather conditions. George and Jacqueline Bryson travelled to Yorkshire that day for a stage rally at Croft Autodrome.

Two other tarmac autotests are on the cards, however, both at Kames. These are on January 23rd and February 13th, so why not keep your hand in during the speed and rallying close season with a bit of hand-brake turning. In between these autotests will be a Test Day on Sunday January 30th. Details on website.

### EACC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY 20th JANUARY In Muirkirk Golf Club

Please support the Club directors by attending this important meeting. Learn what their plans are for the coming season and put your views on Club matters to them. There will be the financial report and the Board of Directors will be appointed for 2011.

## EACC 2010 Time Trial Championship Final positions

### Drivers:

Steven Bogle	28pts	1st Equal Overall
Blair McCulloch	28	1st Equal Overall
George Bryson	27	3rd Overall
David Connell	22	4th Overall
Alastair Cunningham	20	1st in Class 3
John Willis	20	1st in Class 1
Gary Keenan	20	2nd in Class 3
Alister Watson	16	
Graham Bruce	16	1st in Class 4
Keith Seager	14	
Chris McCallum	12	
Ross Fernie	10	
Derek McConnell	8	2nd in Class 1
Kevin McIver	8	1st in Class 2
Craig Corson	7	
Colin Stewart	6	
David Marshall	0	
Paul Graham	0	
Graham Clark	0	

### Co-Drivers

David Murie	28	1st Equal Overall
Alex McCulloch	28	1st Equal overall
Jacqueline Bryson	27	2nd Overall / 1st Lady
Peter McCallum	24	3rd overall
Jim Smith	20	1st in Class 3
Mary Willis	18	1st in Class 1
Billy Dickson	16	2nd in Class 3
Steven McVean	16	1st in Class 4
Laura Baillie	14	
William Campbell	13	
John Young	10	
David Connell	8	2nd in Class 1
Robin Nicolson	8	1st in Class 2
Fraser Stewart	7	
Derek Connell	7	
Marion Marshall	0	
Louise Nowell	0	



MEET  
A  
MEMBER

1987 →

← 2010

DAVID  
CONNELL



David is another of our born-again members, having been very active on EACC clubbies and rallies in the eighties and still a familiar sight in the Kames paddock. The Ayr factory manager has been co-driving this season in a Corsa with son Derek with whom he hopes to share a Locost in sprints during 2011.

## EAST AYRSHIRE'S MONTE CARLO ADVENTURE

For the first time in decades the Monte Carlo Rally is to have a starting point in Glasgow in 2011. Not too many Scots can say they have competed in this most famous of rallies, but one such person was East Ayrshire Car Club's Alistair Findlay and here is his remarkable story.



*From the  
Archives*

**42e Rallye Monte Carlo Rally 1973  
in Ford Escort RS1600 (DRR 111J)  
By Alastair Findlay  
(March 2010)**

Having barely started rallying, and being daft and impulsive, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to pick up the regs for 'The Monte' at the Royal Scottish Automobile Club in Blythswood Square when I went in there for lunch one day near the end of 1972. There wasn't much time until the closing date for entries, so I completed it there and then and took it through to Major R. Tennant Reid together with a cheque for the horrendous sum of one hundred quid! There was so little time in fact, that Bob appended a personal note to my application via the RAC in London which said 'for favour of stamping and urgent onward transmission to Monte Carlo', and sent it off by Special Delivery.

"You've what!" exclaimed Isabell when I eventually arrived home. "I've entered for the Monte" I repeated. Quite reasonably she asked who I was going to do it with; and this had the immediate effect of making me realise just what I had taken on, and thus began weeks of planning and organisation.

Right enough, a co-driver was the first thing on the agenda. I suspected my wonderful co-driver Frew Bryden would be unable to take the time off for it, although I asked him of course, only to receive the answer I expected. So who was to be the brave soul sitting in the hot seat? With the handicap of the passage of time I am not absolutely certain quite how I was lucky enough to avail myself of the professionalism and experience of the late Ian Muir, (who himself dearly wanted to have the Monte on his CV as it were). I think the tracking-down process was via Jimmy McInnes and John Milne.

International rallying was different in those days, and quite unlike the rather pathetic three-day events in daylight only which we have today. They lasted a week or more and involved days and nights without sleep, and pace notes were something a privateer could only dream of. Also, being a foreign event, there was no question of having or affording my trusty service crew of Mid Bruce and Mike Banks, so everything we needed had to be stowed in the car. Big problem - and the subject of many meetings and 'phone calls between Ian and myself which usually boiled down to weight and to what we thought we might need.

