

Beautiful Bournemouth

AN EXCELLENT SOUTHERN NATIONAL RALLY



WINNER of the Bournemouth was Bob Aston, here braking his Saab at the end of the final test on Bournemouth front. He was navigated by Graham Robson.

THE Bournemouth National Rally, organised last week-end by the West Hants. and Dorset Car Club, turned out to be, in the opinion of many competitors, the toughest National yet this year. This was in part due to a fabulous route over the Devon lanes, but also to the thick blanket of fog that covered most of the night-section route. Winners, losing no less than 39 minutes, were Bob Aston/Graham Robson (Saab 96), thus bringing Robson, surprisingly, his first National win.

From start controls at Camberley, Bristol and Bournemouth, there was a main-road run-in section via a route-check near Stonehenge to the converging-point at Huish Episcopi, near Langport. Already the form the rally was going to take had become apparent, for there was thick fog most of the way west from Salisbury Plain; and by the time the first competitor left on the night section, at 8.45, there was a real pea-souper going. From Huish Episcopi there were three easy sections looping round south through Kingsbury Epis-

STAN ANNIS' Sebring Sprite, now registered with his old number and tastefully finished in his light-blue-and-purple colour-scheme, tackles the first test en route to Bournemouth.

copi to a control at Hambridge, to another near Isle Abbots, then round Curry Mallet and through Hatch Beauchamp and Bickenhall to T.C.5 at Curland. Already people were in trouble, for the fog made these sections, intended to be easy, no gentle run. John Brown, navigating for John Sprinzel, mis-plotted the first reference of all; by the time he had discovered his mistake, it was too late to make the control within the maximum permitted lateness of only 10 minutes; outside their time at the second, too, and troubled with navigator sickness, they retired. Romek Michaelkiewicz's TR3A collided head-on in the fog with a local Austin, but fortunately none of the occupants of either car was

seriously hurt, although there was extensive bending of motors.

At T.C.5 a further list of map-references was handed out, beginning with a very tight bit to 242136, then a very tricky bit through Bishop's Wood—which is just as tricky as it looks on the map—then south to T.C.7 at Marsh on the A303. From now on, everyone began to lose time, and the rally became a question of who could save the odd minute here and there over "bogey" time. The route continued zig-zagging southwards down the western side of map 177, with plenty of really tight sections. Between Eight at 278088 and Nine at 283051 (appr. E), several crews, including Bill Bengry/David Skeffington (VW), were unable to believe that the time-allowance enabled them to stay on yellow roads and tried the white roads south from 292073, but all in vain.

The route crossed on to map 176 just south-east of Honiton, where a fresh list of controls was given out at Racombe Gate (166948). This proved to be of a few easier sections westwards across the map, looping south of Exeter. Many crews by now were running close to their maximum permitted lateness—now up to 30 minutes—and this respite was welcome after the rigours of the maze of fabulous yellow roads that had had navigators really working hard, with junctions, on average, about every half-mile. These new sections were not wholly without interest, however, for several crews went astray at Cyst St. Mary, where there is a new main road, not marked on the map, by-passing the centre of the village; while B. R. Greaves put his big Healey well and truly into the bank on one bend. From T.C. 21, near Exminster, the route went due south to 941802, whence there was a very tight two-minute section to 942792. From here, there were some further very tight sections, with the fog thicker than ever, to T.C. 24 at 8791790. This control was about 25 yards south of a very tricky multiple junction, which

on the ground is not at all as it appears on the map, and from which the correct route lay south-west towards Gappah. Only the winners, Bengry / Skeffington, Don Grimshaw / Brian Melia (Austin Healey 3000) and one other crew found the correct slot first time, according to the marshal! Brian Harper/Ron Crellin were now having gearbox trouble in their Sebring Sprite, having already lost two cogs. At one point, they overcooked a bend, pulling up in time with their nose just touching a wire-mesh fence, and, having lost reverse, too, had to push it out. When they were left with only top at T.C. 25, they packed it in. Peter Astbury also retired his Morgan Plus Four with navigator sickness. Soon after this, John Grimshaw drove his Alpine into a bank and broke a light. They replaced the bulb, but in the fog their beam was now at a very awkward angle. They arrived some five controls later at the fuel halt at White Horse—on the A30 near Whitestone—to find that only about half a dozen crews had not missed a control, so they pressed on.

