

LIEGE-BRESCIA-LIEGE

**Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the
World's only International Rally for sub-500cc cars**

July 17-20, 1958



July 11-20, 2008

Provisional entries top 75!.....Major Sponsors on board!.....Entry Forms Now Out!

Dear all,

Welcome to the November Newsletter of **Liège-Brescia-Liège 2008**. So much has happened since the October Newsletter – we've completed a full recce of the route, we've signed up two more great sponsors, we've published the regulations and entry forms, there's just so much to tell! We're sworn to secrecy on the sponsors for just a bit longer, though: you'll have to wait for the December Newsletter for their exciting news...

First and most important, do please get your entry in to us as soon as possible to guarantee yourself a place on the rally. If you haven't received the forms, tell us now. Some of the hotels are already booked up and we have only reserved 60 rooms at present, so we need to know as soon as possible how many of you are coming. If you're waiting until nearer the end of December, just before the entry fee goes up, please don't – get the entry form in to us (if you must, send a cheque dated December 25 so we can't cash it until after Christmas!) – the most important thing is to get a picture of how many are coming early enough, so we can start hunting for more hotel places if we're going to need them. And remember to keep watching the Liège-Brescia-Liège pages of www.classicrallypress.co.uk for more information.

So, how is the route? The answer is that it's absolutely fantastic. The Belgian crew who planned it 50 years ago did a superb job and the vast majority of it is still very much as it was 50 years ago, except that the passes have been surfaced and the busier ones have also been by-passed, but you can still drive on the old roads. For sure it's much smoother, and in places much busier, than in 1958 but you will be able to come home saying with conviction that you have driven Liège-Brescia-Liège as it was in 1958. And you will be filled with admiration – and incredulity – for those men and women who thrashed their microcars around that route in 1958, flat out, non-stop, day and night. One or two people have said that they'd like to emulate that today – and it's an idea we considered at first. But having driven the route we can only say, please, don't attempt it. For one thing, with modern traffic levels in the towns and cities it's impossible; for another, 50-year old cars will never stand up to that non-stop flat-out pounding (and there would be no time to stop and make repairs); and for another, the mental and physical strain on the crew would be incredible – you'd almost certainly crash before the end. No, with 200 miles a day, our rally will be plenty challenging enough to test the most intrepid of you!



The Spa kart circuit: a kilometre of sheer fun!

1958

SO WHAT DID happen on that pioneering event in 1958? The full story has long been forgotten...



It's a fascinating tale of bravery and innovation; of flouting convention and following belief. The result was a rally that was both unprecedented and unique, a daring attempt to overthrow entrenched beliefs that tiny-engined cars were useless outside cities. The Royal Motor Union of Belgium, based at Liège, had decades of rally organisation experience and was very well respected. Led by Commissaire Général Maurice Garot, the RMU put together a rally that would take all the small cars on the market and test them to their limits to prove which were engineered to last, and which were not.

Entries came in from all over Europe, some works-supported, some private, some brand new cars, some several years old. Most prolific were the Fiat 500s – launched the previous year, the little Fiat was tailor-made for this sub-500cc event and the seven 500s included one newly-launched 500 Sport (tuned engine, light body, no sunroof) and at least one 500 Abarth. Next most popular were the Berkeleys, and this was a serious works attempt to win the event. The new 492cc three-cylinder two-stroke Berkeleys looked favourites: light, two-seater glassfibre/aluminium monocoque bodies, transverse engines, front-wheel drive – surely they would walk

it? Berkeley boss Charles Panter certainly hoped so, and supported three 492 entries, two with regular Berkeley race drivers and one driven by the Dutch Berkeley importers. Perhaps he had some doubts about the 492s' reliability, however, as it was the two-cylinder 328cc model that he gave to his star drivers, Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom, fresh from winning the Ladies' Prize in the Alpine Rally in an Austin-Healey 3000, and to BBC motorsport commentator Robin Richards and another pair of regular Berkeley racers.

