



The Unlikely Competitor

The Landcrab Rally Story

Part.2

Evan Green and the BMC 1800 Rallycross car AKO-258

By Ian Comport HRA member 0087

Launched in the UK in October 1964, entered into its first event by the Publicity Department in the 1965 Monte Carlo rally, first developed in to a works vehicle in July 1967 and then to have the rug pulled out from under it by Lord Stokes, after being so successful in the London to Sydney Marathon, when he moved to close down the Competition Department rallying program. The BMC 1800 had a very short development and competition life. Lord Stokes was disappointed to come second outright to the Hillman Hunter of Andrew Cowan and second as a team to the Australian Ford Falcon entries.

The BMC Competition Department was set up in 1955 and the Monte Carlo Rally was its first event. From 1955 to 1968 the BMC Competitions Department ('Abingdon' or 'the works') was a potent competitor in rallying world wide and was one of the most professional. Preparation, development, modification, fabrication, performance, performance parts and the finished cars from 'the works' became legendary, as did its partnerships with John Cooper and Donald Healey.



The performance parts, accessories, fabrications and modifications and the information that it produced more than paid for its operations, it was actually a profitable venture as well as good publicity and marketing. Lord Stokes was short sighted and shut the rally programme down. Numerous talented and experienced people left, rally minis were rebuilt into race cars, marque rivalry under the new British Leyland created divisiveness within the company, long term agreements with John Cooper at the Copper Car Company and Donald Healey Motor company were terminated and on the 25th August 1970, after a much drawn out process, it was announced that the Competition Department would cease to exist. Special Tuning ('ST') would continue to exist at Abingdon until 1980 when the MG Car Company was closed. British Leyland Policy for the total closure of the Competitions Department required that all cars be disposed of and all competition files, records, build sheets, photographs and archives be destroyed. Nothing was to be left from the past.



DAILY MIRROR WORLD CUP RALLY 1970

Yet other special tuning houses and garages had done some work and development on the BMC 1800 much like John Cooper had with the Mini. These included Janspeed, Downton and some MG specialists such as Broadspeed. Although Lord Stokes had shut the doors on the Competition Department, Special Tuning still supplied parts, advice and modifications to private customers as did BMC Australia and various garages and tuning specialists in Australia (Including Peter Manton Motors, Repco, Ethridges, Whitehorse Motors, Lane's and Monaro Motors to name a few).

Thus the unlikely competitor that was the BMC 1800 did continue to compete as a Morris 1800 Mk1, Austin 1800 Mk1, Morris 1800 Mk2, Austin 1800 Mk2, Morris 1800 S, Austin 1800 S and a lesser known created Hybrid the MG 1800. The upmarket Wolseley 18/85, the luxury BMC 1800, was a gentleman's car and was never used for motor sport, or so I am led to believe.

From 1969 Special Tuning and the MG Car Company produced notes and a hand books on modifications for the BMC 1800 and special tuning for the 'B' series motor as used in the BMC 1800 and the MGB.

The notes had parts listings, fabrication and modification notes and diagrams. The Handbooks had at least six stages of tune for the motor, a listing of special tuning competition parts, notes and drawings. Everything from fast road car to rally car to sprint car were catered for with power gains starting from 3-4 HP through to a total of 129 HP at 6,500 RPM using modifications of the standard head. Using the HRG/Derington Aluminium 7 port cross flow head with twin 40mm Webers could reap up to 160HP in total. This cross flow head was planned for use in the cancelled 1967 RAC rally, was used by a few private individuals, was offered as a performance option in Australia by Peter Manton Motors, Repco and a few other garages and was fitted to and used on the rally cross BMC 1800 as driven by Evan Green.

BL Special tuning modified and prepared 5 BMC 1800s for the 1970 London to Mexico World Cup Rally. HPV-491F (Royal Navy), OOH-774G (Mr R Redgrave), JOP 1E (Peter Jopp), NOB-284F (Woman magazine) and DOH-745G (Metropolitan Police). It must be noted here that the RAF Red Arrows entry was not an Austin 1800 but an Austin Maxi (an Austin 1800 with a hatch back like a Nomad 1500). The official British Leyland entries for this event were the Triumph 2.5PI.



Sunday Mirror BMC 1800 in London to Mexico



BMC 1800 rallying in Australia



ATG-520 winning 1969 Southern Cross Rally



Andrew Cowan & David Johnston driving ATG-520 to win the 1969 Southern Cross Rally

After the 1968 London to Sydney Marathon SMO-226G (Paddy Hopkirks car), VLM-128G (Dizzyak the Royal Navy Car) and ORX-663F (the RAF Red Arrows car) returned to the UK but SMO-225G, SMO-227G and SMO-974G remained in Australia with BMC/BL Aust.

