



# MICRO MARATHON

AND

# LIEGE-BRESCIA-LIEGE

The World's only International Rallies  
for small-engined cars



July 17-20, 1958 ★ July 11-20, 2008 ★ September 5-12, 2009 ★ July 16-25, 2010

## MM & LBL NEWS: MAY 2009



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**Liège-Brescla-Liège, July 2010: First entries in and Interest is growing!**

**Y**ou must all be wondering why we've been so quiet for the last couple of months. Well, we've been banging our heads against a brick wall called SNCF.... We really hoped to have some great news by now on transport to the **Micro Marathon**. After all, there's a recession on, which has hit the travel industry harder than any, so you really would expect that anyone in that business would be falling over themselves to help. Not so, I'm afraid. I will explain in a minute, but first, here's the bottom line. Currently, Motorail is a no-go for three-wheel micros and possibly for unusual four-wheelers. More conventional four-wheelers like 2CVs and Fiat 500s will have no problem, but there is no Micro Marathon discount.

The best alternative is to drive or trailer your micro to Toulouse, where we have booked a hotel for the Friday night and arranged parking for tow vehicles for the week. The AA route from Calais to Toulouse ([www.theaa.com](http://www.theaa.com)) is 964km (c600 miles) and the AA suggests it should take 8hr 46min - it'll take longer towing or driving a micro, we suspect, but it should be perfectly doable in a day if you can't take more than the Friday off work. Coming back, as we finish Saturday morning, you can give yourself all weekend for a leisurely drive back. For crossing the Channel, we have a special deal with SeaFrance: discount can be obtained by booking via our website or quoting CRPLTD when you book. So what went wrong with the Motorail? OK, we'll tell you...

RailEurope, which sells the tickets for the Motorail from Calais to Toulouse, expressed great interest in the event a YEAR ago and promised to help. Six months later, after long and frustrating negotiations, they pulled out, saying they had "no room to

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LBL 2008: Vespa 400 on the superb Passo Pennes



We were delighted to acquire this cute Trabi

Combi recently for Kevin Clemens: look out for it on MM and LBL. Let us know if you'd like us to find YOU a car..!

manoeuvre after all", but they would still of course accept individual bookings of the more conventional cars at normal rates.

At this point we went straight to the top and spoke to the MD of RailEurope. He said he was concerned SNCF might refuse to accept some of the cars, as they had done this to a few customers in 2008, and he didn't want the bad publicity this would bring if it happened on a high profile event like Micro Marathon. He gave me the phone number of the lady at SNCF who, he said, makes the decisions on what cars are accepted. Anyone who runs a business will be cringing in horror at this pathetic dereliction of duty: how can the MD just allow this to happen and treat customers in this way? It's appalling!

Nevertheless, we took up the cudgels with SNCF and, after a very positive telephone conversation in

January, wrote with all measurements and vital statistics of a wide selection of microcars that we hoped would be entering. We then endured months of delays, sending reminder after reminder, calling and calling. Meanwhile a well-meaning friend sent us up another route via Eurotunnel's PR department who, he hoped, would be able to put pressure on SNCF for us. This too proved abortive, the key person at Eurotunnel eventually, after a month of prevarication, dismissing us with "I don't know anyone in that part of SNCF". Thanks, mate.

Eventually, SNCF replied; with the same pathetic excuses we'd heard before (that they "can't take three-wheelers") and ignoring the list of four-wheelers we'd asked about. We battle on. The argument given previously was that not all their loading points have full-width ramps. We refuted this every time by pointing out that we travelled on the Calais-Toulouse service ourselves last year and checked: their ramps are fine for three-wheelers and we spoke directly to the loaders who were excited by the rally and looking forward to it. Now the argument has changed to one of security. We have pointed out before that they secure motorcycles in an upright position, tying them with complex arrangements of plastic straps - securing a three-wheeler is child's play by comparison. We currently await the response of the head of security at SNCF. We are also requesting the acceptance of individual four-wheel micros where entrants have let us know that they really need to use the Motorail.

We really didn't want to have to bother you all with all this - but the end result of all the delays is that some of you inevitably think that we're not serious about the **Micro Marathon** and it might not happen. Let's make this absolutely clear - **Micro Marathon** is most definitely on. The recession has kept entries low and the confusion over the Motorail has definitely put some people off, so we have a very small entry. Signed up so far are:

