

CHEQUERED



FLAG

MARCH 2025

A black and white photograph of a large, two-story stone building with a central entrance and a gate. The building has several windows and a chimney. The text '60 YEARS OF SOUTH HAMS MOTOR CLUB' is overlaid in a yellow, serif font.

*60
YEARS
OF
SOUTH HAMS MOTOR CLUB*



Read some memories from this fresh faced youngster inside

MY FIRST 57 YEARS AS A MEMBER OF SOUTH HAMS MOTOR CLUB

By Roger Gillard

I have often been asked how did I get involved in motor sport well it's a long story as you might expect, after many years a class mate at school called Robert Sloman we being at the age of 12/13 he was telling me about a load of cars trashing around a field down near Gerston Bridge outside Kingsbridge yesterday, called an Autocross , what great fun it looked, he was telling me and this got my thinking this sounds like a sport I could do as running, kicking a ball or throwing it did not meet to my ideas of fun I could, but do it NO. But watch sport that's OK

Roberts cousin Alan ,as lads we used to kick about on the quay in Kingsbridge most night times ,and he talked about this chap he meet called Mike Rowe and we should meet up with him some time, so we did about once a week normally on a Tuesday as I remember ,and in to the winter he was telling us about these rallies on Saturday nights once a month called 12 cars ,so Alan and I would walk come hitch hike to the start at Totnes Cross Garage and see what this was all about and if we could catch a lift and do some of this marshalling stuff.

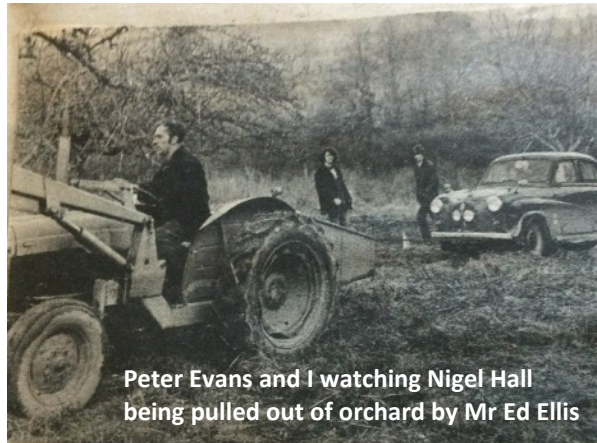
One of the first times we teamed up with a local builder Bob Wingate in his Wolseley 1500 and did a control or two. The first time out in the lanes marshalling at our control in comes as my memory remembers was Edward Baker and Phil Chant in their Mk 1 Cortina GT, and short time later car 2 Alan Lidstone and our hero Mike Rowe in a Triumph Heald Estate then others came to the control, I thought I need some of this, this is fun, but how. The best was we went to the Sloop Inn for Breakfast that Sid Helston had cooked fresh for all and a beer !! and the finish was always about 2.00 AM for the first car.

So time went on ,got myself a job ,so then I discovered something else beer !, so in 1969 and keeping in contact with Mike he suggested that I went to a meeting at the Thurlestone Hotel, which turned out to be the AGM and Awards Presentation for the year and someone said Roger can come on the Committee before I realised what is happening I am at a committee meeting aged 17 ,could not drive at this time and the meeting was at the White Hart Inn in Kingsbridge for my first of many meetings over the coming years. Here I spoke to John Brodie for the first time who I believe was the probably the best chairman the club ever had in my time, and this with no disrespect to any other Chairman/woman since this time, having been chairman within a few years of joining the committee. I also learnt it takes great dedication and commitment from all related to the person in this role, and many years later I would be doing some 12 cars

with his son Nick in his Mini.

A few weeks later a big rally was coming to the Southwest the 1968 RAC Rally, the intentions were to go with Mike and others to Porlock Toll Road and spectate, but a case of shingles put paid to this.

Some of the early events we used to hold where Trials held in the ground of Thurlestone Hotel and in the orchard behind Mr Ed Ellis's Dream Hill garage near Averton Gifford but as I remember it always rained or least wet.



Peter Evans and I watching Nigel Hall being pulled out of orchard by Mr Ed Ellis

The club's main events at this time were Autocross with three events a year, first being Easter Sunday, 3rd Sunday in July after Fair Week in Kingsbridge and August bank Holiday Sunday, with Haldon MC on Easter Monday and Taunton MC on August bank Holiday Monday.

