

My First Monte Carlo Rally

By Stirling Moss

In a few weeks time I shall be taking part in my third successive Monte Carlo Rally, and I hope there will be many more to follow. However many of these there may be, I shall always look back on my first effort with the greatest pleasure, for I was fortunate enough to win second place in the general classification, coming within four penalty marks of Sydney Allard, who was the winner in that year, 1952.

In saying that I came in second in my first Monte Carlo Rally I do not want to overlook the fact that I had two accomplices, John A. Cooper, of *The Autocar*, and Desmond Scannell, Secretary of the British Racing Drivers Club. The whole thing began when John Cooper and I came to the conclusion that it would be a good idea to enter the Rally together. As the third member of our team we invited Desmond Scannell, and were able to reap the benefit of his skill in organisation, a very necessary requirement in stern and long drawn out events such as that for which we had to prepare.

As you will all know, we were one of the units of the official Sunbeam-Talbot team, making the trip in a works-sponsored Sunbeam-Talbot 90. The Monte Carlo Rally is not just an ordinary event. Wherever the competitors start they have to travel over mountainous sections, and as the event is held in mid-winter it is almost certain every year that much of the driving will have to be carried out over ice and snow and in the most difficult conditions. It is great fun, but the most careful preparations are necessary, if only to avoid the unpleasant experience of finding oneself ditched without means of extraction, or of making some blunder that leads to an ignominious withdrawal!

At length the day came for us to make a start. We chose Monte Carlo itself for our starting point, and as we thought it would be a good idea to discover something of the route on our way to the starting

point, we assembled in Paris, and from there followed the Rally route southward.

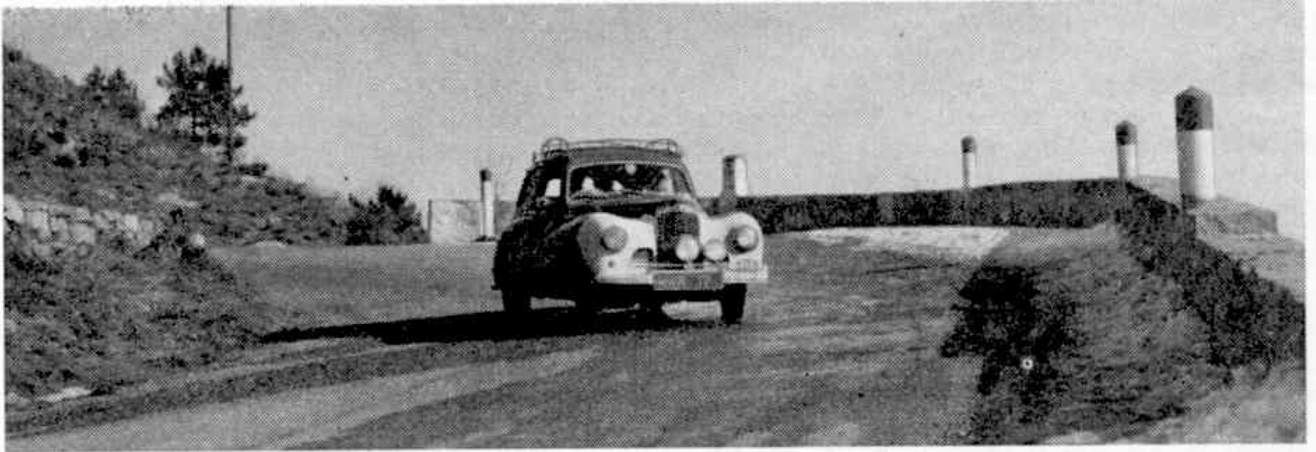
It was not long before we made acquaintance with one of the terrors of the Rally—snow. We were alternately heartened and discouraged, the latter when we managed to bury ourselves in a snowdrift, and the former when we were pulled out of it with surprising ease by a couple of oxen at the end of a length of chain. This episode put into our minds the advisability of taking a couple of oxen



Norman Garrad, the Sunbeam Talbot Team Manager, wishing Stirling Moss and his co-drivers, John Cooper on the left and Desmond Scannell on the right, bon voyage when they are about to leave Monte Carlo at the beginning of the 1953 Rally.

along with us during the Rally itself, but with three of us in the Sunbeam-Talbot there was no room even for one of them!

