

MOTOR Sport in Australia today is much the same as it is in most other advanced automotive countries — a hectic pell mell of organisation, vehicle preparation, high speed competition and a few hasty hours of conviviality as competitors conduct the "post mortem" and recount their triumphs or tragedies.

Every once in a while, however, we're treated to a look at how things used to be, in those bygone days when motoring was in its infancy and journeys that we now take for granted were an adventure to be approached with trepidation.

So it was, on November 21, during the "Alpine" Rally stopover in the carpark of Manns Store at Wodonga, that I met a delightful person named Alan Campbell-Drury. A teacher of photography at Swinburn Technical College, Alan had in his possession some photographs of old cars, some of which were actually competing in the fore-runner of the event in which we were involved — the "Alpine Contest" of 1924.

Alan's father, Gilbert Alan Drury, had been a competitor in that event, and the photographs were copies of faded old prints that Alan had painstakingly restored

in his laboratory. He even had the original plaque that was presented to his father for having completed the course.

These photos had to be reproduced in "Racing Car News", and why not have a story with them? Thanks to the aid and resourcefulness of Susan Priestley of the RACV and Jo Pittendren of the State Library of Victoria, we obtained copies of the Programme and the report and results which appeared in "The Australian Motorist". Our sincere thanks to those two ladies.

Story by MAX STAHL

Rallying in "The Good Old Days"



The "Alpine Contest" of 1924



1250 Miles Through the Scenic Beauties of Victoria and NSW

RACING CAR NEWS, February, 1962 page 56



THE RACV "Alpine Contest" of 1924 was conducted from March 6 to 15 over a distance of 1250 miles and attracted an entry of 37 cars.

The brainchild of one H.B. (Harry) James, the founding genius behind the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, it was the second such event, the first having been run in December, 1922.

Following that first event, however, a second one seemed doubtful and, indeed, the 1923 Contest was cancelled — due to withdrawal by many vehicle manufacturers representatives who felt that expenditure of some ten to twelve thousand pounds was far from justified.

Nevertheless, the Club decided to run an event in 1924, confident that its private owner-driver members would support it. And they assuredly did, with entries coming also from a number of interstate competitors.

Incidentally, it's interesting to note the makes that were represented by the objecting trade — how many of these makes do you recall? — Buick, Citroen, Crossley, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chalmers, Chenard-Walcker, Calcutt, Ceirano-Bianchi, Dodge, Dorr, Durant, Delaney-Belville, Excelsior, Essex, Earl, Eco, F.I.A.T., Ford, Gray, Gardener, Galloway, Hupmobile, Hispano Sutra, Hotchkiss, Hudson, Itala, Lancia, Maxwell, Minerva, Moon, Morris Oxford, Nash, Oaklands, Oldsmobile, Overland, Packard, Rolls Royce, Rover, Renault, Rugby, Sunbeam, Studebaker, Scar, Vermorel, Voisin, Willys-Knight and Wolseley!

As the Programme stated, the event was to be "a Reliability and Efficiency Contest at racing speeds. No premium is offered for putting up records along the route or arriving at termination of each day's run ahead of time."

TOP: The field assembles outside the Hotel Bombola.

UPPER LEFT: Descending the Great Alps Road was a hazardous journey in 1924. **LOWER LEFT:** View of Feathertop, taken from Mt. Notham.



ENTRY LIST

OWNER-DRIVER EVENT

No. Entrant-Driver	Car	Cap.	Price
1. A.H.A. Beckett	Panhard	1188	\$900
3. R.T. Godfrey	Talbot Darracq	2121	\$1330
4. C. Judd	Voisin	1244	\$1230
5. E.H. King	Vermorel	1693	\$1170
6. E.H. Leete	Austin	1661	\$1030
7. G.W. Limb	Lancia Lambda	1802	\$900
8. J.W. Robertson	Essex	2121	\$1500
22. A.W. Bernadou	Maxwell	2932	\$900
23. G.W. Fysh	Peugeot	3044	\$860
24. B. Hutton	Peugeot	2951	\$1760
25. J.H. MacKinnon	Essex	2932	\$900
27. A.J. Terdich	Studebaker	3394	\$1010
34. J.H. Brown	Wolseley	5185	\$2000
35. H.B. James	Buick	4178	\$1240
36. S.R. Lough	Flat	3446	\$1980
37. R. Mactier	Buick	3958	\$1090
38. J.W. Marriott	Crossley	4530	\$2000
39. C.C. Moore			