With the July Autocross these events were held at Croft Farm West Charleton, courtesy of Mr Rogers and son Chris who competed in his Lotus Elan, and before that his Cortina GT, but we had to clear the 40 plus acres of small straw bales first, hopefully three nights before the Sunday and then we could set the field up, also with a large marque to set up the bar which a great amount of income came from this. One great job I seemed to be volunteered for, us boys being the youngest was encouraged to do some digging, deep holes 3ft x 3ft and 4ft deep, this was for the Toilets which where the clubs chip board made boxes and guess who had to take them apart at the end of the day and refill the holes, so I have no issues when asked to be a steward on an event today, and some say "oh jobs for the boys", there is no guilt in me because I have been up to my knees in it literally. I do remember Edward Baker Autocrossing in a Ford Pop.

To raise income for the club to keep it afloat and have the capital to hold events, we would hold Jumble sales in the Market and Jives at the Town Halls in Kingsbridge and Jives to you youngsters is a dance with a live group which often ended in a fight or two which us young whipper

snappers where asked to stop and after a thump or two on the nose you got to learn to duck, and as I said earlier beer is good to give bravery. The groups at the time we hired was called Mercedes and Caged with all motor club members at the time with the ex-magazine editor Tony Lyle as lead singer, with John Simmons on bass Guitar, time has taken its toll as I can't remember the other group names but good times at the boat shed dances in Salcombe.

Mike organized an Auto Jumbo at Kingsbridge Cattle Market, with Mr Tompkins the local Auctioneer trying to raise the prices. People brought their items on the Friday evening, so we stood on duty on Friday night, so things didn't walk. So, at 6am change of helpers, home wash and change and off to work all day, this being spring 1970/71! I believe.

The 12 cars still ran, and someone said you can Navigate for me this was Peter Hayford in his Sunbeam Talbot and every time we went through water, I got very wet feet and with my mate Alan Sloman in the back, staying dry!

I went marshalling with Mike a very snowy night with the route on Dartmoor near Two Bridges the Navigator was very sick when she came in to our control so Mike said jump in so me being me I did following the route on the maps but it was snowing hard, so hard no tracks on the road and as we were last car on the road and a long way down on time and we became stuck in a snow drift near Princetown so my driver and myself spent a long time digging our self's out with the children's very small plastic tennis rackets in the back of the estate car. Phil Modica and I were glad to get back to the Sloop Inn for the warm fire and breakfast.

I teamed up with Eric Hough from school who had a very fast car a Triumph Herald Coupé !!! to go marshalling and learn how to go rallying, I remember being out on the Exeter MC Rally of the Moors in thick fog up near the dams near Henock ,first through was Bob Chapman in a Cortina my god was he quick, followed by the Booth Brothers from Paignton ,we were saying if we can go that quick we would hit the first granite wall, after this we did a control near Crediton and then home, our first all-nighter. One time we went out playing and finished in a ditch at Lixton on a Sunday afternoon, we could not push the car out so a long walk to find a Telephone Box at Aveton Gifford to summon help, and lucky Alan Lidstone came to our rescue, so this became my first map marking.

I also teamed up with a group of lads to Marshal and do the odd 12 car who have become lifelong friends and our driver being Roger Lidstone with a Triumph 2000 estate then a 2500PI estate before the GT6 and you

can spin a estate car in the lanes without hitting the banks on either side ,another map marking anti-camber tightening 90 left , and at this time we were on 1" inch maps and the split between the maps was right down the middle now of the new metric sized map grid line 70 north to south which became heaven to a navigator and a lot larger scaled yellow roads and as I remember the numbers were 187/188 on the 1"map and as we all know 202 for the metric sized maps. Then at that time I used a Pifco handheld battery Potti light, and you had to change the batteries after about two hours hopefully at a control. This cost more than the entry fee!

Something the club was very proud to do, and like today is the Monthly Magazine which Chris Henley has carried on with this grand tradition but back in the day Tony Lyle of South Milton did a great job in chasing club official's and competitors for reports but fast forward nothing has altered. When Tony stepped down Geof Jung did the job for many years so the 2nd Tuesday in the month, I would join Geof at his family home, a Hotel in Thurlestone and turn the handle on the duplicator for every page but a few years later we went up market and the club bought an electric powered one heaven. When Geof moved away from the area, Bob Nichols did the job followed by Gordan Wilson ,myself ,Neil Gillard ,Charles Tildesley ,Alan Whitney, Geoff and Margaret Ford, Alan and Shirley Frame to name a few and at this time we had a Electric copier before the club invested in an all singing and dancing machine, and to me this was heaven ,and the Theseus of a Magazine each month is being carried on by the club and Chris Henley, not too many people in this post over the Sixty years of the club, but very important to have good people in this post as it informs club members and holds the club together.

