

Sahara: the supreme test

The sheer hell of this desert ordeal

The long hard road to Timbuktu



Dust, sweat and bloody-minded determination

Le rallye des masos!

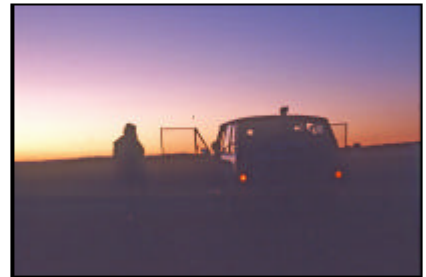
Just deserts: a severe test of willpower and stamina

Desert rat: how to prepare for the last great adventure

Stories of an intriguing Range Rover
prepared by Janspeed Engineering

**First all-British entry to finish the awesome
Rallye Paris-Dakar**

across the Sahara desert and west Africa



2 Range Rover TRW 425R

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that's **PIRELLABILITY**

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**A presentation by
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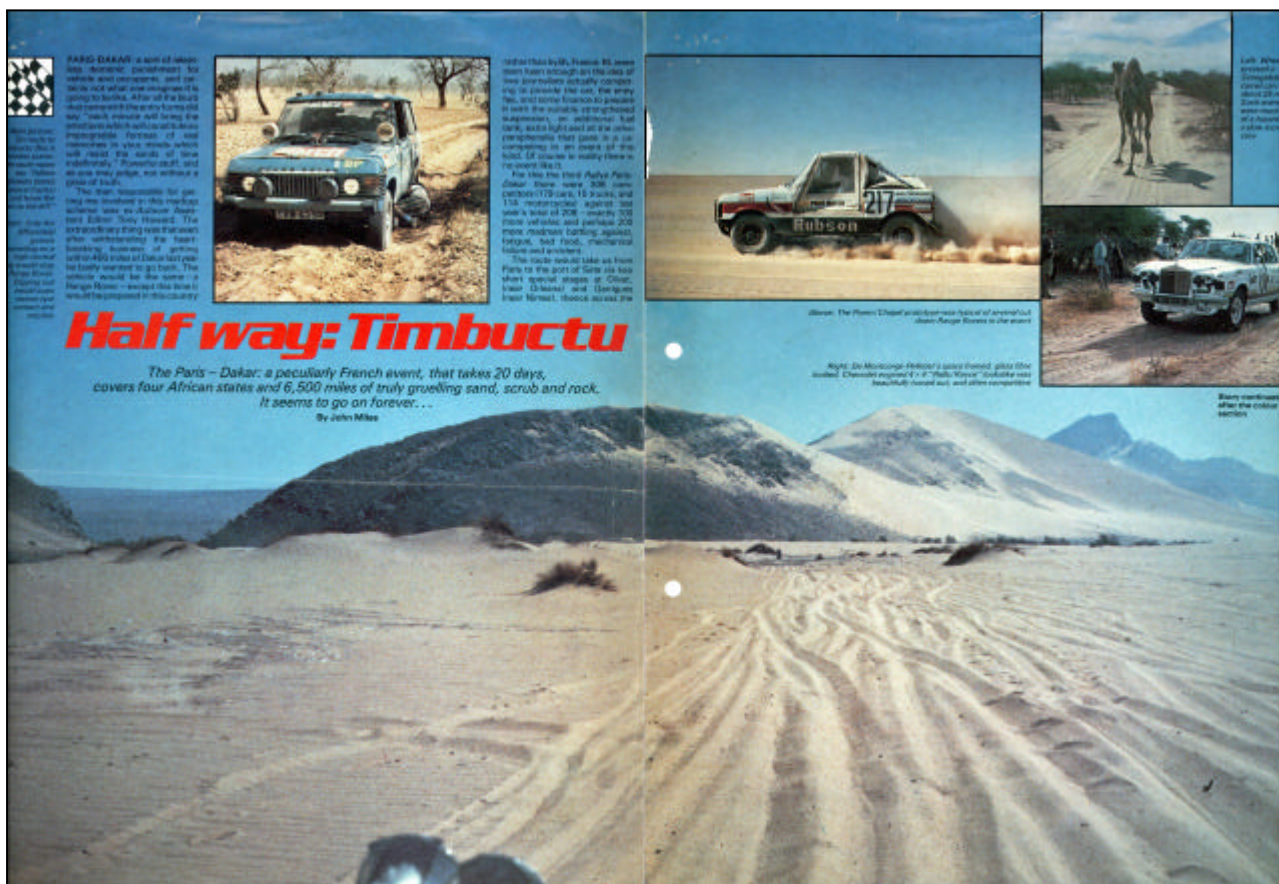
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Main picture: On route to Timbuktu this is a familiar scene. The route notes say "follow plusieurs pistes (several tracks) and leave the dunes to the left". Inset above left: Only differential guards grounding on a high central hump would stop the Range Rover. Digging out would soon restore tyre contact and traction. Above right: The Puren Chapel prototype was typical of several cut down