The dining room at Barnsdale was emptied of furniture and the floor given over to laying out every conceivable thing we thought would have to be taken; but after a while it became obvious that what we had spread out just wouldn't physically fit into the car, (in spite of a few sterling efforts), and thus began the process of starting all over again with the criteria for inclusion being not what we thought might be handy, but that which we just couldn't do without. There was much to do, and even my entry number, 307, had to be traced out and painted onto self-adhesive white plastic on the dining room floor, as standard competition numerals weren't allowed.

With days to go, we were as ready as we were ever going to be; and on the eve of the adventure duly reported to the multi-storey car park near Blythswood Square for signing-on, scrutineering and *parc ferme*.

The big day started dark and freezing, and I can't remember if my shivering was because of cold or nerves! A few Glasgow friends including Robert Reid and my uncle John braved the elements to see us off, as did that wonderful stalwart of Scottish rallying - the late Ross Finlay. His advice was not to worry too much about the competition, as most of the foreign private entrants were all 'flashing teeth and eyes and go-faster tape!' There were only twelve starters from Glasgow - the other three hundred odd starting from nine varying places such as Stockholm, Warsaw, Paris, a few other capitals I cannot recall, and Monte Carlo itself. Among our little group was the maestro himself, the legendary Hannu Mikkola - of which more later.

Five, four, three, two, one - the Saltire was lifted from the windscreen by Bob Reid whose parting words were, "See you in Rosie's!" We were off.....

There were only three main controls in the UK - Scotch Corner, Watford Gap and Dover. These were easy runs with ample time, and had none of the snow around Carnwath and the Borders that I remembered seeing when I watched the Monte competitors on several occasions before. We only had a little bother, (with the twin down-draught Weber carburettors), which was sorted out in next to no time thanks to the kindness of Norman Masters of the Ford works service crew.

Boulogne, and another freezing early morning, and the start of more serious road sections with shorter times between main controls than allowed in the UK. There were crowds in every town and village willing us to go faster, which we refrained from doing until we saw even the gendarmes urging us to 'sink the welly'. In France, quite unlike rallying in Britain, where cars seem to be studiously ignored by the general public, but not by the police (!), we could at last let things rip a bit. I remember our first control point in a small town in northern France where we were served breakfast by the mayor who turned out to be an Englishman! He insisted we come with him to see a Norman archway which had recently been discovered in the local church; and although we were in a bit of a hurry to be off, good manners dictated we paid a visit to his pride and joy.

The run south through France was fast but uneventful until we reached the hillier regions around Clermont Ferrand. There was one small incident however which marked out Ian as one of the countries greatest co-drivers and navigators. We were speeding along in convoy at the tail end of about eight competitors, (which included Mikkola), when Ian

## 42e Rallye Monte Carlo Rally 1973 Part 2

told me to take a left even although every other car had gone straight on. Just as with Frew, I did as I was told, but did wonder just a wee bit! I needn't have worried, as about ten minutes later I saw them all come up in my

rear-view mirror! (I learned only recently that Ian once co-drove for Stig Blomquist in an RAC Rally and learned Swedish for the event).

In the Rallye Monte Carlo in the old days, there was only one special stage on the first leg between one's starting point and Monaco itself, and which had to be completed before being allowed to compete on the subsequent two mountain sections for the real meat of the rally. This for us was the Col du Corobin.

I don't think before or since in my rallying career have I ever known such out and out fear. As I mentioned at the beginning, I was very much a learner driver, and it would be nearly two years before I was third in the championship, and had yet to master even that most basic of rally-driving skills - opposite lock! The stage started down in a valley and climbed way up above the snowline. That was bad enough - but going down the other side was nothing short of terrifying. The road was narrow, there were no crash barriers, and the drops were awesome. I was close to tears with fear, and but for Ian's comforting words I might have stopped there and then and run home to mummy! We did have a minor prang though when I stupidly braked on an icy hairpin instead of hitting the loud pedal, and we hit the side of a spectator's BMW; just the other side of which was a chasm, the depth of which I still don't want to know!

It was at the bottom of this ordeal when I first met Geraint Phillips, aka Verglas of the Motoring News - and I was in a state. Gerry saw this quivering wreck and sussed what was up: so he came over, stuck his head through the window, and in his lilting Welsh accent uttered the words I shall never forget - "You don't want to worry about these drops boyo. Just imagine it's a ploughed field out there!"