Another serious challenge, this time for the smallest, 250cc category, came from the Zundapp factory, with four immaculately-prepared Janus cars looking impossibly large for their tiny engines, but proving incredibly efficient. The two BMW Isettas may have seemed less serious, but in fact the 250cc and 300cc cars had been carefully prepared by the factory to challenge for the 250cc and 350cc classes. There were three Citroën 2CVs too, though it seems there was no factory involvement and these private entries were less than well prepared, with the exception of a pretty glassfibre-bodied coupé which would be the only Citroën to finish.

Much was expected of the single Messerschmitt TG500, a sports machine to challenge the Berkeleys, but sadly it would drop out due to driver illness on the first day; a similar fate befell the sole Goggomobil, actually an Isard 350 Coupé, which hit a deer on day one and was out. That left sole Lloyd and Panhard

entries, both larger-engined cars which, it was claimed, had been sleeved down to 500cc to meet the regulations. The Panhard may well have been – it was pretty slow and was out before long – but the Lloyd showed impressive stamina and went on to finish a surprise third overall. We believe that eight other cars were entered but were not ready in time to start; pre-event articles mentioned that a Vespa 400 and a Frisky Sport were among the entries, and it would be great to know what the other six might have been...

The cars gathered in Liège on Thursday, July 17 and at 5.30pm they set out in convoy for Spa. It was a very slow, hot convoy, recalls Pat Moss, resulting in her Berkeley's engine seizing temporarily due to lack of airflow: an ominous beginning. The start of the timed section (which would not end until Brescia on Saturday morning) was from Spa at 9pm, in the dark.

Just outside Spa, a hillclimb was set up: straight up the gentle incline of the main road, for 5km from a standing start. This was a gift to the Berkeleys and the Dutch entry, unhindered by heavy extra lights and charging equipment fitted to the British cars, stormed up in 3min 58sec, an average of 75kph! The British 492s were close behind, followed by the Messerschmitt TG500 (4'38"), the Fiat 500 Sport (4'55"), three more Fiats, the stunningly quick Isetta 300 (5'19"), the special-bodied 2CV (5'41"), the quickest Berkeley 328 (5'46") and the first of the amazing Zundapps (5'47"). The Panhard was next up, followed by Moss and Wisdom, then two more Zundapps before the remaining gaggle of cars that seemed to have rather lost the plot with times well over six minutes.

The rally now set off through the night, with a minimum average speed (including all stops for fuel, repairs, food, comfort etc) of 50kph on normal roads and 60kph on autobahns, of which a long stretch from Kaiserslautern to Munich was to prove too much for one of the 2CVs ("melted conrod") and one each of the Berkeleys, one with gearbox



failure, the other unknown. Despite the pressure, the Isetta 300 still found time to call into the factory at Munich for some fine tuning! Even with a 25-minute delay due to snow at the foot of the Brenner Pass, all 19 remaining runners made it to the next checkpoint on time. Pat Moss recalls how much fun it was running railway crossings in convoy in the little Berkeleys: "You didn't have to duck, if you could see it was clear you could just go straight under the barrier without lifting off," she laughs.

Entering Yugoslavia ("the border guards were very cute," recalls Pat, blushing) the leaderboard would change dramatically. Here, unlike western Europe, the rally average speed leapt to 60kph and the Col de Moistrocca, tackled on a hot Friday afternoon with an impossible time schedule, hit the Berkeleys hard. "It would just seize," says Pat. "They'd told me it would: you just got out, had a cigarette, got back in and it would go again. When it finally packed up in Yugoslavia, Ian Mantle turned up in another Berkeley and proceeded to tow me all the way back to Italy!"

The 492 Berkeleys suffered too, insufficient airflow as they struggled up the loose-surfaced, twisty pass forcing them to stop and allow the engines to cool. Incredibly, the fastest Fiat 500 was only three minutes late at the next time control, another lost six minutes and the Lloyd was third with seven minutes, equalled by a third Fiat 500 and followed by the quickest Berkeley in eight. Both remaining Berkeley 328s were out, as were the Isettas (the 300 had dropped out earlier when it ingested part of its air filter).