According to records SMO-227G (Evan Greens car) became ATF-353 and later AZN-256, SMO-225G (Aaltonens car) became AKO-258 and SMO-974G (Tony Falls car now with Tim Kennon) became ATG-520 and then RTC-333.

SMO-227G/ATF-353/AZN-256 the former Evan Green car competed in various rallies, including the Southern Cross and the London to Mexico, before it ended up in the Gilltrap's Museum in Coolangatta and was sold in 2001 to Ken Green (no relation) and shipped back to England. It is believed to be the only car to have completed both the 1968 Marathon and the 1970 World Cup.

SMO-225G/AKO-258 the former Aaltonen car was rallied for a few years by Evan Green, converted into a Rallycross car and later scrapped and parts used on the X6 (Kimberley) rally car.

SMO-974G/ATG-520/RTC-333 the former Tony Fall car also continued to compete in various rallies, with Andrew Cowan it won the 1969 Southern Cross and was sold to John Taylor in South Australia. It continued a rally career including the 1993 Lombard London to Sydney and was then sold to Tim Kennon. With Tim Kennon this car has remained in Australia, has been rebuilt and well maintained (by Geoff White /Layco), continues to compete in niche rallies such as the 1995 Mobil 1 Around Australia, various Historic re-run events, the 2008 Red Centre to Gold Coast, 2009 Repco Re-run and is a car that we will hopefully continue to see in rallies in Australia.

Other private cars built by the BMC Competitions Department for private customers, by Special Tuning and by specialist garages and tuners for rallying continued to compete after the Competitions Department was closed. These have included cars built for the RAF Red Arrows, the RN team, the Army team, the MET Police, media groups such a women's magazine and the Daily Mirror as well as for private individuals.

These cars competed in events in Australia, England, Wales, Scotland and Canada from 1968 through to about 1972 and then started to disappear. Up until the late 1980s the BMC 1800 rally car was considered extinct with the odd sighting now and again like SMO-226G in the museum and in the 1988 Pirelli Classic. Yet in the 1990s the odd car came out of the woodwork as a find to be prepared and rallied again in the popular and growing sport of historic rallying. In the UK today there are at least 6 BMC 1800s actively involved in club events and rallies.

In Australia BMC/BL had three BMC 1800 rally cars that were actively involved in rallying and promotions from 1969 through to 1972. On top of these were various privately owned Austin 1800 rally cars of which we cannot be sure how many existed and how many events they actually did. We do know of cars driven by Andrew Cowan, Evan Green, John Taylor, Ken Tubman, Patrick Farrell, Bill Stevenson, Geoff Kennett, Alan Dukes and more recently by Ian Comport, Paul Nicholls, Tim Kennon, Darren (spud) Smith, Simon Young and John Barry. Yet there are photos that show more we do not know about. Today in Australia there are at least 4 BMC 1800 rally cars still in use as could be seen in the 2009 Repco Re-run. All in slightly different histories, guises and appearances but none the less all BMC 1800 rally cars.



The former SMO-974G, Tony Fall's BMC 1800 Marathon.

From memory this photo was taken in 1995 after John Taylor had sold the car to Tim Kennon and the car was at the MG Workshops in North Rd Bentleigh. It was being prepared for the 1995 Mobil 1 Round Australia



1979 Melbourne Show Grounds start of the Repco Reliability Trial. Car 158, rego IBB-916.



IBB-916 now as ELI-131 in the 1991 Alpine Rally at the start in Albury.

I personally started rallying an Austin 1800 in 1991, running out of time and funds in 1997 and brought it out once again in 2009 for the Repco Re-run. My car was built in Australia by Brent Benzie, it entered and started in the 1979 Repco Reliability Trial as car 158 only to be sabotaged due to team incompatibilities, was used by Alan Duke and others in the early 1980s and then stored away tired, damaged and unwanted. My father and I purchased the car in late 1989 and with a group of friends, with a very limited budget, resurrected the car. Its first event was to be the Hill climb at Morwell but an engine failure finished that idea before we even got there. A second hand motor was cobbled together and the car entered the 1991 Alpine rally in the historic sub-section. From then on I managed to keep patching her up for various events from 1992 onwards with the newly formed HRA. Between 1992 and 1997 I entered an Austin 1800 in as many events as I could allowing for money, time and availability of a navigator. In 1997 due to time and financial constraints, as well as frustrations with eligibility changes and issues, I stored the car away. I rejoined the HRA in 2008 with the goal to get involved in rallying again, as I had missed it.