We made it to Monaco, and, as arranged, Isabell flew out to Nice to meet up with us. We all stayed with a Madame d'Estrange in one of those houses built on the edge of a cliff which seemed to feature all over Monaco. (As an aside, Madame d'Estrange was very friendly with the staff of the Onassis household, and on our first morning with her we found her in tears as she had just heard that Alexander Onassis had died in a plane crash. Even then, just hours after the tragedy had happened, Aristotle himself privately announced to his staff that he was sure his son had been murdered).

A proper sleep before the first of the mountain sections was completely out of the question, and I sweated, tossed and turned all night. That made it about sixty hours without anything approaching a decent kip - but adrenaline is an amazing thing!

We were not to know it as we were flagged off for the second section of the rally, but this Monte was to turn out to become one of the most famous in its long history.

The trouble all started after we had completed only a few special stages, (which didn't turn out to be so bad, because it was dark, and I couldn't see the drops!). I also discovered that Ross Finlay was absolutely right about the boy racers as we had to pass dozens of them on the stages.

The next main control was in the village of Burzet high in the mountains, and we drove into what can only be described as a rally circus. There were hundreds of vehicles in the square - rally cars, services wagons, spectators' cars, tyre trucks, the press - you name it. Ian got out and went to the control point with our road book for stamping, but returned very soon after

and told me the marshals weren't signing in anybody, and there would be an announcement later. The announcement duly came in the form of a marshal who poked his head in the window of every car that bore rally plates, and saying, none too politely, - "*Pour vous c'est finis!*"

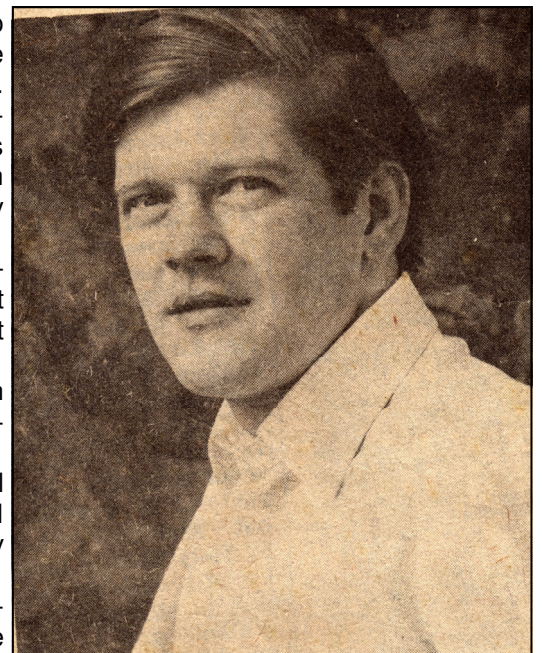
While I went off to find something for us to eat, Ian tried to discover just what the hell was going on, (and thank goodness for his fluent French).

It turned out that a few dozen of the leading cars had made it through what would have been our next stage, but then an avalanche had blocked the route. As the then leading car was French, a Renault Alpine driven by Jean Claude Androuette, co-driven by Michelle Petite, aka 'Biche', the organisers decided not to declare *force majeure* on the stage and thereby effectively put an end to our rally. (We found out not much later that the Clerk of the Course was a twenty-three year old Frenchman who had never even seen the inside of a rally car in his life!)

We three hundred or so privateers hadn't gone to all the time, trouble and expense to be illegally kicked out of a rally because a young Frog didn't know the rules! Something had to be done!

The leading light of the rebellion was a Swiss driver who turned out to be a forceful character with a command of most European languages. Our 'council of war' centred around a map of the south of France spread out on a car bonnet. We knew we had to stop the rally in its tracks in order to bring about a status of *force majeure* for the entire complement of competitors, including 'the ones that got away'. It became apparent that we would have to block several junctions at scattered locations such that the cars still in the rally couldn't possibly make it to their next main control in time thereby disqualifying them too. Ian and I along with about sixty other cars set off in a high-speed convoy to a junction twenty miles away with instructions to snarl up the route. The blockage we arranged was by parking about thirty cars up the road from the stage and the rest from the junction over the bridge which was the road out to the next special stage control. We sat and waited.

We had the radio tuned to Monte Carlo, and suddenly Ian pricked up his ears. It was the news, and the first item



Alastair Findlay



## 42e Rallye Monte Carlo Rally 1973 Part 3

was about competitors blocking the route of the Monte. Here were we thinking we were on a secret mission when every man and his brother knew what we were up to! It didn't take long for the gendarmes to arrive - and

arrive they did. Truckloads of them, and mob handed. They were nasty. Vary nasty indeed. There was none of your 'good morning sir, would you mind moving your vehicle'. No - it was out with the truncheons, screaming and shouting, demanding our car keys, and generally behaving like a shower of thugs. It was scary enough to make us move.

