

historically speaking

# Triumph Cars in Rally Competition

## – Part 1

BY SIMON RASMUSSEN  
– TTC MOTORSPORTS COORDINATOR

*(This is the first article in a series and deals with the pre-war era.)*

The Monte Carlo Rally, the most famous rally in the world, celebrates 100 years in 2011, so this seems like a good time to look back at the successes and failures of the Triumph cars, (and a few Standards!), in competitive rallying.

Last year the Monte attracted over 12 million television viewers and probably hundreds of thousands of spectators. Eurovision will supply 14 hours of coverage this year to markets across Europe and Asia; no doubt there will be some coverage here in Canada. In addition, the World Rally Championship, comprising 13 events around the world, also attracts millions of fans who buy video games licensed by the WRC, collect models of the cars driven by their heroes and even buy replica crash helmets. It is clear that success in rally competition has the potential to affect car purchasing decisions made by the public, so the commercial benefits can justify the substantial expense. Triumph thought so too...

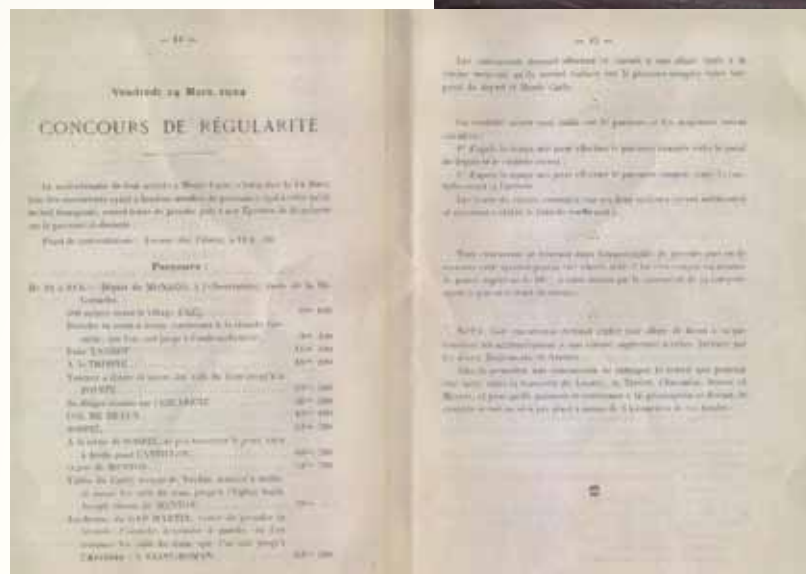
In the early years of the 20th century motoring pioneers pitted their noisy, slow and unreliable machines against each other in contests of speed. In France, in particular, races over quite long distances, from city to city, became popular. Contestants would start at timed intervals and the winner would be the car and driver (and usually intrepid riding mechanic) which finished in the shortest elapsed time, as opposed to finishing first.

Within a few years, manufacturers (and they really were manufacturers, as the cars were made by hand) were producing much

more powerful and faster machines, average speeds rose from the low teens to the 50-60mph range and this resulted in some serious crashes causing death to both competitors and spectators. There was inevitably a backlash – these noisy, overpowered machines looking something like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang with their huge engines, spindly wood-spoked wheels and chain drives caused horses to bolt, scared livestock and generally were a menace to society. The governments had to do something - and they did. Speed limits were imposed in England and there was no more racing on public roads. The Brooklands race track at Weybridge in Surrey was built in 1909 to provide a safer venue for this type of competition, while racing on public roads was still legal in Ireland, where the Tourist Trophy became an important annual fixture attracting competitors from all over Europe.

Various clubs of motoring enthusiasts had been formed by now to advance the interests of both drivers of cars and motorcycle riders. (Motorcycles outnumbered cars by far in the early days as they were much cheaper). One of the earliest of these was the Liverpool self-propelled Traffic Association, another the Royal Automobile Club. Organisations like these wanted to improve the image of motoring and promote it as a practical means of transportation. They organised reliability trials and endurance runs to gain as much exposure as possible (Keep in mind that most of the population before WW1 had probably never seen a car, or a plane). Manufac-

Monte Carlo Rally route book 1924



London to Brighton veteran cars



Triumph Super Seven 1930

Gloria Southern Cross



## Profile of Donald Healey



**B**orn in Perranporth, Cornwall in 1898, Healey showed an early interest in technology, joining the Sopwith Aviation Company and then the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War.

Healey was invalided out of the Flying Corps after a crash in France and joined the Air Ministry, where he studied engineering. Now in his mid-twenties he became more interested in cars and entered rallies, including the 1929 Monte Carlo, in a Triumph 7. He actually won the Monte in 1931 in an Invicta and joined Triumph as an engineering manager in 1931 (some sources say 1933).

At Triumph, Healey worked on the Gloria, Southern Cross and Dolomite 8, an exotic high performance car with a supercharged straight eight engine. Only two of these very expensive cars were built, one being destroyed by collision with a train on the 1935 Monte Carlo rally, when Healey mistook the train whistle for the whistle of the supercharger!

During WW2 Healey worked with Humber on armoured car designs and on aircraft carburetors. In 1946 he formed a small company with investment from his father and started to produce cars powered by Riley engines; one of these, the Silverstone, enjoyed modest success. A venture with the American Nash company resulted in a reliable, but ugly car, which was not a sales success, but the use of Austin engines in the new Gerry Coker designed model 100 led to a merger with BMC and the popular series of Austin Healey cars.

