

They started three by three.
Here an MG, an Austin and
a Porsche await the start of
the ascent of Stelvio Pass.

TEAM HEALEY'S FINEST HOUR

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Without doubt the greatest event in the International Championship Rally Calendar, the Liege-Rome-Liege Marathon was started in 1931, and had no mention of the word "rally" in the regulations. Organized as a motor race by the Automobile Club of the Liege Motor Union, in Belgium, this Marathon did, for many years, travel from Liege to the city of Rome and back, and attracted many of the top Formula, Sports Racing and rally drivers of the era. They drove cars as varied as Porsche, Ferrari, Mercedes Gullwings, Jaguars, Alfa Romeo, Delahaye, Healey, MG, Plymouth, Studebaker, Ford, BMW, Bristol and Lancia, to name just a few. The regulations permitted virtually any modifications as long as there were four wheels and the car was road legal with a two man crew.

The route used as many mountain passes as possible, most of which were in the high Dolomites over unmade roads, and many of the French Alpine Cols. As European traffic increased, Rome became an impossible target for a road race, and first Yugoslavia and then later Sofia in Bulgaria became the "turning points" so that many of this region's very rough roads and difficult mountain tracks could be included. In the classic years of the fifties and sixties, the route covered some

3,300 miles and took four days and nights of motoring, with just a brief four-hour rest halt at the halfway city.

The first Healey to appear was a Silverstone in 1951, driven to finish in 8th place overall and the class victory out of 138 entries, by a very young Peter Riley and Bill Lamb. Only 24 cars finished within the time limits, which was about par for the course – in 1959, for example, only nine cars finished, with Peter in 7th place this time with the works 3000 team losing just over one hour and just two minutes ahead of my Speedwell Sprite. Perhaps this low rate of finishers explained why everyone who arrived at the end of a Liege would receive a prize at the magnificent Gala Dinner at the end.

To set the stage, events on European public roads had to conform to strict traffic rules in most of the countries used, and so the Liege regulations listed the control points and the permitted time allowances at a 50 KPH average speed (60 KPH in Yugoslavia). A second listing showed the opening and closing time of the controls for each car, which painted a totally different picture. If you kept to the original time allowance it is true you would not be penalized, but you would arrive at the finish a day and a half after the rest of the convoy and control points would have been closed to you



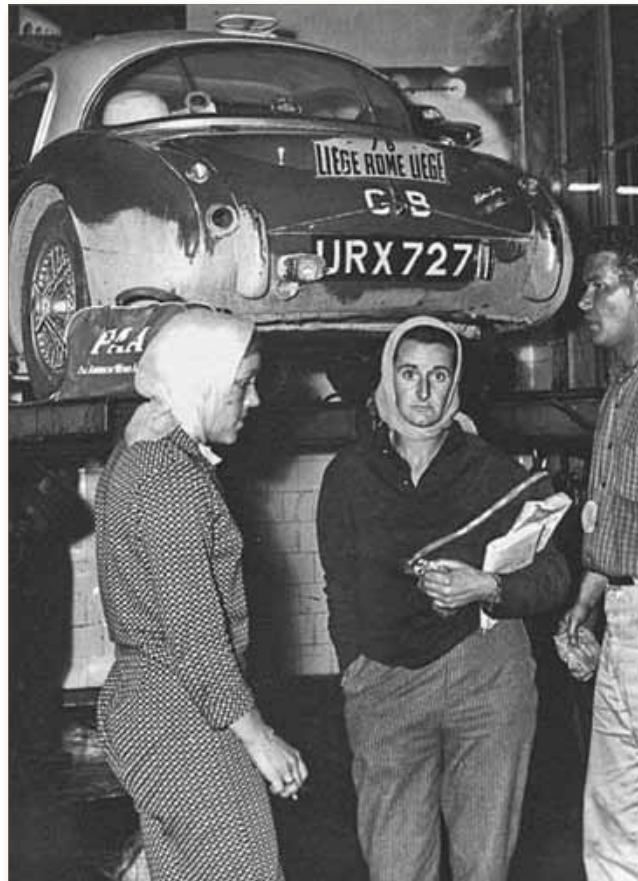
Peter Riley and Bill Lamb in an earlier Liege-Rome-Liege, in 1951, with a Healey Silverstone.

pretty much after the second morning. At the driver's briefing, Maurice Garot, who was the leading light of the organizing team, would always announce that no protests would be accepted, and also that there would be secret police speed

checks in some of the more populated and neutralized sections. He would then silently hold up the list of where these checks would be placed, which gives some idea of the wonderful sporting atmosphere which prevailed.