OPEN EVENT

9. A. Barber/John Barber	Lancia Lambda	2121	\$1500
10. A.G. Barnard/A.G. Barnard	Flat Sports	1460	\$1240
11. Bevan Bros & Tucker/L.J. Bevan	Swift	1097	\$790
12. Bevan Bros & Tucker/R.G. Tucker	Swift	1097	\$790
13. Conn's Motor Eng/Andrew Lang	Amicar	1004	\$650
14. French Auto Co/P. Vanderben	Peugeot	668	\$600
15. French Auto Co/A. Cooper	Peugeot	1525	\$1160
16. Levey Cooper Motors/J.P. Cooper	Ansaldo	1847	\$1190
18. Sheppard Motors/F.H. Sheppard	Hands	1247	\$850
19. Sheppard Motors/G.A. Drury	Hands	1247	\$790
20. Sporting Cars/L.W. Barnett	D.F.P.	1099	\$610
21. R.N. Wallis/R.N. Wallis	Austin	1661	\$1030
42. Morrison Motors/R.B. Morrison	Austin	1661	\$1030
26. S. Raphael/O.M. Neale	Hupmobile	3030	\$1080
29. French Auto Co/H.B. Smith	Peugeot	3290	\$1590
31. A.E. Head/E.T. Head	Oakland	2901	\$930
33. J.L. Simpson/J.L. Simpson	Bean	2386	\$1160
40. W.R. Glasson/Boyd Edkins	Vauxhall	4224	\$3200
41. L. Herman/L. Herman	Studebaker	3394	\$950

That each day's mileage was to be longer than normally envisaged by a travelling motorist was made necessary by the availability of suitable accommodation along the route. Also, the speed averages were higher than normally contemplated, but after all the

event was "to demonstrate the dependability of the contesting cars".

Rules every bit as strict as those pertaining today were published in the Programme.

THE ALPINE CONTEST

providing three capacity classes (0-2200cc, 2201-3300cc and over 3300cc), complete with the formula for calculating same. (This, incidentally, is "bore squared, multiplied by stroke, multiplied by 0.7854, multiplied by number of cylinders" the measurements being in centimetres.) There would be two divisions, an owner-driver event and an open event.

Each competitor was to start with a total number of points, representing 1000 for dependability and 15 for each hillclimb, acceleration and speed test. Another 50 points were in credit for the fuel consumption course. Points lost on route would be deducted and the competitor with the most points remaining would be the winner.

Various formulae were provided by which results of the tests would be determined, taking in vehicle weight, power, time taken, etc. An extensive list of breaches for which points would be lost was also provided, most dealing with the failure or breakage of the vehicle's parts... 100 for a broken wheel, stub axle or conrod, 50 for replacing the magnets or a big end bearing, 20 for a burst gasket, 10 for faulty brakes or broken shock, 5 for a spring breakage (per leaf), etc.

Points were deducted at the rate of a half-point for each minute beyond 15 minutes after the due arrival time at the end of each day — and 10 points per minute for arriving more than 15 minutes early!

Allowances were made for normal repair or maintenance stops for tyre changing, brake adjustment, etc., while only two refreshment stops were permitted each day — with the engine left running and the observer staying put.

Entry fee for the privateer comprised a nomination fee of (the equivalent of) \$2.10 and an acceptance fee of \$4.20 — a total of \$6.30. Considering the average wage was something like \$10 a week, it was a hefty sum, to which had to be added the cost of fuel, tyres, meals and accommodation. It seemed the organisers wished to discourage protests, too, imposing a fee of \$6.30!