Yugoslavia was tough on everyone, the leaders picking up big penalties on the way out, so when the rally re-entered Italy it was the Fiat Abarth that led, with the Lloyd third, the plastic Citroën fifth and the Berkeleys 6th and 8th. The Cols of Falzarego, Pordoi and Costalunga between Cortina and Bolzano would prove their undoing, however, a minor accident taking out the leading Berkeley (it's a miracle there weren't more accidents - it was now 3am Saturday and they hadn't rested since Wednesday night) and the Dutch entry succumbing to gearbox failure. 13 cars were left, all of which would make it back to Liège: but first, they had to climb the Stelvio and Gavia, at dawn...

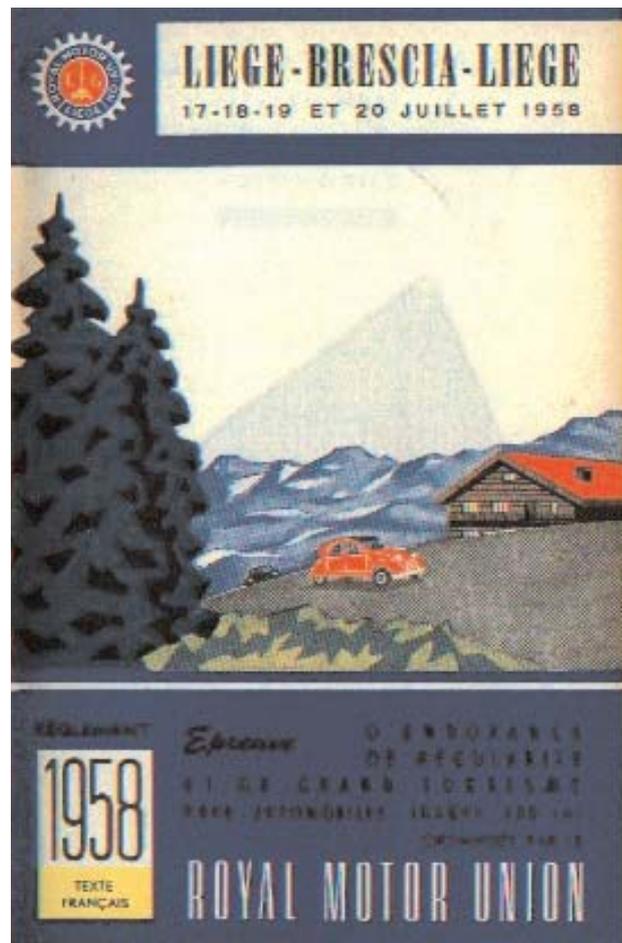
These two major Cols, gravel-surfaced with terrifying drops, were tackled as one special stage, the quickest Fiat 500, the Sport, losing just 12 minutes - a time that would have placed it 13th overall in that year's Liège-Rome-Liège rally against far more powerful opposition. Even the quickest Zundapp, with 35 minutes' penalty, would have beaten 40 of the full-size cars on that event! The Abarth still led, but by just three minutes: the challenge was on.

