

HISTORIC SCENE WITH

GORDON CRUICKSHANK



One wheel in the past: searching out what's new in the old car world

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Endurance test: Philip Young (inset, left) and Paul Brace drove 1000 miles a day on their Cape Town-London record-breaker

LONG-DISTANCE RUNAROUND

Meet a man who has opened borders, closed Tower Bridge and practically created a whole sport

USED TO THINK IT WAS A long drive to Oulton Park. I'm put to shame by Philip Young, who recently spent 10½ days on the road from Cape Town to London in a Fiat Panda TwinAir, breaking the previous record by more than a day. As Philip's adventures go it was relatively tame – he and co-driver Paul Brace didn't get chucked in jail, break down in the Sahara or get caught up in any wars. Not that any of these would faze him particularly; he's been through all of that before in a career of organising long-distance rallies – seriously long-distance, such as

Peking-Paris and even one right around the world in 80 days.

"Longest rally ever run," he points out over lunch in the office local. It's just one in a string of achievements: for the '97 Peking-Paris he persuaded the Chinese to open the Tibetan border for the first time since Mau shut it; he took the first rally across Iran since the revolution and the first through Albania before its revolution, revived old-style Monte Carlo rallies not to mention practically creating a whole new sport. If you have tried classic rallying it's Philip you can thank. Before 1989 there was little you could do with a period road car beyond Sunday

drives and concours. Even ex-works rally cars were curios of no great value, preserved by a few enthusiasts who created a Historic Rally Car Register to record the histories. Today historic rallying is huge worldwide, while the HRCR boasts 2000 members and has just celebrated 30 years – though Philip disagrees with the chronology.

“It really dates to 1981 when Don Pither and I decided to list the cars we knew about. I remember laying out the name HRCR in Letraset. It’s just that it was RAC-affiliated in ‘83.” You can always rely on Philip for a good argument. He’s a big man who can stare down the angriest competitor or grimmest border guard, which is one reason he’s managed to run events across half the globe – Morocco, Alaska, Libya, Mongolia, South America. His current project is The Road to Mandalay, from Singapore through Thailand to Rangoon in Myanmar, or Burma, which hasn’t the best record for official flexibility.

“It’s sorted,” says Philip with the self-confidence that carries him through each logistical crisis. “I met the ministers of tourism, sport, customs and persuaded them to open the Thai border.”

Of course it’s not just him: the Endurance Rally Association he heads includes some 30 people, with route-finder general Kim Bannister on the road for half the year, path-finding for these mammoth events.

“I’m in charge of the big picture, Kim and the others make the parts work. On Peking-Paris we have two teams of 50 leap-frogging the cars with tents, toilets, catering... We have one truck just filled with vegetables. In the middle of the Gobi desert a big bowl of vegetable soup is just what you need.” That’s not

to mention local assistance...

“On the first Peking-Paris we used Gurkhas – they were fantastic. Dead reliable,” he says. “That doesn’t always happen: on one run I’d arranged for a tankerful of petrol to come from China but when we got to the foothills of Everest – no tanker. I went down into the local ramshackle town and found a tanker parked up. We woke up the driver, and made him come out to the camp and fill up the cars. They all set off popping and banging with clouds of black smoke – and then a fuel tanker turns up looking for me. I’d hi-jacked the local town paraffin tanker. The cars ran but it didn’t do them any good. Always felt a bit guilty about that. I’ve never admitted it before!”

It’s a bit of a surprise to hear Young say this: a sensitive nature isn’t something of which many would accuse him. In fact as a competitor on some of his events I’ve often heard the word *bolshie* in his vicinity – which is possibly how he has got so many old cars through so many sticky situations. You can’t accept entries unless you’re sure that your event is

Crowd surfing: Young says a prayer as the Archbishop’s Morris gets local help. The old Moggie stole all the rally headlines



going to happen, and Young is always sure it’s going to happen because he just doesn’t hear the word ‘no’. And frankly I’ve always rather admired the rhino hide that lets him say “my game, my rules”. That’s why the first Pirelli Marathon had a cut-off date of 1968 – before Ford’s heyday. “I wasn’t going to have Escorts win everything,” he says, shrugging.

It was same sentiment that originally sent him down the classic rally route. Having been a motoring journalist on the *Daily Mail* he decided to step in when *Collector’s Car* folded and start an identical-looking magazine. “IPC threatened to sue me, so I went to Victor Gauntlett” – Young has never been shy – “and he said ‘don’t worry, old boy, I’ll ring up [legal guru] Lord Goodman’.” It was sorted out over lunch and Philip ran *Sporting Cars* solo for three years, winning an award before selling it.

Already a regular rally entrant, including the 1977 London-Sydney Marathon, he decided to enter the 1980 Himalayan Rally. “Jim Porter [the organiser] said ‘not another Escort, get something interesting. So I borrowed the

Archbishop of Canterbury’s Morris Minor.” They not only finished, but in 10th place, hi-jacking all the headlines from the new machinery. “We met Mrs Ghandi at the prize-giving and I tried to kiss her hand. There was a shocked silence broken only by the massed cocking of 50 Royal Enfield rifles...”