In September 1972 I teamed up with Chris Pridham in his Ford Escort Twin Cam YDV389K and I put an entry in for our first rally together the Exeter MC Rally of the Moors got an entry a start number of 86 finishing 23 o/a 5th novice in class very pleased with this and 90 starters it started in a garage in Exeter and all the entry was inside it felt like we had hit the big time!! .As the only previous Restricted rally I had done before this was with John Simpson Rally



Chris Pridham and myself on the Exeter MC Rally of the Moors our first rally together

Cooper S ,John still competing on Hillclimb's still today, I can't remember the event name but it started and finished in Bodmin we started at 9 pm and about 240 plus miles of Cornish lanes later and 11 hours we gave up as we could not keep our eyes open. my first large event on the maps, more homework needed to learn the skills required to get to the finish let alone win!

Prior to these days when Autocross's were a one-day event on the Sunday's I used to hitch hike to them early in the morning and marshal, going to events near Launston, Ottery St Mary, Saltash also Newquay Auto club used to hold them on a Thursday evening to name a few locations where I travelled to. The following year Ron Easton would come and collect me and we would go to the events in his Light Blue MGB Roadster ,then his Blue MGB Gt traveling with the knobbly tyres in the back with all his tools, Ron then purchased his trusted TVR Vixen and he had many a good result in this car and winning the RAC Championship in his 70th year .I have to say I was very privileged to drive this car in competition on a few occasions and the first being a four abreast



Driving Ron Eastons TVR
Taunton Autocross 1984

event at Taunton MC event at Stogursey Nr Bridgewater, my thoughts were what have I done so I let the other three go and went after them in Practice but I do remember the great Phil Kempthorne next to me on the start line looking across to me and laughing his head off!! I do remember in 1969/1970 going to the Players No 6 Autocross finals at Woburn Abbey and the following year to Peterborough show ground with Mike Rowe, Alan Lidstone the events had 120 entries from around the country on both events that had qualified for the finals, with local club members entered alongside Ron like Phil Hoper, Ken White, Tom Shilston. On the entry list was works minis, Fords Escorts Twin Cams as well as the 4x4 Capris driven by Roger Clerk being one.

My first official roles on an Autocross were back in 1969 being Chief Marshal on one and Secretary of the meeting on another and this was before I could drive and finished up driving the recovery Land Rover to keep out the way of the RAC Steward and now, I am the Motorsport UK Steward.

Over the years I've had many roles on our club Autocross events for the ASWMC Championship, and to our Wednesday/Thursday night, club

Gymkhana's with 30 plus or on Sunday up to 54 on one event I do remember. Club members having a drive around a field course set out like an Autocross, well I ask you was this right, but good dam fun.

So, to my great passion being a navigator on events on 12 cars to full blown international rallies, there has been many up and downs with many good results that we as a crew had fought hard for, a few results have come by others losing the win and the win coming our way, and there have been events that we have not finished this being with breakdowns ,one comes to mind John Nott and I on a ASWMC rally were on one of those nights when using the saying we were flying but broke down with a broken gear box almost in view of the last control, there had been many events that finished well short of the last control ,some by finding the under growth or anything that was connected to it. There are some accidents that come to mind, like doing a 12 car with Geof Jung in his Triumph Spitfire and the car did not like going around corners near Staverton. Hedge 1 Car nil, then on Plymouth stage rally with Rodney Burnham his Imp went round corners like it was on rails until the fuel got light and we left the road in Dunmere where a lot of competitors went off on the Southwest Enduro many years later this on the hill going down the track from Post Office corner to the tee junction. You can even go flying in a rally car on a event, coming down off Exmoor with Dave Peters towards North Molton we took off on a yump and I was thinking we have been in the air a long time and I look out my side window and I am looking down on to the top of the telegraph pole and wires so is it time to pack up the map but we came down straight and the road went straight and after many a bounce, head down back on the map. Another time my driver found a lump of granite up near Burrator Reservoir which the road was covered with sheet ice prior to this although we doing well on the Harvest we did not finish and the first person we saw when we stopped was Jon Skelley who rescued us, but the biggest accident was on the Tour of Epynt up the end of the new road I did not think the accident was going to stop ,I've never been so pleased to hear a siren in the distance before coming to help us.

I Did a lot of events with Martin Pridham in OJY 98K it all started I had put an entry in for a night rally with Chris and the car was not well, so the first I know that I was going to sit in with Martin was when I knocked on Chris's door and the conversation went like you're going with Martin as my escort is not well, so this is how a good relationship started doing many road rally's ,long story short change of engine ,put big arches on the shell so February 1974 we competed on our first International

MOVING INTO THE RALLY BIG TIME WITH OJY 98K

OJY 98 K makes a noise that sounds to the uninitiated like a chain saw on wheels. But then OJY 98K is no ordinary car.