Only 36 cars from the entry of 66 left White Horse to start the second of the three loops, which gives an idea of the toll that was being taken. The Mini-Minor of John la Trobe/Vic Elford was suffering from a slipping clutch, into which they poured, with little success, Vim; while la Trobe himself was feeling ill. Driving (or navigating) in fog is particularly bad in this respect, because of the continual jerk of sudden braking as an obstacle heaves into sight, coupled with the hypnotic effect of the fog itself.

From White Horse the route wound northwards across the western half of map 176. Near Templeton, Bob Aston and the Partridge/Britton Mini, running together, encountered a vast Army lorry on a very narrow lane, causing much manoeuvring to get by. In the same area, there was a very deep ford. The ignition system on Don Grimshaw's big Healey got damp, so he got out on to the bonnet in mid-stream and began drying the distributor, but was eventually pulled out by Jack Wolchover's Sebring Sprite. The Sebring of Valerie Harper and Valerie Domleo, going very well, also stalled in the middle, while Stan Annis' foot slipped off the brake-pedal as he approached, and he dived into the water with a fountain soaking him and navigator Richard Binns.

From here, the rally wound its way on to map 163, with some more very tight sections. The fog was thicker again here, too. John Grimshaw, still pressing on, lost his wipers, too, so he retired. After looping around the south-eastern quarter of 163, the depleted field headed east back towards 164; and here came the one big slip of the rally. T.C. 56 was at 738335, just south-west of the junction on the same reference, with a direction of approach from the north-east—with five minutes allowed from 711332! In fact, the control being just S.W. of the junction, the correct route was to approach the latter from the N.W., then turn into the former from the N.E.; however, it was not possible to plot this on the map, and almost everyone had grave doubts as to which was incorrect, time or direction. Those that said the time was wrong were unlucky for, although they still had a correct approach—which they would have got going the short way—they could not hope not to lose several minutes.

From 163, the route moved east again to 164 over the newly-surfaced white road through Twicken and on to a further fuel-halt in Dulverton. This was followed by two or three more tight bits, and then a gradual let-down back east to breakfast at Long Sutton, near Langport. Arrivals initially were very few and far between, the first car home by nearly ten minutes being the Mini of David Gray and Peter Noad, running number two. After one of the best rally breakfasts we have ever had—and free, included in the £4 entry fee—there was a main-road haul back to Bournemouth, with a driving test en route and two more on the seafront to please the crowds. Needless to say, they were not needed to break ties.

J.R.C.B.



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Bournemouth Rally

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

1. C. R. Aston/A. G. Robson (Saab 96) 380; 2. J. H. Partridge/M. P. W. Britton (Mini) 430; 3. D. de Souza (Mini) 560; 4. G. D. Grimshaw/B. Melia (A.H. 3000) 740; 5. A. E. Bengry/D. Skeffington (Volksvagen) 850; 6. J. la Trobe/V. Elford (Saab 96) 970; 7. Miss P. Moss/M. Butler (Saab 96) 1,270; 8. Dr. J. T. Spure/J. F. Bailey (Gazelle) 1,410; 9. H. H. Faure/M. A. M. Pirie (Mini) 1,410; 10. Mrs. V. Harper/Miss V. Domleo (Sebring Sprite) 1,450; 11. S. Annis/R. A. Binns (Sebring Sprite) 1,600; 12. A. Allard/T. Fisk (Anglia) 1,720; 13. K. Piper/D. Stone (DKW Junior) 1,970; 14. D. W. J. Thorne/I. Cameron/I. Thorne (Zephyr) 4,000.