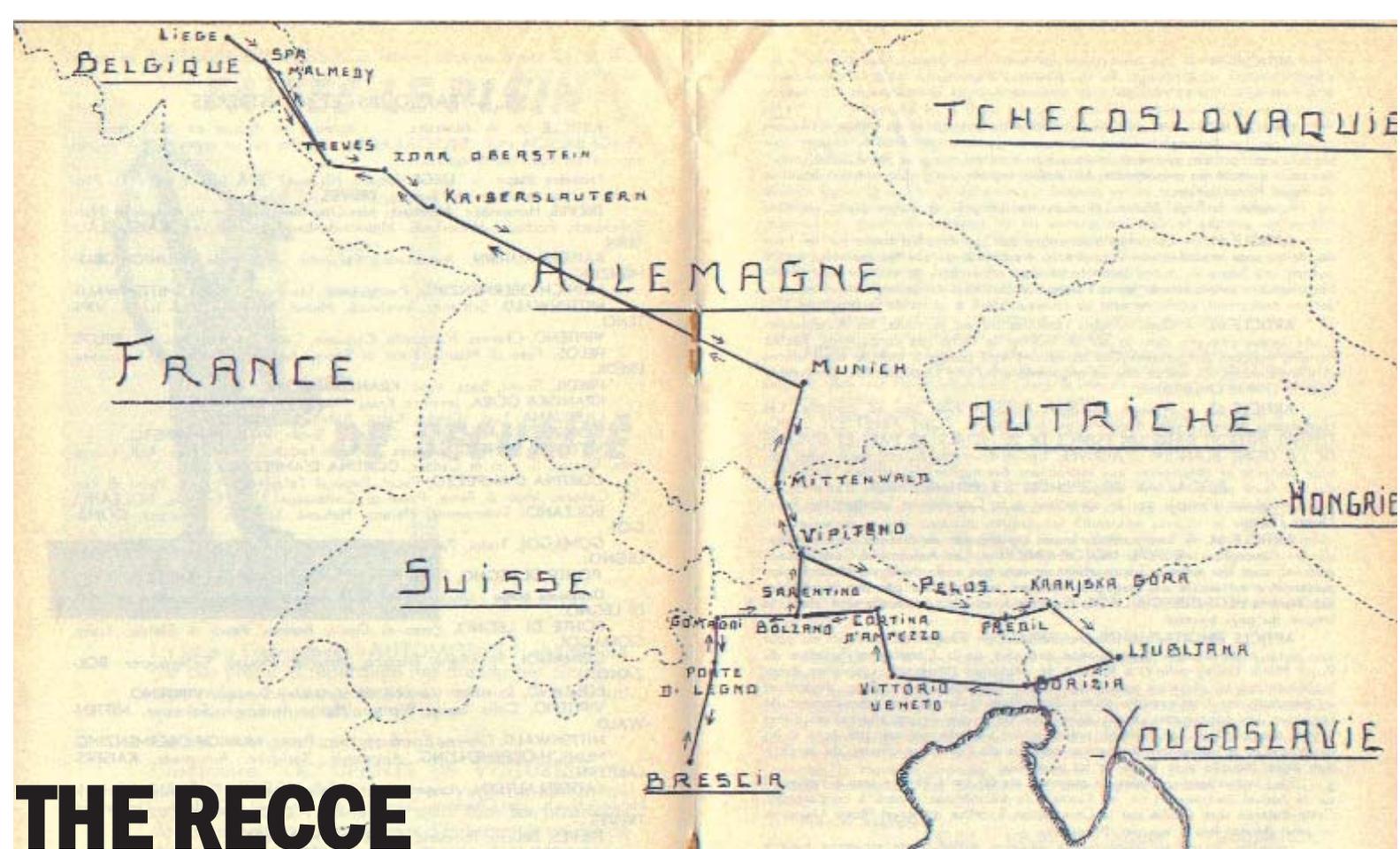
Eight hours in parc ferme were scheduled at Brescia, but as all crews were now at least half an hour late and some two hours behind, little sleep would be had: battle was to be rejoined at 6pm. This time, therefore, the Gavia and Stelvio would be tackled in the dark... Italian ace Arturo Brunetto and his young Argentinian co-driver, Frieder, in the 500 Sport stormed the section three minutes quicker than the next car, taking the lead. The 47km Col de Pennes section north of Bolzano would prove the final challenge to the leaderboard, just three 500s getting through unpenalised. After all that, the entire remaining field charged back through Austria and Germany without another second of penalty to the section finish at Spa and reception at Liège.