In 1956 an Austin Healey with a special aerodynamically designed body and tuned engine reached a speed of 203mph. During the 1960s Healey worked with Jensen on the 541 V8 and later on the Jensen-Healey with William Towns. He died in 1988. **RAGTOP**





1933 Gloria Competition Tourer b



1934 Dolomite 8b



1938 Triumph Dolomite at Prescott Hill Climb



1936 RAC rally, tires with chains

Getty Image

tion visible only in the southern hemisphere, as a tribute to success in the Australian market. The Gloria was available with a number of different body styles and in standard or high performance "vitesse" tune.

It was now decided to develop a really exotic, high performance competition car to further raise the profile of the company. The supercharged, straight eight engine for this car was based quite closely on the Alfa engine designed by Vittorio Jano, apparently with his consent and was housed in a beautifully rakish two-seater with flowing fenders. The Dolomite, named after the mountain range, was extremely expensive to produce and only three units were built. One was entered in the 1935 Monte Carlo rally, driven by Healey, but was demolished by a collision with a train. In the same year Competition Director Jack Ridley, in a Gloria, won his class and came second overall, and another Gloria, driven by Joan Richmond, finished second in the light car class, capping a wonderful result for Triumph!

The following year Healey was back with the Dolomite, now fitted with 12-inch drum brakes from the Gloria, but was only able to finish 8th. In a tight financial situation, in spite of its modest success with sports cars, the company now concentrated on efforts to manufacture quality saloon cars, but was forced into receivership in 1939. More than a decade was to pass before Triumph returned to rallying. **RAGTOP**

– to be continued...

been there fixed that

# Differential Leaks

## An exercise in patience

BY BOB MUIR

All British cars leak oil, don't they? Along with other leaks, oil has been dripping from my differential.

The first thing I did was free-up the split pin that lives in the breather hole, but oil still dripped onto the cardboard on my garage floor. So, I decided to get new seals from Fred McEachern at British Auto Sport and then have them installed by Wayne McLeod, my local one man auto mechanic shop here in Collingwood. Wayne has



done many of the repair and replacement projects that I have not been ready to tackle myself. Fred mailed the \$20 worth of seals and I made an appointment with Wayne to have them installed the following week.

Bright and early Monday morning, I had the car in Wayne's shop. When Wayne removed the differential, he found that the rubber bushings needed replacing, so I ordered new polyurethane bushings from Fred. They arrived the next day and I rushed them over to Wayne. When he tried to remove the oil seal housing from the inner axle shaft, he couldn't get the housings

off, even with 15,000 lbs. pressure. We consulted with Fred and he suggested that Joe at JD Auto Service in Rexdale could do the job. So I hopped in my Maxima and drove 2 hours to Rexdale. I was there at 9:00 AM Friday morning, because Wayne said he would like to get the axle shafts back as soon as possible and I could have the car for the weekend. Joe started to work on them right away. He proudly showed me a custom tool he had made just for this job. He had to apply about 10,000 lbs. and the housings came off.

Wayne had suggested that while the in-

ner axle shafts were out, we replace the caged axle shaft bearings. Joe agreed, but he didn't have them in stock. He called a bearing supplier on Courtney Park Drive in Mississauga, gave them the measurements of the bearings and they said they had the right size in stock.

Just over half an hour later some guy in a slammed Honda came into Joe's shop to get a sample of the bearing. It was after lunch when the bearing company phoned to say they didn't have the correct bearings after all! So then we called Fred and he had them in stock, but he was an hour and a half away. I wanted to get the job done, so I hopped in my Maxima and drove over to Fred's. I said "hi" to Laura, Fred sold me the bearings and I drove back to Collingwood as quickly as I could, but Wayne had left for the weekend.

So first thing Monday morning, I got the box with the axle shafts and bearings over to Wayne's shop, and I now have a stronger, non-dripping differential. **RAGTOP**

# advance AUTO-WIRE

## BRITISH & REPLICAR CAR WIRING

- Wiring Harness
- Headlight Relay Kit
- Auxiliary Fuse Panel
- Fog & Driving Lights
- Driving Lights & Auxiliary Fuse
- Instruction Manuals
- Technical Assistance
- Stock Schematics

ADVANCEAUTOWIRE.COM

Steve Carrick  
8277 Woodpark Dr SW  
Byron Center, MI 49315-9339  
sales@advanceautowire.com  
mgbv8@comcast.net  
616-889-9707

Authorized **RIPCA** Dealer



ULTIMATE TRANSPORTATION PRODUCTS

SY LANGER

23 Markwood Lane  
Thornhill, Ontario L4J 7A6  
Phone: 416-580-7327  
Web: www.wheelwax.ca  
Email: info@wheelwax.ca



Car Care

Langka - Professional Paint Chip Repair



Manufacturer Approved Convertible Care



DIY Power Bleeder for Brakes/Clutches

www.TorontoSpecialtyCars.com  
www.TorontoClassicCars.com

Antique Car Appraisals  
M.T.O. Vehicle Appraisals  
Antique and Classic Vehicle Sales

Larry Ferg  
905-584-6789

Email: larry@TorontoSpecialtyCars.com