Competitors started each section in groups of three at three minute intervals. This was mainly to establish a sort of pecking order, so that the fastest of the trio had at least a few minutes for the dust to settle from the preceding group as the route – especially in Yugoslavia – was very rough and dusty on the unmade tracks. The marshals would hold the three road books firmly under the hand on the control table, releasing them exactly on the departure time. This gave British right-hand-drive cars a little problem, but the answer was to park on the other side of the control table, so that co-drivers could quickly jump into their “wrong side”

seats. However, as the rate of attrition was very severe, it was rare for trios to last much further than the Italian Dolomites on the first trip through, and in any case, as lateness began to affect everybody, there was no question of hanging around at a control as the event progressed. In fact, even a stop for refueling or natural breaks would probably result in a loss of time.



Moss and Wisdom look worried as mechanics try to repair their Healey in time.



Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom round a corner in the Stelvio Pass and stayed in the lead until the end.

Both crew members had to sign the control sheet, which explains why those who have ever driven on a Liege have the fastest scrawl imaginable as their signature even to this day. A recorder was also operative at every control where the passing of the minutes and the order of arrival of the competitors' car numbers would be taped, so that no possibility of timing errors could be made.

Service was practically nonexistent. Getting in and out of Yugoslavia with a mechanic's car full of spares was just not possible, as customs “carnets” required everything carried to be listed and checked at the frontier. Also, the route was very direct, and the few service cars which did go through would only be able to see their competitors once or maybe twice during that part of the contest – the chance of something



Moss and Wisdom thunder their way in the Alps up through Larche Pass.

over enthusiastic sideways driving usually resulted in more tire damage than spares which could be carried. It was not unusual to see champion drivers attempting to fix a small heap of punctured tubes at the side of the road. Perhaps slightly slower and less tail happy driving would explain my finishing four of the eight Lieges I entered with some of the smallest-engined cars in the event, and without a single puncture.

And so we come to 1960. The Abingdon BMC team had entered four specially strengthened AH 3000s



Vic Elford and David Seigle Morris in Larche Pass.

actually breaking when near a service crew was just minimal.

As a result, we took whatever help we could get from whichever team's mechanics could be found, British pride providing service to any of us who needed it. Punctures were perhaps one of the biggest causes of abandonment, as horse-drawn traffic was the rule on these Yugoslavian tracks. Discarded horseshoe nails littered the sides of the road, and



Two Big Healeys can just be seen on the switchbacks of a mountain pass.

PHOTOGRAPHIES DES CONCURRENTS

Nom du 1^{er} conducteur: *Springzel*

Nom du 2^e conducteur: *Tatten*

Marque de la machine: *Austin Healey 4p 975*

MERCREDI 31 AOUT 1960
DÉPART OFFICIEUX de LIÈGE à 18 h. 00

DÉPART OFFICIEL:
A SPA
à *23 06* heures

NUMÉRO DU DISQUE

Signatures civiles
du 1^{er} concurrent: *John Springzel*
du 2^e concurrent: *Tatten*

John's route book showing a page with times recorded:
Departed from Trafoi at 9:38:00 p.m. and arrived at Bagni Nuovi at 10:17:11 p.m. for a total time of 39 minutes and 11 seconds. Against the allowed time of 36 minutes it meant that they arrived 3 minutes and 11 seconds late.

Tronçon chronométré à la seconde:

TRAFOI - BAGNI NUOVI
30 kms

	Heures	Minutes	Secondes
Heure d'arrivée à BAGNI NUOVI	22	17	11
Heure de départ de TRAFOI	21	38	00
Temps		39	11
Temps imposé	0	36	00
Retard		3	11

Cachet de contrôle

13 AOUT 1960

LIEGE - ROME - LIEGE
LIEGI - ROMA - LIEGI
LÜTTICH - ROM - LÜTTICH

1960

Voiture N° **69**



By the time the convoy of survivors crossed back into Belgium, they were now running in order of the General Classification. Every kilometer of the route was packed with knowledgeable and enthusiastic crowds, and every car was applauded for their effort and achievement. However tired you may have felt, adrenaline and chicken skin (goose bumps) was certainly a cause for instant revival.