Prize-money was on a comparable scale, however, and was quite attractive, with \$100 for first (equivalent to about \$3000 today), \$40 for second and \$20 for third. Actually, first prize was the Dunlop Cup, valued at 50 pounds, and all other awards were in the form of trophies, there being no cash awards — another fine practice of the "good old days".

It is certain that without the presence of the redoubtable Harry James, the "Alpine Contest" would not have happened. Not only was the worthy gentleman a key figure in the RACV, but also he managed the advertising department of the Dunlop Rubber Co. of A/Asia Ltd. In this capacity he was able to provide much additional support for the Contest, including numerous neatly painted signboards along the route.

A Scenic Wonderland

Punctually at 5am on Thursday, March 6, the first car, an 1188cc Panhard driven by A.H. A'Beckett, left the start at the Haymarket Weighbridge in Elizabeth St., Melbourne, and headed for Mount Buffalo some 243 miles away. The final acceptance list totalled 34 cars, and all were despatched at two-minute intervals.

As "The Australian Motorist" reports: "The break of dawn disclosed a scene of



The Hands 10-20 Tourer was entered by Sheppard Motors and driven by the proprietor, F.H. Sheppard.

moving shadowy shapes struggling under overburdens of kibags, moccasins, rugs, coats and what not, which seemed to indicate soldiers in full marching order. The presence of golfing irons, tennis racquets and fishing rods among the 'what not' indicated that the party was entering into the spirit of the competition whole-heartedly."

Through Healesville and over the Strathbogie Ranges to Euroa they went, then followed the Sydney Road to Wangaratta, where they were glad to leave "the avocian track" and head to Myrtleford and Porepunkah for the climb up to the Buffalo, some 4400ft above sea level.

Overnight and all of Friday were spent at the Buffalo Chalet, where the crews "inhaled the invigorating mountain air in gulps", and Saturday took them via Bright, Omeo and Mitta to Tallangatta, with the 18½-mile climb beginning at Harriettville being the stiffest on the whole event, reaching 6100 ft at Mount Hotham.

A canter of 134 miles the next day took the field to Tumut in NSW, crossing the Murray at Tintaldra, where "the roads seemed to improve immediately", and partaking of lunch at Tumbarumba. A very dusty run took them to Batlow, then an easy romp to the night's "roosting place", where the Mayor of Tumut "extended a glad hand" and the citizens "showed they have a happy knack of making travellers feel at home".

A winding 23 mile drive to the foot of Mount Talbingo produced the rally's first drama, when the Essex of Mr. Arthur Tendich (a prominent member of the Light Car Club), "when giving a fair imitation of a Brooklands racer, skidded on a turn and, charging broadside onto the road embankment, was thrown back and toppled over, throwing the five occupants out". There were no serious results, save a broken rib to one passenger, and the car continued to the top of the mount with a bent front axle.

Several other cars hit the same bank, but without mishap, and two other cars shed tyres. Going down the hill, Harry James' 5-litre Wolseley sheared a steering pin and lost a front wheel. The lunch break site, Yarragobilly Caves, earned much praise for their unique appeal, and then it was on through Kiandra — "Australia's little known

arctic town" — Admabny and Lindabyne to Kosciuszko for an overnight at the hotel.

On Wednesday, March 12, the route led through Cooma to Eden, passing through Nimmitabel, the infamous Brown Mountain, lunch at Bemboka and finally Bega (native for "beautiful"). Making play with the name "Eden", the "Australian Motorist" reports: "It was not reported whether any serpents were seen in Eden, but one high-spirited passenger unearthed a bottle of snake-juice and later was seen performing serpentine evolutions on the footpath. He was eventually rescued by an Eve. 'Nothing has changed, it seems!'"