We then made our way down the route of the rally and came upon a long straight with a bridge in the middle of it whereupon was parked a service van with its wheels removed! We had to laugh! Other competitors and some spectators were parked with us beside the road, and we all wondered just how the gendarmes were going to sort this one out as the driver of the service truck had taken the keys out and flung them into the river along with the wheels!

And then it happened. The most amazing bit of guts and driving skill I have ever witnessed.

The first car down from the stage was the works Escort of Hannu Mikkola. He stopped about four hundred yards from the bridge, and we could hear the throaty snarl of the powerful engine as he stopped there, revving every few seconds, wondering what to do. Suddenly we heard the deafening roar of the RS1600 bursting into life, and with squealing tyres hurtled towards us. About a hundred yards from the bridge he flicked the car right, blasted through the roadside hedge, literally flew down onto the field several feet below, gunned the car towards the river, drove right through it in a cascade of water and noise, roared across the field on the other side, did a wall of death manoeuvre up the banking, blasted through the hedge again, off down the road, and away.....! When our dropped jaws returned to normal, all we could do was clap, cheer and salute! Having seen how it could be done, many others then completed the same trick.

The heavy-handed gendarmes soon arrived along with a handful of members of the press and some more spectators. One poor bloke was taking photographs and was immediately pounced on and had his camera ripped from him and the film torn out. Another was manhandled pretty badly. Ian sought to intervene, and for his troubles finished up with a policeman's pistol thrust into his gut. It was the photograph of this incident that finished up on the front page of The Daily Mirror. Fame at last Ian!

The gendarmes unceremoniously dragged the offending service van off the bridge, and the road again became clear. A little later, and a bit further down the road, the mayhem continued. In a massive field of several hundred acres we witnessed the cream of the world's rally drivers milling around aimlessly in desperate attempts to find a way out and back onto the route. The first to try was Tony Fall in a works Datsun 240Z who blasted through the hedge quite close to where Ian and I were standing. His effort was in vain as he belly-flopped onto a banking which rose from the hedge to the road. He was right royally stuck!

Tony pleaded with us and the others who had gathered around to get him out of his predicament; but it was Ian, who knew Tony well, who told him there was no way we were going to help him unless he used his position in the Rally Pilots Association to help us. He eventually agreed to take the position seriously and promised to help, so we dragged him onto the road and let him go. (Fortunately his Datsun was an ex-Safari car with lots of grab handles).

Eventually we all finished up back in Monte Carlo and into one of the stormiest meetings of any kind I have ever attended. The organisers were sticking to their guns by saying we hadn't clocked in at Burzet, (studiously failing to mention that they wouldn't let us!) We for our part were screaming back saying that the Clerk of the Course hadn't followed his own, and standard, rally regulations! But it was no use. We were denied further participation, and for the rest of the event became mere spectators.

On a lighter note, two days later was the rally dinner and presentation of prizes which was held in the splendid Sporting Club d'Hiver in Casino Square. Before that event we had to of course pay a visit to the world-famous casino and lay the many one-pound bets we had been given by friends and relatives! Entrée to the best areas of the casino was smoothed by the *concurrent* badges which Ian and I had to wear on our lapels - and it was truly amusing laying five-franc bets with us resplendent in our dickies and Isabell in a magnificent mink stole lent to her by Madame d'Estrange, beside the seriously rich laying bets for a king's ransom! James Bond - Eat your heart out!

There was more. One had to arrive at the dinner venue either by car or taxi; so we had to pile into a taxi for the hundred yard journey from the casino to the winter sports club! The reason for this was so that the band could play the appropriate national anthem for the arriving competitors' grand entrance! Now I know what royalty feels like!

Our last day was also the festival of St. Devota, the patron saint of Monaco - and in addition to the most amazing fireworks display I had ever seen, we were within five feet of one of the most beautiful things on the planet: Princess Grace. On the silver screen she is certainly lovely, but close up in the flesh she was a memory that will forever sear my mind.

### Postscript

The long journey home was a high-speed blast which we did 'in a oner', with poor Isabell sandwiched into a corner of the back seat between roll cage struts, studded tyres, crash hats, tools, and all the other paraphernalia.

Our Monte fiasco finished up at the FIA in Paris for their adjudication, and not surprisingly they ruled in favour of the privateers. The rally organisers received a severe ticking off and were told to provide us all with free entries for the 1974 event.

However, 1974 was the year of the fuel crisis - and the event never took place.

Naive souls that we were, we presumed that we would have our free Monte in 1975 - but the organisers, with a completely straight face, told us that our free entry was only for 1974!

Do the damned Frogs ever change....!!!