Range Rovers in the event. Top far right: When pressed a Senegalese camel can make about 25 mph. Such animals were much less of a hazard than a slow moving cow. Lower far right: the De Montcorge-Pelletier space-framed, glass fibre-bodied, Chevrolet-engined 4 x 4 "Rolls-Royce" lookalike was beautifully turned out, and often competitive

Half way: Timbuktu

The Paris-Dakar: a peculiarly French event, that takes 20 days, covers four African states and 6,500 miles of truly gruelling sand, scrub and rock. It seems to go on for ever...

By John Miles

PARIS-DAKAR. a sort of relentless demonic punishment for vehicle and occupants, and certainly not what one imagines it is going to be like. After all, the blurb that came with the entry forms did say "each minute will bring the emotions which will constitute an impregnable fortress of real memories in your minds which will resist the sands of time indefinite-

ly." Powerful stuff, and as you may judge, not without a grain of truth.

The man responsible for getting me involved in this madcap scheme was ex-Autocar Assistant Editor Tony Howard. The extraordinary thing was that even after withstanding the heart-breaking business of getting within 400 miles of Dakar last year he badly wanted to go back. The vehicle would be the same - a Range

Rover - except this time it would be prepared in this country rather than by BL France. BL was even keen enough on the idea of two journalists actually competing to provide the car, the entry fee, and some finance to prepare it with suitably strengthened suspension, an additional tank, extra lights and all the paraphernalia that goes with competing in an event of this kind. Of course, in reali-

ty there is no event like it.

For in this the third Rallye Paris-Dakar there were 308 competitors (179 cars, 15 trucks, 114 motorcycles) against year's total of 208 - exactly 100 more vehicles and, perhaps 200 more madmen battling against fatigue, bad food, mechanical failures and accidents.

The route would take us from Paris to the port of Sète via two short

special stages at Olivet (near Orléans) and Garrigues (near Nîmes), thence across the Mediterranean to Algiers where the rally proper would start. We would go due south through Bordj-Omar-Driss, skirt Tamanrasset, then into Mali - over relentlessly-rough tracks - to Timeiaoune, Gao and Timbuktu. The loop into Upper Volta and the Ivory Coast took in Bouna and Korhogo. Then this year's route took us back into Mali through Kolokani and Niolo. The final leg was on better surfaced - sometimes graded - tracks into Senegal - Bakel, Tiougoune and finally Dakar.