A 1958 100-Six photo of Gerry Burgess on the Vivione Pass in the Dolomites. Not only were we often in the thin air at 9000 feet, but the "road" surfaces and the protection from the drops left a lot to be desired.



driven by John Gott with Rupert Jones, Peter Riley with Tony Ambrose, David Seigle Morris with Vic Elford, and Pat Moss with Anne Wisdom. There were also three Sprites: Danny Margulies' Speedwell GT, Norman Blockley's Mark One, and John Patten's prototype Sebring. John had purchased this first Sebring from Donald Healey's business in London's Grosvenor Street showrooms where I was running the Speed Equipment Division, and he had kindly asked me to drive it with him on this event.

Eighty three cars took the ceremonial start from Liege's spectacular courtyard of the Palace of the Prince Bishops, touring across to nearby Spa and the famous Belgian racing circuit, part of which formed the first section of the event. A fairly rapid trek across Germany, Austria and northern Italy brought just 65 cars to the Yugoslavian frontier and a rougher, more tortuous welcome to the country would be hard to find.

Peter's Healey succumbed here, after the throttle had stuck fully open and wreaked some havoc with the fan and radiator, but the other team cars were going like clockwork. After a day and a half of very hot and difficult driving, with a short halt at Sofia for a quick lunch, just 30 cars came back into Italy. Pat Moss's Healey was leading, and to everyone's amazement, we were in second place, just three minutes behind, but a Porsche Carrera was close and with a raft of hill climbs still to come, his superior horsepower would be hard to fend off.

The run across northern Italy was quite sedate because of the country's strict laws governing motor sport, so our approach to the French border and the notorious Col d'Allos stage allowed a little time in hand. This was a real boon for Pat Moss, as her clutch had been slipping for some time, and the mechanics were able to replace an oil seal to cure the problem. As it was, they just managed to send the girls



John Sprinzel and Stuart Turner coming down the Gavia on the 1959 Liege-Rome-Liege in the class-winning Speedwell Sprite.

LIEGE—ROME—LIEGE RALLY 1960



Liege-Rome-Liege 1960. Three teams winning Austin Healey 3000's with crews—left to right—Pat Moss, Ann Wisdom, David Seigle-Morris, Vic Elford, John Gott and Rupert Jones.

- NEVER before has this Rally been won by a British crew in a British car—PROUD AUSTIN HEALEY.
- NEVER before in the history of the sport of International Rally driving have two women won a classic rally and a championship event—PROUD AUSTIN HEALEY.
- NEVER before has Great Britain won the Interland Trophy—the Trophée des Nations—PROUD AUSTIN HEALEY.
- NEVER before has any manufacturer achieved such a sweeping success in this or any other International Rally—PROUD AUSTIN HEALEY.



Liege-Rome-Liege 1960. John Sprinzel and John Patten with their amazing Austin Healey Sprite.

LIEGE—ROME—LIEGE RALLY 1960

Make	Starters	Finishers
Alfa Romeo Giulietta	10	—
Alpine (Renault)	2	—
Austin Seven	1	—
Austin Healey 3000	4	3
Austin Healey Sprite	3	1
Auto Union	3	1
B.M.W.	2	—
Borgward	3	—
Citroen	6	3
Ford	3	—
Jaguar	2	—
Lancia	3	—
Lloyd	1	—
Lotus	1	—
Mercedes	3	—
MGA	2	—
Morris Mini-Minor	1	—
Panhard	3	—
Peugeot	3	—
Porsche	14	3
Renault	2	—
Simca	1	—
Triumph	4	1
Volvo	6	1
	83	13

LE MARATHON DE LA ROUTE



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Austin Healey

The 4th September 1960 saw the completion of the thirtieth Liege-Rome-Liege Rally.

This Rally has always been regarded as the rally for professionals—the rally drivers' rally. To quote Belgium's *Echo de la Bourse* (7.9.60) "Le Marathon demande des Marathonien's".

The toughest Rally in the calendar, it is not for frail cars or frail drivers. Only the strongest cars will finish. Only those drivers who know what they are doing and can get the best out of a car, driving at top pitch yet always mindful of the machinery under their hands, will get round the course.

To even finish a Liege-Rome-Liege Rally is a greater achievement than a class win in most other rallies. In 1960, eighty-two cars started, only thirteen finished.