ELI-131 in the 1993 Anglia Memorial



John Barry's Austin 1800 Mk2



Simon Young's Austin 1800 Mk1 rebuilt and modified as a replica of ORX-663F, the former KOC-391E from the 1968 East Africa Safari. In 2009 on the Repco Re-run



Tim Kennon's Morris 1800 Mk2 the ex Tony Fall car at Bagshot during the 2009 Repco Re-run with co-driver Gene Canner at the wheel.

Compiled below is a draft of the competition history of the BMC 1800 rally car as researched by me personally from a number of references and resources? If anyone could fill in any gaps or provide addition information it would be much appreciated by me and a number of interested parties around the world.

1965	DJB-94B	113	Monte Carlo	Joss/Fitzpatrick	29
1965	AOB-987B	138	Monte Carlo	Wisdom/Edwards	31
1966	??	100	Monte Carlo	Brinkman/Fitt	?
1967	LRX-824E		Moss Tyres	Freeborough/ ?	1
1967	LRX-824E		??	Freeborough/ ?	2
1967	LRX-824E	5	Danube	Fall/Wood	1
1967	LRX-824E	66	Alpine	Culcheth/Syer	11/1
1967	LBL-416E	-/-	MONZA Record	Poole/Enever/Baker/Vernaev/Aaltonen/Fall	
1968	KOC-391E	172	Monte Carlo	Culcheth/Syer	24/2
1968	LOF-179F	167	Monte Carlo	Sprintzel/Ryan	32
1968	LOF-238F	188	Monte Carlo	Jopp/Cave	38
1968	KOC-391E	6	East Africa	Aaltonen/Liddon	Ret-OLT
1968	ORX-662F	14	East Africa	Fall/Drews	Ret-OLT
1968	ORX-661F	11	East Africa	Makinen/ Benzimra	Ret-Oil Cooler
1968	KXX-89	28	East Africa	?? / ??	DNF
1968	ORX-663F	110	Canadian Shell 4000	Fall/Johnson	8/2
1968	KTU-542C	90	Gulf London	Offley/Lyall	1
1968	RBL-448F	16	Acropolis	Culcheth/Wood	10/2
1968	??	35	Scottish Rally	Bailley/ ??	??



IBB-916 Car 158 in 1979 now IBB-916 again in 2009 at Bagshot during the Repco Re-run driven by Ian Comport



1991 Melbourne Show grounds
The 1991 Alpine Rally



2009 Bagshot
Repco Re-run



Also 2009 Repco Re-run at Bagshot

1979	IBB-916	158	Repco Reli Trial	Kennett/Nye/Stewart	DNF-Sab
1979	AYS-003	139	Repco Reli Trial	Stevenson/Eassie/Lincoln	DNF-OLT
1980s	IBB-916	??	Dunlop Rally	Duke/?	1
1980s	IBB-916	??	Experts	Duke/?	??
1980s	IBB-916	??	Mountain	Duke/?	??
1984	AOP-971K	62	Coronation Rally	Lucas/ ?	Finisher?
1988	SMO-226G		Pirelli Classic	Jubb/Clarke/Currell	
1991	ELI-131	56	Alpine	Comport/Hutson/Mcleod	Finisher?
1992	ELI-131		Alpine	Comport/Tangey	Finisher?
1992			Otways Rally	Comport/Hartman	
1993	ELI-131		Maroondah	Comport/	
1993	FCD-700		Mountain Rally	Nicholls/Shearmann	
1993	ELI-131		TATA	Comport/	
1993	ELI-131		Goldfields Rally	Comport/Grierson/Gledson	
1993	ELI-131		Anglia Memorial	Comport/Grierson	
1993	ELI-131		Castlemaine Classic	Comport/	
1993	ELI-131		Ivans Folley	Comport/	
1993	ELI-131		Powelltown		
1993	AGF-543G	101	London to Sydney	Woodward/Grace	70
1993	RTC-333	79	London to Sydney	Taylor/Magrath	DNF
1994	FCD-700		Maroondah	Nicholls/Shearmann	
1994	ELI-131		Mirboo Meander	Comport/Tangey	
1994	FCD-700		Mirboo Meander	Nicholls/Shearmann	
1994	ELI-131	14	Goldfields	Comport	
1994	FCD-700	44	Goldfields	Nicholls/Shearmann	
1994	FCD-700		Castlemaine	Nicholls/Shearmann	
1995	AGF-543G		London/Mexico	Woodward/Norkett	Finisher?
1995		87	Round Aust Trial	Kennon/McDowell	
1997	GPX-29N	83	Peking-Paris	Wilks/Bedingham	Finisher?
2001			Charity Run	Alcock/	3
2002			Charity run	Alcock/	6
2002	KKG-839	110	Rally Tasmania	Smith/Hickey	2
2003			Charity run	Alcock/	6
2003	KKG-839		Rally Tasmania	Smith/Hickey	DNF
2004			Charity Run	Alcock /	12
2003			Rally Canada	Lebel/Chichak	16/2
2003	SMO-974	23	1953 Redex Re-Run	Kennon/	Finisher
2003	YED-423K		MCC Centenary Trial	Green/	Gold Medal
2004	MTB-150G		Monte Carlo	Locks/Locks	1
2004	KKG-839	155	Toll Hist Tas Rally	Smith/Hickey	1st in Class
2004			Variety Club Bash	Abrahams/	
2008	SMO-974	36	Red Ctr to Gold Coast	Kennon/Holloway	
2009	IBB-916	158C	Repco Re-run	Comport/Coombe	23
2009	SMO-974	1	Repco Re-run	Kennon/Canner	DNF
2009	02310-H	9	Repco Re-run	Young/Hogan	13
2009	03182-H	24	Repco Re-run	Barry/Rossiter	25