Long, dusty road

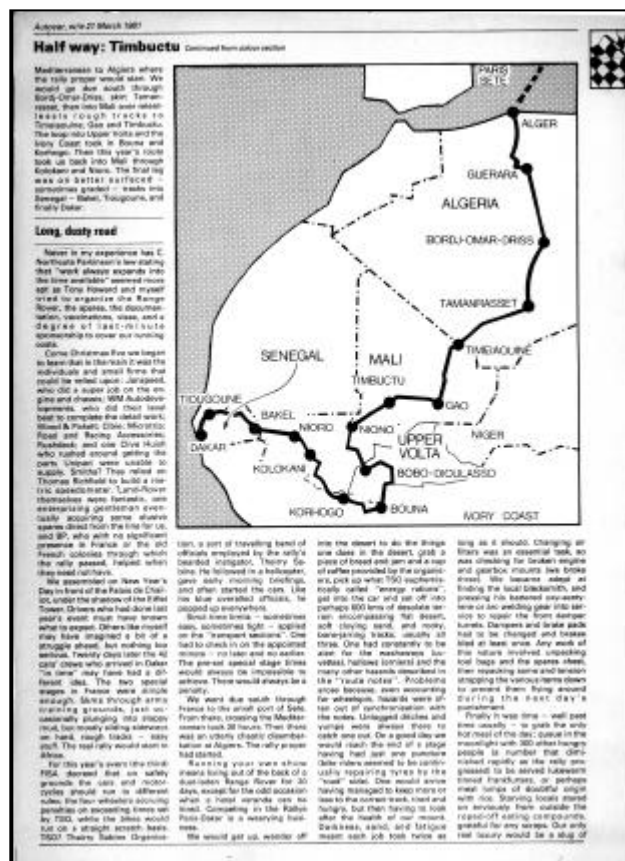
Never in my experience has Northcote Parkinson's law stating that "work always expands into the time available" seemed more apt as Tony Howard and myself tried to organize the Range Rover, the spares, the documentation, vaccinations, visas, and a degree of last-minute sponsorship to cover our running costs.

Come Christmas Eve we began to learn that in the main it was the individuals and small firms that could be relied upon: Janspeed, who did a super job on the engine and chassis; WM Autodevelopments, who did their level best to complete the detail work; Wood & Pickett; Cibié; Microtrip; Road and Racing Accessories; Aushdeck; and one Clive Huish who rushed around getting the parts

Unipart were unable to supply. Smiths? They relied on Thomas Richfield to build a metric speedometer. Land-Rover themselves were fantastic, one enterprising gentleman eventually acquiring some elusive spares direct from the line for us, and BP who, with no significant presence in France or the old French colonies through which the rally passed, helped when they need not have.

We assembled on New Year's Day in front of the Palais de Chaillot, under the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. Drivers who had done last year's event must have known what to expect. Others like myself may have imagined a bit of a struggle ahead, but nothing too serious. Twenty days later the 42 cars' crews who arrived in Dakar "in time" may have had a different idea. The two special stages in France were simple enough; 5 km through army training grounds, just occasionally plunging into sloppy mud, but mostly sliding sideways on hard, rough tracks - easy stuff. The real rally would start in Africa.

For this year's event (the third) FISA decreed that on safety grounds the cars and motorcycles should run to different rules; the four wheelers accruing penalties on exceeding times set by TSO, while the bikes would run on a straight scratch basis. TSO Thierry Sabine Organisation, a sort of travelling band of offi-



cials employed by the rally's bearded instigator, Thierry Sabine. He followed in a helicopter, gave early morning briefings, and often started the cars. Like his blue-overalled officials, he popped up everywhere.