In this Olympic year, the British Motor Corporation's achievement of an outright win, the Coupe des Dames, four cars in the first ten, two class wins and all the team prizes was equivalent to at least two Olympic Gold Medals for Great Britain.

LE MARATHON DE LA ROUTE

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LIEGE—ROME—LIEGE RALLY 1960

18.00 hrs. Wednesday 31st August, and eighty-three bravely gleaming cars, embracing many of the best makes in Europe, leave Liege in convoy for Spa. Even before the official start, one car is out with electrical trouble.

22.00 hrs. and the first three cars line up across the main road of Spa, closed for the occasion, to await the starter's signal. The Clerk of the Rally drops his hand and they are away, to be followed at one minute intervals by the remaining seventy-nine cars, all in batches of three. Ten miles on and competitors are faced with the first test in the Rally. This is a sprint over 18 kms. of twisting road, 5½ kms. of which are untarred. Only the fastest time of the day counts. The Moss/Wisdom Healey, already getting into its stride, makes fifth fastest time.

08.20 hrs. on 2nd September—of the original eighty-two starters, sixty-four cars cross the Italian border into Yugoslavia. 515 kms., most of it timed to the second, to be done at an average speed of 66 km.p.h.; cart track roads, stones, rocks and DUST; curtains of dust enveloping the cars, choking and blinding the drivers. Sixty-four cars go into Yugoslavia—thirty come out.

18.00 hrs. on 2nd September. Thirty cars start on the run back across Italy into France—thirteen arrive at Barcelonnette.

18.15 hrs. on 3rd September—Barcelonnette—the French

Alps and five speed-climbs are to come. Five speed-climbs over a selection of Alpine passes—the sort where the average driver slows up or looks for an alternative route. The thirteen cars are still running.

03.00 hrs. Sunday, 4th September and the last stage begins in the pouring rain. This last long haul up through France and into Belgium with weekend speed restrictions, Sunday traffic and encroaching fatigue to contend with is perhaps the worst part of the Rally. It is dull, slow going with nothing to keep tired crews stimulated. For four nights and four days the competing cars have been pushed over 3,000 miles of some of the worst roads in Europe, through weather which has varied from intense heat to blinding rain and violent thunderstorms. With very few easy sections there has been little opportunity for either driver or navigator to sleep. Food has become something of a dream.

17.30 hrs. Sunday, 4th September, Spa; briefly the sun comes out to shine on the waiting crowd and greet the winners, Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom, as they bring their proud Austin Healey 3000 in to the finish. Following them come the other two big Austin Healeys driven by David Seigle-Morris with Vic Elford and John Gott with Rupert Jones. As the three cars line up side by side, a band in this small Belgian town plays God save the Queen in honour of Britain's great victory.



The impressive starting paddock for the Liege, in the courtyard of the Prince Bishop's Palace.

onto the stage within seconds of their permitted lateness, with the transmission tunnel only held in place by Annie's hand. The marshals assumed that Pat had retired, and re-opened the road to normal traffic, so her passage across this high, narrow and twisting pass with its huge drops, was handicapped with traffic that had hardly anywhere to go when the Healey's strident horns blasted them out of the path of the 3000. Still, they made it with their lead intact, and the small surviving convoy headed off to the rest of those Alpine mountains, and the timed climbs we still had to face. Inevitably, the Porsche took a couple of minutes from our little Sprite,

but even so, Austin-Healeys finished first, third, fifth and tenth among the 13 cars who completed this tough course within the time limits, giving Britain the Nation's Team Prize, the Manufacturer's Trophy, two class wins, the Ladies award and outright victory. At the prize-giving, Monsieur Garot

laughingly announced that next year there would be a *Coupe des Hommes* ("Men's Cup") awarded in case Pat repeated her victory.

In the highly competitive world of international rallying, where some 16 factory teams competed fiercely for the glory and the publicity, it is very rare indeed for one manufacturer to so scoop the results pool. The 1960 Liege was certainly one of those occasions, and without doubt was the most successful result ever achieved by Austin-Healey. In the next three years the best Healeys finished 5th, 6th and 6th overall, but in the very last Liege to be run in 1964, Rauno Aaltonen and Tony Ambrose led home the 21 survivors in the only Healey to complete the course, proving once again how competitive this very basic sports car had become over the roughest event in the calendar. **HM**



John Sprinzel and Bic Healey present a Michael Turner painting to Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom on behalf of BMC to commemorate their success on the 1960 Liege-Rome-Liege.