It is the competition car of Martin Pridham from Warcombe, Kingsbridge, at 29 one of the South West's leading lights in the growing sport of rallying.

The body is that of a Ford Escort, the resemblance ends there. As co-driver Roger Gillard from Chillington says, "The only things that are the same are the glass windows."

Martin has had the car six months, and in that time anything that is unnecessary has been stripped off, to make it lighter.

The wheel arches have been modified so that they bulge from the wings of the car, giving it the appearance of a beach buggy. This is to accommodate the extra wide tyres, of which there are three sets to suit varying road conditions.

The back seats have been ripped out, and the front ones modified so that Martin and Roger sink into position and cannot be jolted out of their seats. They wear seat belts that are made for aircraft pilots, and so they are strapped both across the shoulders and around the waist.

Names in red

Their helmets look strong enough to grace the head of Eivel Kneivel, white with their names written in red.

The dashboard of the car has been ripped off and in place of buttons and switches are a series of what are almost big enough to be called levers.

The car has five forward gears, and has no trouble in reaching 80 mph while still in third and has a top speed of about 130 mph. All the wires leading to and around the engine are specially heat resistant, and the whole car is fire proofed. Just behind both near and off doors are fire extinguishers.

The car is also fitted with a roll cage, to prevent the roof caving in, in the event of it turning over. A 20 gallon petrol tank is a must, for the car only does 8-10 miles a gallon.

Outside the car is white, with names hand painted on near and off sides, front and back. Apart from the names of the driver and co-driver, there is the name of Thomas William Lench Ltd, the Worcestershire company that made the car possible. Martin has been sponsored, a near essential in a sport for which the equipment can cost anything up to £7,000, the amount Timo Makinen's RAC rally-winning car cost.

So there are pictures of the company's Lester Star Locknut on both sides and the roof.

Gazing from the boot of the car, and probably keeping a watchful eye on the navigating is Lord Nelson, whose hand-painted portrait was done by Plymouth professional sign-painter Graham Bidgood. He has also painted Union Jacks on the car.

Quick repairs

The 220 brake horse power engine was fitted by D and M Motors of Plympton, who do all the major mechanical repairs. Martin had just two days to test the new engine before the first rally of 1976, the Mintex.

The rally started in Scarborough on Friday at 7 am. Fog badly



the only sign was a large hole in the barrier.

Such is the temperament of the rally driver that Roger Clarke could even joke about the accident: "I didn't want a transporter to take the car away, I wanted cardboard boxes to put the pieces in."

Not that a serious accident is any laughing matter. In this rally between 50 and 60 cars were written off during the special stages and no insurance company will cover the cars or their drivers.

However, the cars are insured for their journey between the special stages. While the cars do not actually race during these sections the driving is still a skilled task as each car has to arrive at a pre-determined time.

They have to travel at an average speed of 30 mph and penalties are incurred if the car is either late or early.

"You have to be a mathematician," says Roger, "If you are late on your schedule you have to put your foot down and if you are early you stop for a cup of tea."

The first day's driving ended at midnight and Martin and Roger were lying in 102nd position out of 160 starters. The reason for their low position was a leakage of brake fluid, making the pedals slippery and driving highly dangerous.

Up at 5am the next day Martin and Roger found a make-shift solution to their problem by using a special adhesive to stop the leak. There was no time, however, for the glue to harden, so the car's heater was kept on at full blast to encourage it to dry.

And the shock absorbers had received such a hammering on the first day that they had to be

thick fog had kept the car's average speed down to between 50 and 60 mph.

The final day's driving ended where it began, on the Marine Drive at Scarborough. The local pair were obviously getting used to the engine, for they clocked their best time on this part of the course, equalling that of the winner, Andy Dawson, in his Lancia Stratos.

They finished at 9 pm, having worked their way up to 70th place, a result which pleased both the drivers and their sponsors.

Tension over

The rally ended with a ball at the Grand Hotel, Scarborough, on Sunday. Rid of the tension of the rally, the drivers are friendly. During the previous two days they complained of inadequate way marking and false starts, so the positions of the top 10 drivers were constantly changing.

But neither Martin nor Roger complained about anything. "It costs £50 to lodge an objection,"

he explained, "And if you lose the objection, you lose your £50."

Roger and Martin rely on a back up crew comprising Martin's elder brother, Chris 31, and Barry Geldard 26. The crew is depleted following the death of mechanic and friend, Gary Deacon, 20 from Callinton. He was killed in a car accident.