Piping in the winner of the 1969 Southern Cross Rally, Andrew Cowan.

1968	SMO-226G	51	London to Sydney	Hopkirk/Nash/Poole	2
1968	SMO-225G	61	London to Sydney	Aaltonen/Liddon/Easter	5
1968	SMO-227G	31	London to Sydney	Green/Murray/Shepherd	21
1968	SMO-974G	4	London to Sydney	Fall/Wood/Culcheth	23
1968	ORX-663F	64	London to Sydney	Kingsley/Evans/Bell	19
1968	NGK-777G	71	London to Sydney	Field/Tilley/Jones	28
1968	VLM-128G	17	London to Sydney	Hamilton/Lee-Spalding/Stearns	31
1968	VTC-1G	70	London to Sydney	Taylor/McDonnell/Wilson	34
1968	MTG-150G	77	London to Sydney	Eaves/Vipond/Bainbridge	35
1968	NAM-616G	16	London to Sydney	Corbett/Mabbs/Fisk	DNF-Rod
1968	ARA-65G	65	London to Sydney	White/Jeffcoat/Dunnell	DNF-Medical
1968	UDM-999G	21	London to Sydney	Williams/Thomas/Hughes	DNF-Ret
1969	NAM-616G	170	Monte Carlo	Corbett/Fisk	Finisher?
1969	NOB-292F	97	Monte Carlo	Jopp/Wisdom/Cave	23
1969	??	120	Monte Carlo	Reynolds/Grant	Finisher?
1969	LOF-179F	70	Monte Carlo	Potter/Miller	Finisher?
1969	ATG-520	3	Southern Cross	Cowan/Johnson	1
1969	ATF-353		Southern Cross	Garrard	DNF
1969	AKO-258		Southern Cross	Green/Denny	
1969	AKO-258	4	Snowy Rally	Green/Johnson	1
1969	LOF-179F	57	Scottish	Potter/Miller	?
1970	EFK-77C	39	Dimache Tour	Bartlett/	?
1970	OOH-774G	54	London to Mexico	Freeborough/Cooper/Regrave	9
1970	AZN-256	32	London to Mexico	Tubman/Welinski/McAuley	11
1970	NOB-284F	91	London to Mexico	Denton/Wright/Crellin	18
1970	HPV-491F	55	London to Mexico	Mitchell/Evans/Taylor	DNF
1970	JOP-1E3		London to Mexico	Jopp/Khan/Cave	DNF
1970	OOH-745G	34	London to Mexico	Penfold/Jones/McInally	DNF
1970	VTC-1G	73	London to Mexico	Pett/Franks/Robinson	DNF
1970	NAM-616G	41	London to Mexico	Price/Fletcher/Beaver	DNF
1970	MTB-150G	95	London to Mexico	Cresdee/Eaves/Bainbridge	DNF



Andrew Cowan & David Johnston in 1969, Tim Kennon and David recently. Only the driver has changed



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