The Run Home

After indulging in the delights of oysters and fish, the field crossed the border next morning and followed the Princes Highway through Cann River, Orbost and Nowa

Gilbert Drury's Hands was this Roadster, which eventually finished in 21st place.



THE ALPINE CONTEST

Now to Lakes Entrance for an overnight stop.

The next day, despite the weariness induced by the long days at the wheel, competitors had to contest a speed test at Bairnsdale, after which lunch was taken at Sale before heading towards the rally finish at Mornington. On the way they passed through Morwell, where "a lengthy section of the main highway... was the most abominable track imaginable and probably would have refused negotiation by bullockies of the old days."

The last day, Saturday, involved only a 17-mile run to the Aspendale Park motor racing circuit, where cars were despatched at intervals to cover five laps at averages from 30 to 45 mph. The final act in the 10-day marathon was the mechanical examination of the cars, which attracted little interest, for the event had really ended the night before, at Mornington.



Dunlop invented this ad, proclaiming the success of its tyres in the rally.

And what of our hero, Alan Campbell-Drury's father! After a mechanically bothersome run, Mr. Drury finished 21st in his 1247cc Hands, having lost 137 Dependability points (adding water, 20; lost lamp bracket, 10; spring bolt trouble, 45; tightening bolt, 2; loose front spring attachment, 60) and 32 sub-event points.

Another special award was made to a driver already beginning to achieve fame and notoriety for his exploits. Boyd Edkins drove the most expensive car in the event, a 4224cc Vauxhall priced at \$3200 owned by Sydney's W.R. Glasson, and set fastest time in all four speed events.

Result of the Owner-Driver event was a tie between A.W. Bernadou in a 2932cc Essex with a loss of 14 Dependability points (2 broken front spring leaves, 10, and late arrival at Kosciuszko, 2) and 22 points in the sub-events, and G.W. Limb in an 1802cc Morris Oxford which lost 15 Dependability points (5 minutes adjusting extra air, 10; broken spring leaf, 5) and 21 sub-event points.

Picture Speech

Among the post mortems annotated by "The Australian Motorist's reporter, in reviewing the event is this classic: "Occasionally, one or two of the competing cars suffered from general debility, an odd one sowed its mechanical wild oats, some crossed swords with garters and came off second best, while others insulted them by ironing them out."

"In some instances the behaviour of the car was an index as to whether the actual owner was officiating at the wheel, or whether the vehicle had been entrusted to a friend who read no harm in trying to belt the very life out of someone else's property."

Unfortunately, we know the writer only by his nom de plume, "Ravenswell", but he deserves an award for his fine selection of words.

Our thanks, too, to Alan Campbell-Drury, for providing the basis and initial incentive for this report. Wonderful nostalgia. And, without wishing to saturate our pages with nostalgia, should any readers have other memorabilia from the "Alpine Contest", we'd be happy to publish a selection.



Gilbert Drury owned the Weyley Garage at the top of Little Collins Street during the 1920s, and this was his tow truck.

Victory by One Point!

Of the 27 cars that completed the course, only one travelled the entire distance with no loss of Dependability points. This was the 1847cc Ansaldo of J.P. Cooper, which also lost only 14 of its original 80 sub-event points for a total credit of 1066 at the finish, thus winning the Open event.

And, just one point behind (11 down on the sub-events, but 4 down for twice adding water to the radiator) was the 1087cc Swift of R.G. Tucker. In third place, having lost only 5 on the sub-events, but 24 for being late at Mt. Buffalo due to a wrong way, was the 1004cc Amilcar of Andrew Lang.

Best performer on the sub-events was A.G. Barnard from NSW in his 1460cc Fiat Sports, which won the Mt. Talbingo hillclimb and finished second in both the Blacks' Spur hillclimb and the acceleration test. Mr. Barnard also received a special gold award for this effort, and as consolation for missing a major prize due to a miscalculation — he had arrived 8 minutes too early at Mt. Buffalo, costing him 80 points!

This is the plaque presented to Gilbert Drury by the RACV.