We left Monte Carlo on the Rally itself at nearly 10 o'clock at night. We expected a good deal of snow on the road northward, so we fitted snow tyres, and Desmond Scannell took the wheel, feeling extremely nervous, as he confessed later. I took over at Grasse for the tricky run to Digne, but we did not experience any particular difficulty and made good progress, John Cooper eventually taking us over the Croix de la Haute to Grenoble. The snow grew thicker, but the tyres stood up to their task and Geneva was reached without mishap. There we thought it safe to remove the snow tyres, but we found ice in plenty on the road as Desmond took



The Sunbeam Talbot on the Col de Braus during the final stages of last year's Rally, with Stirling Moss at the wheel.

us along to Berne, so we soon put them back and used them throughout the rest of the Rally.

Unfortunately we reached Berne too late to allow me to visit my favourite restaurant and eat one of the fine *banane flambees* made there, a failing that really annoyed me, but after all we were there to cover the course at the prescribed speed and even my appetite had to give way to this paramount necessity. So on we went, each in turn driving, with the others resting in the back of the car, sleeping if possible but awakened at times by hitting the roof as the car bounced about on sections of road covered with ice and deeply rutted. The back of the car, by the way, had been curtained off with blackout paper. My companions alleged that this was done to prevent me from becoming too nervous when they were driving!

Northward we went through Luxembourg to Liege and Amsterdam, where we turned southward again. Actually the going was

now quite easy, as we went onward through Brussels and Rheims to Paris, and then to Bourges. We did not expect this good fortune to continue, for we were approaching the difficult central mountain region, where we could expect plenty of snow and ice and perhaps blizzards as well. And it didn't! John Cooper took over the wheel at Mont Lucon, with the idea of handing over to me at Le Puy, but a heavy storm was raging and when he reached the control at St. Flour we were well behind time. Stimulated perhaps by the fact that he had had the pleasure of seeing half a dozen unfortunate competitors ditched on one of the passes, he decided that the time had come to call upon me to take my share of this strenuous work and retired in my favour.

The road was narrow, with rutted ice below the snow, and in the dark, with snow falling and low cloud making it difficult to see more than 20 ft. or so ahead, we bumped and crashed our way on. Afterwards John and Desmond told me

that they had never been nervous throughout this fearsome night run, in spite of the fact that even on the snow and ice the speedometer at times, where



Arduous hill climbs are a feature of the Monte Carlo Rally, and here is a picture of the Sunbeam Talbot in bleak surroundings and in conditions that call for complete and accurate control.

there was a reasonably good straight stretch, actually registered 130 k.p.h., which is more than 75 m.p.h.

I shall always remember that night's drive. It is one thing to do high speed on a race track and quite another to race on a road surface such as that we encountered. On the racing track it is essential that the driver shall feel absolutely at home with his car; on ice the need for this is increased tenfold, whilst every movement must be instinctive—and just right. No grabbing at the steering wheel to swing the car round on bends! It must be stroked round, for any violent movement is almost certain to end in a ditch, or perhaps at the foot of a precipice in one of the many places where the road has been cut out of a cliff side.

When daylight came and the blizzard grew less troublesome, we had regained our lost time, and at Valence we learned that there were now only 20 of the 328 hopeful starters in the Rally who had not lost points. We were among them and realised that we had a chance of being in the

regularity test, carried out over a difficult circular mountain course beginning and ending at Monte Carlo. Our car was locked up in the official park, but we borrowed another one so that we could run round the course to pick out the difficult spots and work out our schedule of speeds. This practice was useful, but not as helpful as it might have been, as there was snow on the night before the test and many of our check points just disappeared from sight!

We started the actual test two minutes behind the enormous Daimler car in which Tommy Wisdom and two companions had come all the way from Lisbon without losing a mark, a car that on the face of it was suitable only for carrying seven passengers or so about town in comfort and dignity. I often think back with admiration of Wisdom's achievement with this large vehicle, which we caught up just before the first control on that difficult pass, the Col de Braus, with its steep gradients and many hairpin bends. Tommy sportingly pulled over so that we could get through

and when we reached the check we were within seconds of our scheduled time. We lost a few seconds on the pass, but hurtling through snow and slush we made these up and at the second fixed control we were exactly on schedule. We thought this was fine, and cheered ourselves gleefully, but it turned out later that the official chronometers there were in error, and this control was eliminated from the reckoning!

I was driving throughout this regularity test, and on the trip had one mishap, which fortunately had no serious consequences. This was at the entrance to a road tunnel, where there were two or three cars

clustered together on the side of the road and our Sunbeam slid off into a snowdrift. I tried to back out, but the rear wheels just spun round and round uselessly. Spectators rushed to our aid, however, and pushed us back on to the road. Desmond with admirable calm keeping careful count of the seconds we were losing.