Brunetto and Frieder had won, with 50min total penalty, from Luxemburgers Wagner and Donven (54') in the 500 Abarth, Belgian Nokin and Swiss Rebetez (64') in the surprisingly quick Lloyd, the Belgian Sander brothers (79') in a bumperless 500 and, incredibly, Germans Pohl and Dohring (82') in the first of the Zundapps, of which all four finished, collecting a very well deserved Team Prize for their efforts. Fiats and Zundapps shared all the remaining places except 12th, which was the preserve of the remaining Citroën, the special-bodied 2CV of French crew Callier/Laurent (149').

At the prizegiving, many plaudits were laid on the organisers, the competitors and the concept of the event; all indications were that it was considered a success and would become a fixture. The cars had covered 3336km, including 754km of mountains and 238km of major Cols. Honoré Wagner summed it up: "L'effort conjugué de pilote et de la machine permet de réaliser une performance plus passionnante que dans les compétitions pour grosses machines..."

Yet, for reasons unknown, the event was to remain a one-off.....until now.





THE RECCE

Our reconnaissance trip had five main purposes – first, to check out the original route (above) and make sure it is still possible to follow it accurately; second, to check out the hotels first-hand and make sure they will meet our needs on accommodation, food, service, location and parking; third, to check out the new sections we had planned to avoid 1958's autobahn run through Germany and make sure they are the best routes for fun microcar driving; fourth, to start taking the sample 'landmark' photos that will appear in your route book, photos that you must emulate to prove you have driven the full route and thereby get a penalty-free score each day; and fifth, to meet some of the people who will make our trip so much more enjoyable, such as Siegfried at Kartbahn Liedolsheim, Manfred at BMW in Munich, Janez in Ljubljana and many more.



With all that to do, and with much less daylight to enjoy in late October, we had an incredibly tight schedule so taking the Berkeley just wasn't an option. Malcolm decided his 23-year old Sierra XR4i was the best option and so it proved when we needed to make up time on good roads, though on snowy wet mountain passes with hard old summer tyres we had some scary moments and would definitely have been quicker and safer going downhill in the Berk! Let's run through some recce highlights...

We were warmly received at the Spa tourist office, which is located at the gates of the park where the rally's timed sections started in 1958: hopefully you will get your timecard stamped there in 2008. The Spa kart circuit, once we found it, is superb and enhanced by cars on the Grand Prix circuit whizzing round alongside. The rally route then quickly enters Germany on a route that today is pretty, quiet and easy to follow. Where the 1958 route took to the autobahn, we head into the hills and forests on some wonderfully scenic routes and cross the Rhine by ferry. After Karlsruhe, we will be warmly received at a superb outdoor kart circuit (left) which, we hope, will be packed with spectators next July when we arrive for a timed blast around the 1km track. We continue on the back roads through mediaeval villages and towns, with the added bonus of a visit to



the superb motor museum, Boxenstop, at Tübingen (right): as well as exotic cars from Bugatti to Ferrari, it has micros including a Lloyd streamliner and a 1958 Autobianchi.

Munich is a huge city but our back-road route in should see you safely ensconced in the BMW works almost before you realise you're close: exactly what will happen at BMW is still a closely-guarded secret but we're confident it will be unforgettable!

The drive out of Munich on Sunday morning will be quiet and scenic, heading south to the Alps, again on minor roads following the 1958 route, through Austria and into Italy via the Brenner Pass. Here the 1958 rally was delayed by snow and we too had quite a bit of snow to contend with, though it's actually unlikely you'll see much here in July. A checkpoint en route will, we hope, be the extensive museum and classic car showroom of Tirol-



Klassik. A motorway runs past Innsbruck and over the Brenner Pass now, but a series of checkpoints will keep the rally firmly fixed on the old route which still survives intact.