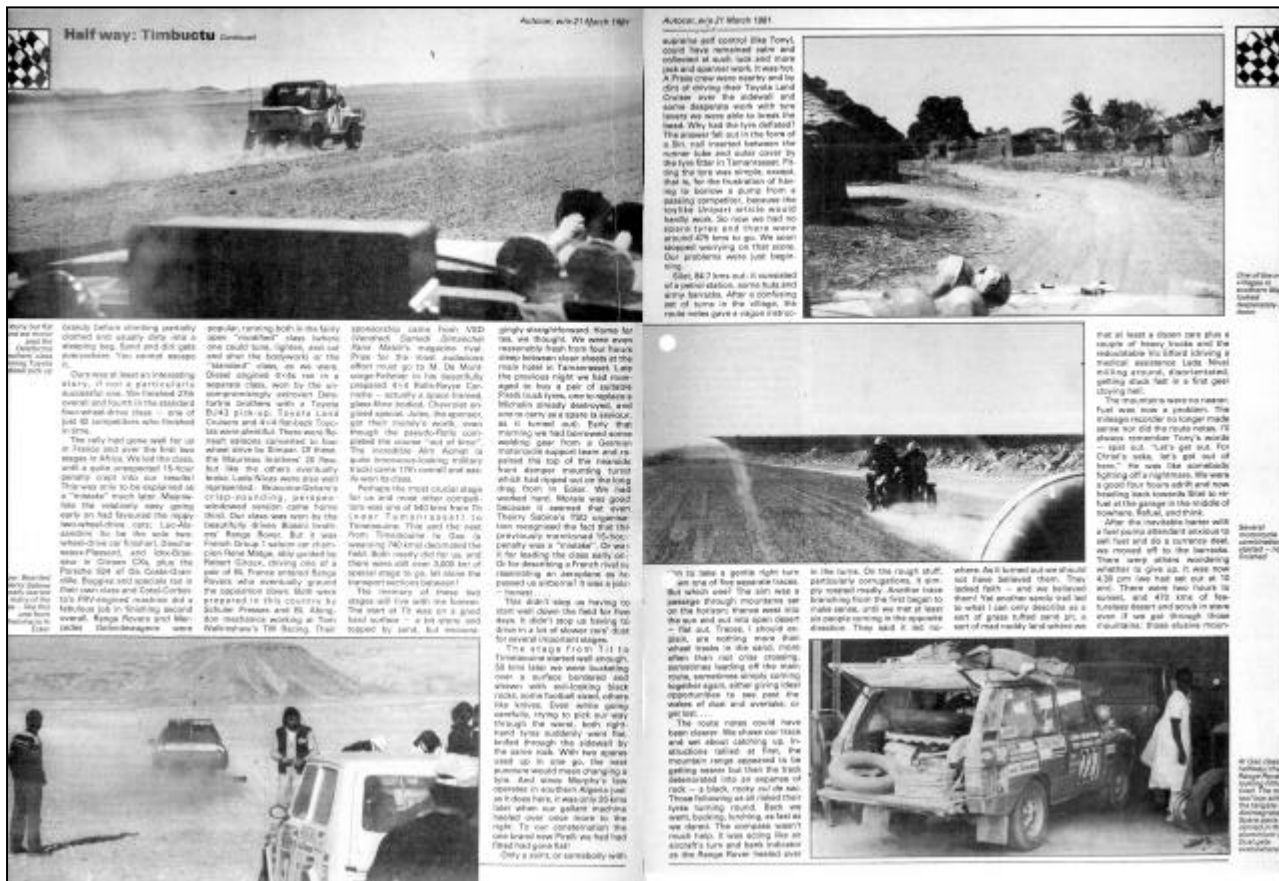
Strict time limits - sometimes easy, sometimes tight - applied on the "transport sections". One had to check in on the appointed minute - no later and no earlier. The pre-set special stage times would always be impossible to achieve. There would always be a penalty.

We went due south through France to the small port of Sète. From there, crossing the Mediterranean took 30 hours. Then there was an utterly chaotic disembarkation at Algiers. The rally proper had started.

Running your own show means living out of the back of a dust-laden Range Rover for 20 days, except for the odd occasion when a hotel veranda can be hired. Competing in the Rallye Paris-Dakar is a wearying business.

We would get up, wander off into the desert to do the things one does in the desert, grab a piece of bread and jam and a cup of coffee provided by the organisers, pick up what TSO euphemistically called "energy rations", get into the car and set off into perhaps 600 km of desolate terrain encompassing flat desert, soft cloying sand, and rocky, bone-jarring tracks; usually all three.

One had constantly to be alert for the wash-aways (cuvettes), hol- lows (ornières) and the



Top left: On stony but flat ground we motor past the Delefortrie brothers' class-winning Toyota diesel pickup. Below left: Bearded Thierry Sabine personally started many of the stages - like this one from Quatre Chemins to In Ecker.

Top right: One of the many villages in southern Mali that looked desperately run down. Middle right: Several motorcycle combinations started - none finished. Bottom right: At Gao (less than halfway) the Range Rover is looking filthy and tired. The metal tool box sitting on the tailgate later disintegrated. Spare parts were carried in the aluminium chest. Dust gets everywhere

many other hazards described in the "route notes". Problems arose because, even accounting for wheel spin, hazards were often out of synchronisation with the notes. Unlogged ditches and yumps were always there to catch one out. On a good day we would reach the end of a stage having had just one puncture (bike riders seemed to be continually repairing tyres by the road side). One would arrive having managed to keep more or less to the correct track, tired and hungry, but then having to look after the health of our mount.