Then down the pass I went at tremendous speed, wondering where the secret check was that we knew was being imposed. If it were still ahead of us (Continued on page 22)



Tough going on the snow covered passes, with Stirling Moss and Desmond Scannell gazing tensely ahead.

running. We had now returned to the road that we had followed on the outward journey from Monte Carlo, running of course in the opposite direction. Over the passes between Digne and Grasse we did not find the surfaces too bad, and we kept ourselves as well up as possible. At Nice we stopped to check over the car and fill up with petrol for the last time, and then went on to Monte Carlo itself, one of only 16 competing teams to arrive unpenalised.

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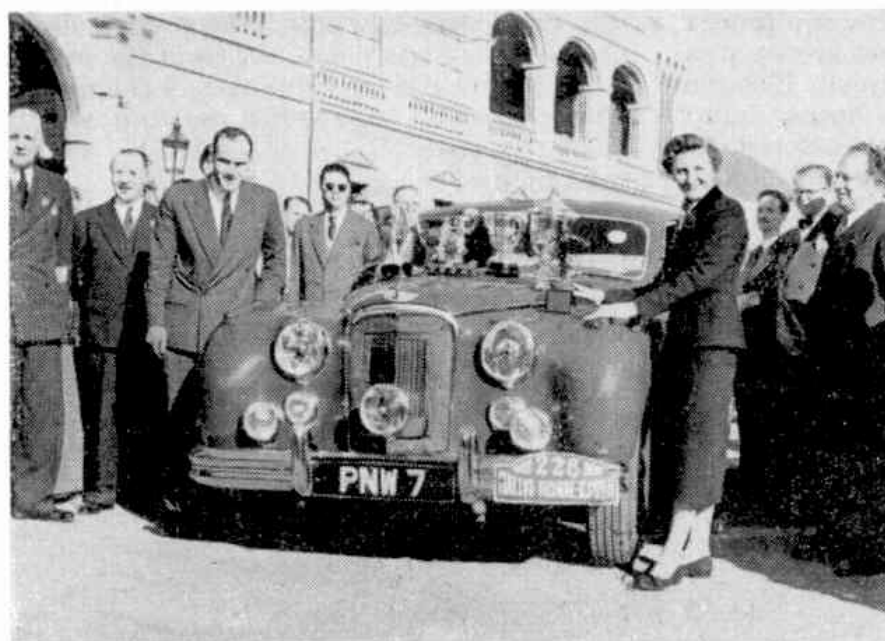
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the car must be a production model of which at least 500 or even 1,000 have been made in the previous year, but sometimes modifications are allowed for the particular conditions of any rally. Special points requiring to be checked always include the weight of the car, whether it has open or closed bodywork, the internal body dimensions, the year of manufacture, and even perhaps such a small thing as the area of the driving mirror, for which there is a minimum laid down.

The number of accessories that can be fitted to the car is not limited by the organisers, which is rather a pity as it is probably the most difficult thing of all to decide. Obvious things required are a good heater, some way of defrosting the windscreen, fog lamps, map lights and a folding seat to enable the navigator to snatch some sleep. But there are

many other odds and ends that can be added and which are useful, all of which add considerably to the weight of the car, however, and put a terrible strain on the battery. One has therefore to be quite ruthless about the choice of these gadgets, and restrict them only to those things that are quite essential to the good running of the car.

One very difficult decision to make is that between the use of chains and the new type of special snow tyre that has recently been developed. In 1952 we chose to use chains and bitterly regretted the decision. After leaving a snow-covered pass we came on to a stretch of hard road and wore the chains right through. Finally they came off and got wrapped round the brake drums, causing us a considerable delay. Last year we concentrated on snow tyres, and found them much better at high speed so long as the tyre pressures were kept very low in order to give maximum grip.

IT may sound strange, but one's chances of success in the Monte Carlo Rally have usually been decided by the time one starts the event, and the results achieved by individual competitors usually bear a direct relation to the time they have spent in the preparations for the event beforehand. Many weeks of hard work on both the car and the maps is far more important than "do or die" efforts during the course of the Rally itself.

The choice of the make of car to drive is obviously very important, but is usually decided by the type owned, and hence the first major problem to settle is that of the crew. In this respect I have been extremely lucky, as for the last four seasons I have always had my wife as co-driver. Being cooped up in a car with someone continuously for perhaps seventy-two hours will strain even the closest of friendships, and it is essential that one should have mutual confidence in each other's capabilities both in the navigational and driving rôles. It is quite impossible to sleep and get adequate rest if one is constantly being frightened by the performance of the driver.

The crew having been chosen, work on the car can begin. But first one must check that it complies in all respects with the regulations. These usually state that

Preparing for the Monte Carlo Rally

By Ian Appleyard

Ian and Pat Appleyard, with the Jaguar car in which they won second place in the 1953 Monte Carlo Rally, are seen in the illustration at the head of this page. The car, its drivers and their trophies are the centre of an admiring crowd.