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| John Ducker/Theo Clift (GB)              | 1959 Heinkel Cabin Cruiser, 198cc |
| Mick Bell/Sara Bell (GB)                 | 1960 BMW Isetta 300, 298cc        |
| Phil Tetley/Martin Archer (GB)           | 1960 Berkeley T60, 328cc          |
| Vic Sayer/TBA (GB)                       | 1967 Subaru 360, 356cc            |
| Mark Smith/Jane Southgate (GB)           | 1960 Messerschmitt Tiger, 500cc   |
| Dan O'Brien/Bernie O'Connor (USA)        | Fiat 500 Giardiniera, 499cc       |
| Loree Kalliainen/Kevin Clemens (USA)     | 1977 Trabant P601 Combi, 598cc    |
| Hedwig Rodyns/Nicole Rodyns-Vervloet (B) | 1936 Morgan F2 3-wheeler, 933cc   |
| Mike Norton/Ben Norton (GB)              | Car TBA                           |

Descending Col du Tourmalet (2115m) in the Pyrenees



Yes, that's right - just nine cars - but the event is going ahead regardless. We are off on the second recce soon and we promise those nine and any more who join us a terrific, friendly and fun event. Small rallies have a character all their own, everyone gets to know each other much better and they're often more fun for participants than big events. But there ARE quite a few more of you out there who have assured us that you are planning to enter, but haven't done so yet. Now's the time to stand up and be counted! We are holding the entry fee at just **£2400** (EUR 2750) - the price that was originally for entries before the end of February - until **JUNE 12**. As explained before, this is a rock-bottom price (especially with the current state of the pound against the euro), so please grab it while you can.

From midnight on June 12, the entry fee for Micro Marathon rises to **£2600** (EUR 2995). If, for whatever reason, you do intend to enter but cannot get your entry in yet, please do let us know: we need to keep the hotels informed of numbers. Now, here's a reminder of the treats in store for all who do join us in September!

# MICRO MARATHON

September 5-12, 2009

The first day takes you from Toulouse quickly into the foothills of the Pyrenees on charming, tiny country roads – almost from the start, seeing another car is a rare occurrence. We then climb up into the Pyrenees proper, via some stunningly beautiful passes. The day finishes in a delightful French Pyrenean village where the town council have promised to entertain us to a party with local band and barbecued local lamb etc.

Day two takes us through the magnificent and deserted western Pyrenees and over the top into Spain, including tiny roads only wide enough for one car where, on the recce, we found wildlife prolific and vultures sitting beside the road – it was as if there hadn't been another car through for a week (though the roads were all smooth tarmac). Where we crossed into Spain, we found a delightful rustic shack beside the road selling the most delicious sheep's cheese, which lasted us for snacks for the rest of the week and a couple of weeks after returning home! We finish the day with another contrast, the fashionable Atlantic seaside resort of San Sebastian, our hotel just a short walk from its delightful beaches.

Day three takes us into the Sierras of Euskadi and up onto the high plains of northern Spain (where no rain fell when we passed through last year – in fact the weather was wonderful), heading on mostly small, scenic roads through tiny pretty villages (and hopefully a fun go kart circuit test, 1.2km long) towards Logroño, centre of the La Rioja wine growing region and a thriving ancient town where our hotel is right in the centre, ideally placed for an evening explore of the historic buildings and bars.

Day four takes us through the wine region on sweeping open roads, again remarkably quiet – it seems almost all traffic in Spain uses the motorways, which of course we avoid! Castles and historic walled cities start to feature on the itinerary this day, plus the poignant and moving ghost town of Belchite, where thousands died in a Spanish Civil War battle after which Franco decreed it should be left as it was, in ruins, as a monument to the futility and cruelty of war. The day ends (subject to negotiations) with an evening special test followed by dinner at the astounding Motorland Aragon, a 'motorsport city' being built in the middle of nowhere which has two superb, long, kart circuits.

Next morning starts, we hope, back at the circuit with a further test, before we head south east towards the wonderful old walled towns of Aragon – the scenery is very hilly, roads are deserted (we use one lovely tarmac road that didn't appear on our sat nav, let alone the map). Beautiful though the scenery is, it seems there are almost no people around between the towns – everywhere the farms lie in ruins, abandoned. You will have the chance to visit some of the stunning towns along the way with their ancient walls, mediaeval castles and even an astonishingly well preserved Roman aqueduct. The day finishes on the Mediterranean coast at the World Heritage Site of Tarragona, where we stay in the best hotel by far, looking out towards the Mediterranean over the amazing Roman amphitheatre...

Day six takes us inland again, into the hills and tiny roads, hopefully visiting a local private classic car and microcar collection before we head back up into the Pyrenees, taking in some smooth gravel roads on the Spanish side that are a great reminder of what car rallying was like in the 1930s and 1950s... We hope to fit in a quick go kart circuit test just before entering Andorra, where the local motor clubs are keen to welcome us to their museum and we end the day at a ski resort hotel that is strongly reminiscent of the prettier parts of the Austrian Alps.