Our night at Cortina d'Ampezzo, in an historic hotel that dates back 150 years and has superb views of the mountains, especially from its wonderful modern swimming pool, will be unforgettable, but there's not much time to rest as we set out on the toughest day so far. We drive lovely, quiet roads through

the achingly beautiful Dolomite mountain range (yes, it was snowing in October!) and cross the border into Slovenia (still manned right now, but the barriers come down this winter as Slovenia has enjoyed three years in the EU). Slovenia is not hugely different from north-east Italy - as the Slovenes are keen to point out, a large chunk of north-east Italy used to be part of Slovenia - but in some ways it's like



going back in time; the people are relaxed and friendly, the roads are quiet and some of the passes even still have cobblestones around the corners, just like in those 1950s Alpine Rally photos.

Here we have our first (or second, depending which route you took out of Cortina!) really challenging pass: the Passo della Moistrocca (left) rises 750 metres in a series of steep climbs between its 24 uphill hairpins. As with the roads out of Cortina, we will suggest an alternative route for anyone who finds this road just too tough. The 250cc Zundapps all got over it in 1958, but the few other remaining small-engined micros struggled. Of course, it was gravel then, so progress was much slower and harder, but if your car - or you - just don't want to go up when you

see it, rest assured that there are easier ways to go!

We drop down to the beautiful capital city of Slovenia, Ljubljana, where negotiations are under way to put the cars on display on arrival in the pedestrianised main square.

Next day we leave Ljubljana (and again those 1958 route planners had tricks up their sleeves) to head back into Italy and once more into the Dolomites. This will be the longest day of the rally, so we will start early to allow plenty of time for you to tackle the challenging triple passes of the Route des Dolomites, before Bolzano.



From Bolzano we head west to the best-known and highest of all Alpine passes, the Stelvio. Once again, an alternative route will be recommended for anyone who feels their car isn't up to it (though, again, we can tell you that all four Zundapps stormed it in 1958!) but for those who do tackle it, it's an unforgettable experience, the road zigzagging up between 48 hairpins to a spectacular viewpoint (with restaurant and gift shops) at the top. We had a spectacularly quiet run up in October (right), but in summer you'll be mixing it with tour buses and all; it's probably fair to say that the actual incline is rarely very steep - it's not as steep as the Moistrocca - but it does go on a long way!

We couldn't drive our next pass, the Gavia, because it was blocked by snow and will almost certainly remain so until May, so



that's one for the next recce in June - but we've been that way before and know it's a good deal quieter, if narrower, than the Stelvio. Thankfully we found an easy alternative road to rejoin the rally route for the descent to Brescia.

Leaving Brescia we have a lovely run beside a lake (left: well, it should be lovely - it was foggy and raining in October!) before climbing back up the Gavia and then over the Stelvio again on our way back to Bolzano.

From Bolzano, we head back north to Munich, taking a pass I'd never driven before, the lovely Passo Pennes - high at 2211 metres but a much gentler climb than most with beautiful scenery all the way up. Then it's back over the Brenner Pass to



Austria and on to Germany, returning to Munich. To find out what happens there, wait for the next Newsletter!

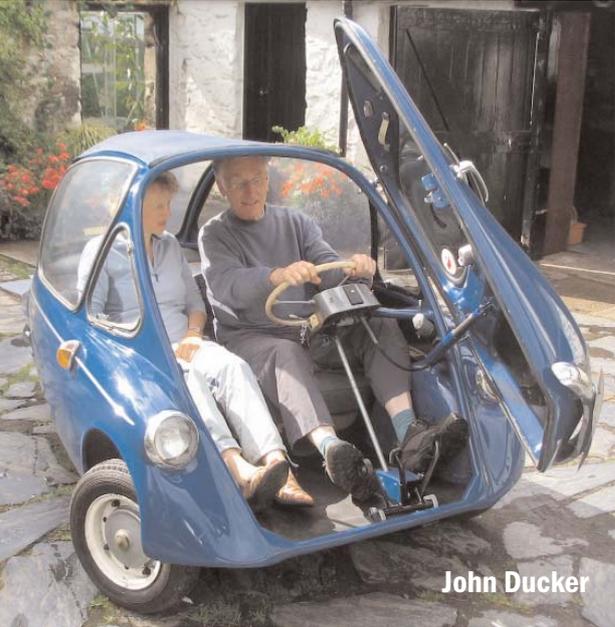
From Munich, we head back through the hills and forests of rural Germany, finding stunningly beautiful and unspoiled old towns dotted right across the countryside, interspersed with fairytale castles, ferries and motor museums. On the final morning, we return to our kart circuit outside Karlsruhe to see whose car is still running best after all the pass-storming; the German Grand Prix is on 20km north at Hockenheim, so it'll be interesting to see how many locals would rather come and watch us...