Sensing a link between old cars and adventure, Young then bought an ex-Morley brothers Austin-Healey 3000. “I beat the guy down from £10,000 to £9000 – then he told me I was the only one who’d replied to the ad.” The car is probably worth £200,000 now, but is long gone from his garage. “I guess that’s the downside to our success – none of us can afford the good cars any more!”

Young led the ‘81 event until a wheel fell off, but it got him thinking. After a couple of one-off historic rally events went down well, he took the plunge in 1988 with the first international rally for old cars, taking them back to the Alps, scene of the great 1950s and ‘60s events. “I asked Pirelli for money and they said only if you get the BBC on board. The BBC said only if you get some old-timers in so we can use period footage. I signed up Anne Hall but we had to build her an Anglia so we started in serious debt...” It was a PR triumph: shown on TV as *The Great Chase* the first Pirelli Marathon drew 6m viewers, twice what the British GP polled.

“The BBC wanted to do another film but could we get big names, please?” For 1989 Paddy Hopkirk, Stirling Moss and Ove Andersson tackled the 3000 miles to Cortina d’Ampezzo, and later Timo Mäkinen, Roger Clark and Bobby Unser joined in. Classic rallying had arrived.

Since then Young has run about 60 events in 50 countries, some involving traversing mountains and deserts in Bentleys, Astons and Volvos, some

taking entrants back to the duffle-coat years of Monte and RAC rallies in Anglias and Minxes. So successful was his Monte Carlo Challenge that the ACO shooed Philip away and started its own *historique* version.

ERA’s portfolio includes the Rally of the Tests, visiting traditional RAC waypoints, Flying Scotsman, Classic Safari, Trans-America, a Nile rally, plus a sideways jump to modern cars. In resurrecting the World Cup rallies, Philip found a new market for small-engined current cars on endurance events. Hence the 875cc Panda for the Cape Town-London sprint. “I wanted to prove that even a small car today can do these trips,” he says, adding that the lightly modified Panda never faltered. “I went to see Claire Francis the yachtswoman and she told me about altering your sleep patterns, waking earlier and earlier. Paul and I flattened the passenger seat and slept three hours in turn all the way.”

ERA has a stack of events planned, so I ask what the limit is. “I can’t run any more events than this. I’ve no time left for other interests. I drive it hard; maybe it’s the fear of failure. I’ve nearly gone under twice and I don’t want my house on the line again.” Though it hasn’t made him rich, some of these are costly events. How was the recession for him? He spreads his hands: “The rich are always with us...”

He leaves me to go and speak at the Adventure Travel show. Does he ever take a break? “I haven’t had a holiday for years. Except a week’s guiding at Rorke’s Drift after a rally. The Zulu wars fascinate me.” He raises a battered case with Dakar stickers on. “Oh, and I did the ‘86 Paris-Dakar with Chris Bruce in a Land-Rover. Some holiday.”

It’s not just his organisation that majors on endurance.



DASTARDLY DEEDS ON THE HILLS

Film and fiction mix with brake fluid as murder comes to Worcestershire

SHOCKING CASE OF SABOTAGE AT Shelsley Walsh recently – brake lines cut, car in flames, someone biffed on the head with a hammer. A good thing it was all part of the filming for BBC1’s *Father Brown* daytime drama, shown in January. MAC and VSCC members had a lot of fun staging the murderous hill climb last September, Chris Williams obscuring clues with clouds of Napier-Bentley tyre smoke, while the GN Spider opened the show with a spirited ascent.

While the killing involved the traditional blunt instrument, there was also a murder attempt centred on the well-known Frazer Nash ‘Terror’, which had a brake line cut.

I’ve seen many variations of this means of mechanical murder, or the alternative “the steering’s been tampered with, sir”, but it’s never struck me as sufficiently definite. Brakes might only fail as your victim pulls up, or the steering break while parking. Hardly lethal. But I did read in a 1930s story of a more effective night-time method – a large mirror placed to dazzle the driver with his own lights approaching a mountain bend with a sheer drop... No car tampering needed and a flash of fatal ingenuity. [*James Bond fell for this trick in Goldfinger!* - ed] □

Top: Mark Williams as GK Chesterton’s Father Brown ponders clues as the BBC crew plans a deathly smash



Legends Racing
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EPOA, www.legendsracing.co.uk

DREAM GARAGE

What we’d blow the budget on this month



Taylor & Crawley
Lancia LC2

A race winner, in Martini colours, and beautiful to look at... What more could you ask? Alboreto, Patrese, Baldi and Wollek all sat here. Set FTD at LM classic in 2012, too!

EPOA, www.taylorandcrawley.com



Trofeo Cars
Porsche Carrera GT

Before the 944 came this good-looking 1981 homologation special built to let Porsche run at Le Mans. Rare, especially in RHD. Derek Bell has one and says it’s his favourite car!

EPOA, www.trofeocars.com