Finally we come to the extra equipment and spare parts carried. These are limited to items fitted reasonably quickly like the coil, sparking plugs, water hoses, lamp bulbs and fuses, together with an assortment of copper wire, insulating tape and strong rubber bands for fastening things on that may fall off! A hacksaw may sound a destructive tool to carry, but it can be mighty useful for removing a jammed nut or cutting off some obstruction to a wheel after a bump. Other essential equipment includes

spades, unditching gear and a tow rope, and of course ensuring that there is somewhere strong enough on the car to fasten the tow-rope to in case one ends up in a ditch in the middle of the night.

So much for the car. The navigational side of the preparations are equally important. Long hours of work with maps before the event will certainly save precious minutes at doubtful places during the rally itself, and calculations made in the quiet of one's home are much more likely to be correct than frenzied last minute arithmetic en route. We try to condense all the navigational information

This splendid picture of the Appleyards indeed shows well the grey painted area on the front of the car that marks it as an entry in the Monte Carlo Rally.

into one loose leaf book, so that one side of each opening has pages cut from the maps, with the route clearly marked on them, and on the opposite page are all the details with regard to mileage,

The Appleyards on the Col de Braus in the regularity test that completed the Monte Carlo Rally of last year.



times of arrival at all the controls, filling stations and so on. A really accurate speedometer calibrated for the continent in kilometres and recording the distance accurately, coupled with at least two good stop watches and suitable lighting for use at night, complete the armoury of the navigator.

So much for the jobs of preparing the car for its task and preparing for the navigation. One now comes to the event itself, and here the comfort of the crew is all important. A really comfortable bucket seat is best for the driver, and for the navigator a seat which can be folded flat to enable periods of rest to be snatched

when the roads are fairly simple. So far as food is concerned, it is usually possible to snatch hasty snacks at some of the controls, but we always carry some emergency rations of cheese, chocolate, raisins, and coffee, etc., and also find that



glucose tablets taken at the right time can add considerably to one's strength towards the end of a long event.

I think I should mention the rally driver's nightmare—falling asleep at the wheel. There is nothing more frightening than feeling oneself beginning to nod when in charge of a car, and my wife and I have an inflexible rule that as soon as we begin to feel at all sleepy we immediately hand over the driving. In this way we find that even if we can only get a rest for a few minutes the tiredness quite soon passes, and in this way, by snatching cat naps throughout a rally, we find it quite possible for two people to keep going for seventy-two hours.

With all these preparations to think of,

it is quite easy to overlook some of the vital documents required for an event on the continent. These include such things as competition licences, special insurance cover for the car, foreign currency for the many different countries through which the rally may pass, shipping arrangements, passports and car documents, and one thing which we forgot until the very last moment only a month or so ago in the Lisbon Rally—visas, if by any chance the trial is going into Spain or Portugal.

The last stage of the preparations is usually a practice run over the most difficult parts of the course about two weeks before the actual start. This also enables one to practice the regularity-speed test usually held in the snowy mountains behind Monte Carlo. During this test competitors have to cover consecutive sections of road at exact average speeds set by the organisers and marks are awarded based on one's regularity. Last year we had to make over 700 calculations to produce eleven different sets of figures in

order to be prepared for any eventuality that could possibly occur during this difficult test.

So eventually one comes to the start of the Rally, in which the weather is always a deciding factor. In 1952, because of terrible snowstorms, only a handful of competitors got through to the finish without losing marks and so the final test only sorted out the placings of these few competitors. Last year, however, the position was completely reversed, for the weather was fairly mild and the majority of drivers got through unpenalised. Because of this the final regularity test last year had a decisive effect on the final results and there was a large



Rallies are not won by just getting into a car and driving off. Careful preparation is necessary, and here Ian Appleyard and a mechanic are seen checking over the "stores." Photograph by courtesy of the "News Chronicle."

element of luck involved in the timing of the cars through the various sections. For instance, the first dozen or so cars were only separated by a few seconds in the final results and we ourselves missed first place by a matter of only one second—a very narrow margin after a drive of 2,000 miles!

This year the event has been made tougher than ever with a regularity section on the final stages of the road section leading into Monte Carlo before the finish, and finally a real race round the houses at the end to sort out the winner. Unfortunately my wife and I cannot go this year, and so towards the end of January, as we go to bed in a nice warm house, we will be thinking with mixed feelings of our friends speeding through the snowy night towards Monte Carlo. Particularly we will remember our collaborators in this special issue of the *M.M.*, Stirling Moss and his co-drivers, and Jack and Peter Reece, with whom will go our best wishes for victory.