Our triumphant return via Spa to Liège will, we hope, be blessed by glorious sunshine and topped off with a superb prizegiving dinner in the Palais des Congrès.

We'll all come back, as we've just done, with incredible admiration for the heroes who charged those tiny cars round the route 50 years ago, when most of the passes were gravel with no barriers, none of the corners had been smoothed out or



tunnels built to bypass the most exposed bits - truly, it's awe-inspiring. Hopefully, we will also all come back exhausted but happy, having had an unforgettable experience, men and machines in harmony through a test to the limit, meeting stunning scenery, making friends, enjoying ourselves immensely while showing the world how much fun micro cars can be.



John Ducker



Hans Lehr

LIEGE-BRESCIA-LIEGE 2008

**A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the
World's only International Rally for sub-500cc cars**

July 11-20, 2008



Jamie Pfeifer



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We've received quite a few questions over the last few weeks and it makes sense to share the answers more widely.

Can we change Car/Co-driver at the last minute? We deliberately left out of the Regulations any rules about substitution of cars or drivers after entries have been submitted, because we didn't want to put too many restrictions and reckon we can cope with last-minute changes without too many problems. However, we didn't explain that! Just to clarify, changes of co-driver and of car are permitted up to Signing On at Liège – provided of course that both car and co-driver(s) meet the requirements of the event and the co-driver(s) sign the entry form.

Can we drive solo? It is a requirement to have at least two persons in the car at all times (except, perhaps, during the special tests: we will confirm that later). It would be foolhardy to attempt to navigate the route and drive at the same time, and if you had to keep stopping every few miles to check the map, it would take forever to complete the route (and be dangerous, because there aren't always safe places to stop). The purpose of the event is to relive as much as possible the challenge of the 1958 event, but without the extreme strain of motoring all night – and they all drove two-up, so it is important we stand by that rule.

Can tiny-engined micros like Trojans keep to the schedule? I don't think you need worry too much about being unable to keep to schedule. One of our senior marshals drove a 175cc Heinkel all over Switzerland in the early 60s with his mum and a mountain of luggage and found it coped surprisingly well. Provided you take a reasonably light co-driver, you should be able comfortably to maintain a 20mph average, which is what our schedule is based on. And there are many places where you can cut sections to catch up – you might lose a few points for missing a passage control, but the chances are everybody will do that at some time and you will only be competing against others in the up to 250cc category, so you're all pretty much in the same boat. As mentioned elsewhere, we will recommend alternative routes around the toughest mountain passes, so if anyone gets to the bottom, looks up and decides "I don't want to drive my car up there", they can turn around and take an easier route.

I've modified my car to make it more reliable: is this permissible? There are two important considerations here –

- 1) To keep as level a playing field as possible for all competitors,
- 2) To present cars as near as possible to how they might have appeared in 1958 (especially in the Authentic category).

It's vital that you tell us in advance what you have done or plan to do, as several competitors already have. We do not intend to penalise people for making sensible minor improvements such as electronic ignition, that are not immediately visible to spectators, nor for fitting more recent parts where originals are simply unobtainable.

Please keep talking to us! We're more than happy to answer everyone's questions and concerns: it all helps us to make this the most enjoyable and rewarding event for everyone!

THE ORGANISING TEAM
for Liège-Brescia-Liège 2008
is led by **Malcolm McKay**

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