"He was a first class mechanic," said Martin, "and we shall miss him."

Rallying is a growing sport in this area, unlike the North of England where it is firmly established. The RAC rally in November was an experience for the team.

"During one two mile stretch in Yorkshire there were 50,000 people watching. We heard of some people who had walked 11 miles to get a good view of the rally," said Roger.

Now Martin, Roger and their all important back-up crew are back home, preparing for the next rally, which starts in Exeter in four weeks' time.

Controlled win

One time control, timed to the second, decided the first three places on the Nightmare Rally, run by South Hams MC over a 100 miles route in the South Hams area of Devon last Saturday night. Winners were John Bragg and Paul Perkins of the Tavistock club in

some of the to area and a lot on at a trick second control on a nasty anti right hander moments.

Rally the Mintex in the forest and stately homes in North Yorkshire finishing that was a thrill ,so then I put an entry in for the Fram Welsh Rally which started on the front at Barry ,with our start number and first car started at 10.00 PM so we start our adventure near enough at 02.30 AM we did not stop until the race part of the event at Llandow Circuit and



At signing on and Scrutineering in Bath for the 1975 Lombard RAC Rally

Lombard RAC 1975 RALLY
Photography by Foster & Skeffington

the rally using all the great forest throughout Wales .We left home Friday at 08.00 AM and got home 10.30 PM on Sunday with no sleep in this time and I still remember I was hallucinating as the trees and undergrowth all had faces on them and looked like spectators. In August, I put an entry in for the RAC Rally with a huge entry fee of £99 pounds ,i.e. three weeks wages plus but we got it together and of too York mid-November ,we got around not braking any records but what an experience .the RAC was the first of three that we did ,I will talk later about other stage events we did together but in 1977 we registered for the Rallysport Magazine

stage events and had an entry for the Telford Forestry Stages here we had a gentle roll up hill, and came to a stop on its roof, and this was before fire proof overalls ,being a hot day all I had a



Martin and I after we rolled on the Telford Forestry Stages using a new type of Dunlop Rally Tyre

This car looked better for the Plymouth Motor Club Plymouth stages a week later!

The LLOYDS of STAFFORD
TELFORD FORESTRY STAGES
17th SEPTEMBER 1977

TELFORD AUTO CLUB
a SPEEDSPORTS (Ruthin) PHOTOGRAPH

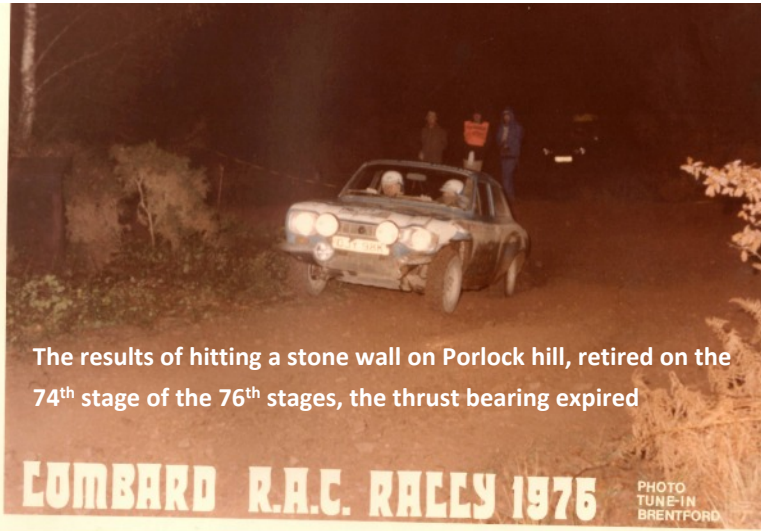
New sponsor for our
1st stage of the 1975 Lombard RAC Rally



sweat shirt on the upper body, and to get out of the cab the screen had popped out so the thing to do was get out of the windscreen area ,so feet first someone grabs my ankles and pulls but my shirt had got entangled with the gear stick and

with the car in gear and engine still running and the very hot gear oil ran down my back and started to fill my helmet ,we did finish the Telford Forestry Stages, as we were entered for the Plymouth Stages the following weekend .There was some long hours after work putting the car back straight and three windscreens later!! we turned up at Vosper's for scrutineering with

the paint still wet!! We were hoping it would have dried on the drive down to scrutineering, but it had not, the marshals had blue hands after we left but it had dried in time, as we all collected on the Hoe on the Sunday morning for the start and finishing 4th overall a job well done by all.



Well, a quick insight of the first few years of the club and myself and if you appreciate this report so far, I could write some more for your enjoyment in a month or two.

Roger Gillard