Darkness, sand, and fatigue meant each job took twice as long as it should. Changing air filters was an essential task, so was checking for broken engine and gearbox mounts (we broke three). We became adept at finding the local blacksmith, and pressing his battered oxyacetylene or arc welding gear into service to repair the front damper turrets. Dampers and brake pads had to be changed and brakes bled at least once. Any work of this nature involved unpacking tool bags and the spares chest, then repacking same and

tension strapping the various items down to prevent them flying around during the next day's punishment. Finally it was time - well past time usually - to grab the only hot meal of the day; queue in the moonlight with 300 other hungry people (a number that diminished rapidly as the rally progressed) to be served lukewarm tinned frankfurters, or perhaps meat lumps of doubtful origin with rice. Starving locals stared on enviously from outside the roped-off eating compounds, grateful for any scraps. Our only real luxury would be a slug

of brandy before climbing partially clothed and usually dirty into a sleeping bag. Sand and dirt get everywhere. You cannot escape it. Ours was at least an interesting story, if not a particularly successful one. We finished 27th overall and fourth in the standard four-wheel-drive class - one of just 42 competitors who finished in time. The rally had gone well for us in France and over the first two stages in Africa. We led the class, until a quite unexpected 15-hour penalty crept into our results! This was only to be explained as a "mistake"

much later. Meanwhile the relatively easy going early on had favoured the nippy two-wheel-drive cars; Luc-Alessandrini (to be the sole two-wheel-drive car finisher), Deschaseaux-Plassard, and Ickx-Brasseur in Citroen CXs, plus the Porsche 924 of Da Costa-Grandville.

Buggies and specials ran in their own class and the Cotel-Corbetta PRV-engined machine did a fabulous job in finishing second overall. Range Rovers and Mercedes Gelandewagens were popular, running both in the fairly open "modified" class (where one could tune, lighten, and cut and shut the bodywork) or the standard class, as we were.

Diesel engined 4x4s ran in a separate class, won by the uncompromisingly extrovert Delefortrie brothers with a Toyota BJ43 pick-up. Toyota Land Cruisers and 4x4 flat-back Toyotas were plentiful. There were Renault saloons converted to four wheel drive by Simpar. Of these, the Maureau brothers' 20 flew, but like the others eventually broke. Lada Nivas were also well represented with the Briavoine-Deliare crisp-sounding, Perspex-windowed version coming home third.

Our class was won by the beautifully driven Biasini brothers' Range Rover. But it was French Group 1 saloon car champion René Metge, ably guided by Robert

Giroux, driving one of a pair of BL France-entered Range Rovers, who eventually ground the opposition down. Both were prepared in this country by Schuler Presses and BL Abingdon mechanics working at Tom Walkinshaw's TW Racing. Their sponsorship came from VSD (Vendredi Samedi Dimanche), Paris Match's magazine rival.

Prize for the most audacious effort must go to Thierry de Montcorge and Jean-Christophe Pelletier in a beautifully prepared 4x4 Rolls-Royce Corniche - actually a space framed, glass-fibre-bodied, Chevrolet-engined special. Jules, the sponsor, got their money's worth, even though the pseudo-Rolls completed the course "out of time". The incredible Alm/Acmat (a quite innocuous-looking military truck) came 18th overall and easily won its class.

Perhaps the most crucial stage for us and most other competitors was one of 540 km from Tit (near Tamanrasset) to Timeiaoune. This and the next from Timeiaoune to Gao (a wearying 740 km) decimated the field. Both nearly did for us, and there were still over 3,000 km of special stage to go, let alone the transport sections between!

The memory of these two stages will live with me forever. The start at Tit was on a good hard surface - a bit stony and topped by sand, but

encouragingly straightforward. Home for tea, we thought. We were reasonably fresh from four hours sleep between clean sheets in the main hotel in Tamanrasset.