The final morning sees our highest pass, 2408m, as we head out of Andorra into France with some more absolutely stunning scenery, gradually dropping down into the lower hills and via back roads, making our way to the gates of one of the world's most wonderfully preserved mediaeval walled towns, Carcassonne. And where all the other visitors park outside and walk in to



2009 Micro Marathon route map



Mediaeval walled towns  
abound...



this semi-pedestrianised town, we drive through the narrow bridge among the tourists and into the heart of the mediaeval city, where our hotel has a large walled car park set aside for us and a wonderful prizegiving dinner laid on for the evening. As we stay in the heart of the city, there will be plenty of time to look around next morning (Saturday) and the hotel is happy for cars to stay in the car park until competitors feel inclined to head home.

I hope this gives you a clearer picture of the treats we have in store. We look forward to seeing you all there!



LBL 2010: Snap up a perfect mount from the Malcolm McKay Collection, on sale at H&H Auction, Buxton on June 10

**Liège-Brescia-Liège 2010: entries coming in!**

It's early days yet, but we're delighted to have received entries already for **Liège-Brescia-Liège 2010**, which as you know is the turn of 600-1200cc cars, both pre- and post-war, to experience the fabulous roads, challenges, camaraderie, exhaustion and sheer fun that the micro crews enjoyed last year. There's lots of interest and we're expecting a healthy turnout, so book soon to be sure of avoiding disappointment...

Coincidentally, a significant number of suitable cars is coming up for sale at H&H's next Buxton, Derbyshire auction on June 10 (see [www.classic-auctions.co.uk](http://www.classic-auctions.co.uk) or tel +44 (0)8458 334455), partly because I am selling my own classic car collection – a decision I've taken simply because in recent years I've had no time to use them and I can't bear to see them languish unused in the barn for the foreseeable future. As seen above, they include a Micro Marathon-eligible Berkeley T60 and LBL-eligible Super Two Ford Special (1172cc Ford sidevalve) and Rochdale Olympic Phase I (948cc A-series + Shorrocks supercharger). Also LBL-eligible but needing restoration are my 1953 Austin A40 Somerset drophead coupé, 1960 Rochdale GT and 1957 Ford Anglia 100E. Other rally-eligible cars in the sale are a 650-Abarthised Fiat 500, THREE very nice Isetta 300s (one LHD, one RHD 3-wheel, one RHD 4-wheel), and a tidy and good value Frogeye Sprite.



Most exciting of the LBL entries promised so far is a team of three specially-prepared Mini 850s coming all the way from New Zealand. Myles Hicks is co-ordinating the team and writes, "We have managed to buy two extremely original Mini 850s but are still looking for the third. At present we are dressing one up to look like the original Works 850s. We are hoping to get an article on this one in the NZ Classic car magazine". Good for you, Myles!

**SUBSCRIBER ADVERTS ARE FREE...**

**LBL MINI FOR SALE**

Ideal Liège-Brescia-Liège mount: 1961 Morris Mini 998cc, currently getting full restoration but I've been tempted by a Cooper replica so the Morris could be yours for £3750. Mike Norton, email [miken@dentaladviser.demon.co.uk](mailto:miken@dentaladviser.demon.co.uk)

**NAVIGATOR OFFERED FOR MICRO MARATHON**

LBL veteran (co-driver in 2CV no 31) would love to have a go at the Micro Marathon too: email Mike Norton on [miken@dentaladviser.demon.co.uk](mailto:miken@dentaladviser.demon.co.uk)

**EXPERT NAVIGATOR FOR MICRO MARATHON**

They don't come more experienced than Willy Cave: if you want the best, email [willycave@amservice.com](mailto:willycave@amservice.com)

**IDEAL MICRO/FIAT 500 TRAILER FOR SALE ->**

In very good shape, recently repainted, £300ono. Collect Scotland or Cheltenham. Chris Berens, 01285 653924



**BRADFORD CLASSIC CAR SHOW NEEDS MICROS!! JULY 18-19**  
Microcars are invited to display in Centenary Square, Bradford for this high profile event: Contact Bob Parker, 01274 434407

**NAVIGATOR SOUGHT FOR MICRO MARATHON**

Navigator needed for Berkeley Foursome (rare 492cc 4-seater), must be prepared to share entry fee and costs. Bill Toyer, [geedadtee@aol.com](mailto:geedadtee@aol.com)

**LBL 1968 NSU 100TTS REPLICA FOR SALE IN NORWAY**

Immaculate. 100,000 kroner (c£10K). Arne, [nsuclub@online.no](mailto:nsuclub@online.no)



**The organising team for Micro Marathon & Liège-Brescia-Liège is led by Malcolm McKay ClassicRallyPress Ltd, 9 Sycamore Leys, Steeple Claydon, MK18 2RH, England**

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