The previous night we had managed to buy a pair of suitable Pirelli truck tyres, one to replace a Michelin already destroyed, one to carry as a spare (a saviour as it turned out). Early morning we had borrowed welding gear from a German motorcycle support team and repaired the top of the near front damper mounting which had ripped out on the drag from In Ecker. We worked hard.

Moral was good because it seemed that Thierry Sabine's TSO organisation recognised the fact that the previously mentioned 15-hour penalty was a "mistake". Or was it for leading the class early on? Or for describing a French rival as resembling an aeroplane as it passed us airborne? It was a joke - honest. This didn't stop us having to start well down the field for days. It didn't stop us having drive in a lot of slower cars' dust for several important stages.

The stage from Tit to Timeiaoune started well enough. 50 km later we were bucking over a surface bordered and strewn with evil-looking black rocks, some football sized, other more like knives. Even while going carefully, trying to pick our way through the worst, both right-hand

tyres suddenly went, knifed through the sidewall by the same rock.

With two spares used up in one go, the next puncture would mean changing a tyre. And since Murphy's operates in southern Algeria as it does here, it was only 25 km later when our gallant Range Rover heeled over once more to the right. To our consternation, one brand new Pirelli we had fitted had gone flat!

Only a saint, or somebody supreme self control (like Tony), could have remained calm and collected at such luck and more jack and spanner work. It was hot. A Press crew were nearby and by dint of driving their Toyota Land Cruiser over the sidewall and some desperate work with tyre levers we were able to break the bead. Why had the tyre deflated? The answer fell out in the form of a 5-inch nail inserted between the runner tube and outer cover by the tyre fitter in

Tamanrasset. Fitting the tyre was simple, except, that is, for the frustration of having to borrow a pump from a passing competitor, because the toy-like Unipart article would hardly work. So now we had no spare tyres and there were around 475 km to go. We soon stopped worrying on that score. Our problems were just beginning.

Silet, 84.7 km out, consisted of a petrol station, some huts and army barracks. After a confusing set of turns in

was now 4.30 pm (we had set out at 10 am). There were two hours to sunset, and 470 km of featureless desert and scrub in store even if we got through those mountains; those elusive mountains on the horizon, bathed in a pale mauve light.

A Mercedes crew washed gratefully in a barrel of water outside the army post. Their motor had blown. I washed too, forgetting to take off my glasses at first. The captain in charge said it was a simple matter. The road to Timeiaoune was an easy one to find, but we explained that six of our friends had given up, turned round on the road he described. One last try was called for. A lot of people had put a lot of effort into our car.

I shall never know whether it was our state of relaxed concentration that helped, or simply a guiding spirit. We set off in company with a couple of Toyota Land Cruisers and didn't put a foot wrong - until later. I was driving, not really taking in much of the outside scenery, just concentrating avidly on the road ahead. It was the usual second and third gear stuff, always full throttle and down a gear when the sand thickened and dragged the speed down.

Suddenly the mountains were there on our left, sliding by. The three of us were through, trailing great plumes of dust like some tiny animals escaping a giant trap. We powered ahead over

flat, featureless desert. There were marker posts just visible about two kilometres to the left, otherwise nothing, just us, almost blinded, charging flat out at 85 mph directly into the setting sun. If we had stopped a Toyota could have passed unseen two miles to the left, or 10 to the right.

The sun set; five hours left and 300 km to cover. It dawned on us that perhaps there was a hope of getting to our destination before going over the maximum time limit, before collecting a penalty sufficient to put us out.

It is at times like this that the navigator must not hesitate even if he is wrong, because at 60 mph-plus the headlights don't show the trace far enough ahead for a change of mind. It was pitch black when the desert ended and we began to pick up traces once more. The going got rougher. We were chasing grooves that twisted and turned 30 degrees either side of the chosen compass bearing, peering ahead looking for shadows cast by the headlights that might mean a spine-jarring car-smashing hollow, at the same time trying to keep a friendly star in view, and our heading constant. Rapt concentration meant I was hardly aware of Tony using the map reading light to follow the route notes or to check our compass heading.

The first inkling that all was not well came a

couple of hours into the night - light bulbs! Far ahead a row of naked light bulbs twinkled. The trace was leading us inexorably to a settlement where no settlement should have been. Hooded figures appeared. They were eager to shake hands and know what these impatient strangers could possibly want. Large eyes stared in at what must have seemed to them a strangely complex machine. We wanted Timeiaoune! Timeiaoune, they said, was 200 km away, on a trace to the right, more west than south. We had three hours left.

The real fight had just started - difficult on a diet of purified water tasting of Milton and lukewarm at that, a few dried prunes, and some biscuits. We were at least heading in the right direction. To press on seemed the best course, going right trace by trace. Timeiaoune could have been light years away. There are no signposts in this terrain, just endless traces in the sand, some apparently soft but with rocks underneath to give the axles and chassis a pounding, some so soft that the best way to keep moving was to swing our long suffering mount from side to side, giving the diffs a chance to barge through a central hump waiting to jam the car fast.

Our guiding spirit led to another settlement. A particularly bright youth confirmed that Timeiaoune was still to

the right but only 120 km away, just an inch away on our large-scale map, yet so far; and there were just two hours to do it in. "You must pick up the trace to the right, then fork right again - soon - onto the main trace," he explained. Any thought of caution or tyre conservation had to go. Those at the control were waiting to give us a stiff penalty if we arrived after 12.45 am. We were now on a hiding to nothing. We had to go as hard as possible. The tension lifted only slightly when 7km later the headlight picked up a turn to the right - nothing more than wheel tracks veering off.

Soon we saw the first comforting wisp of dust - a haunting entrail caught in our beams. it was there and then gone. Could it be another competitor far ahead? Or was it simply dust stirred by a flurry of wind? Now it was more dense. Suddenly we glimpsed two tail lights weaving, independently, and almost uncontrollably. They followed two steadier ones. Two completely worn-out motorcyclists were following their service vehicle - a Mercedes G-wagen - for the last, agonising miles.

Bouncing, slithering off shallow sand banks bordering our track we forced past. It took more time to scratch past a couple of Ladas and a truck. Self control is needed, to pass in a dust trail. You need to exercise patience, until a light breeze or surface

Les actualités



Fleet Street Christmas farewell with Spike Milligan, John Miles, Tony Howard and Bernard Miles, character actor, writer, director and mastermind behind London's Mermaid Theatre



PARIS, Jan 1st - Some 250 cars, trucks and motorbikes are lined around the Trocadero fountains opposite the Eiffel tower Wednesday after completing check-in operations for the 10,000-kilometre Paris to Dakar, Senegal, rally. Participants left Paris early Thursday for the three-week long ride through African deserts to the capital of Senegal. (AP WIREPHOTO)

change makes the dust storm abate. Only then can you get a vague impression of the track ahead.

Agonisingly, with just a few km to run the trace evaporated. It simply vanished from view. A desperate sweep left and right failed to pick it up. Where the hell was it? Rocks began to hem us in. Only Tony was calm. "Turn around." "How can I in this lot?" "Turn round."

Those following had turned to the right and had picked up the trail. So the overtaking process started again. The last few km were a mad dash. The tension barely lifted when we saw the flashing amber light in the distance. It was the control. We lived again with 10 minutes to spare. Africatours still had their field kitchen going. I only

remember swallowing some of their awful frankfurters (or was it horsemeat stew?) then stumbling around trying to find somewhere to sleep.

It took all my strength to pull a sleeping bag out of its sack. Tony had gone to the only garage to find tyres. Just before passing out, I remember wondering if the smile on the face of the TSO official at the control was one of surprise that we made it. Or did he already know what the very next stage to Gao had in store for us? That was to turn out to be another object lesson in survival. Only this time it was a dreadful 740 km long.

If only it had all been like the first 140 km, thrashing across a dried up lake bed. I hadn't believed Tony when he said that given the

chance a Range Rover in full cry corners in gentle oversteer. There were moments when this machine weighing a good two tons laden behaved like real racer. It was stable enough in a long slide for the driver not to be tempted to lift off. The tail would move gently out, but not far. There wasn't enough excess power for that to happen.

For an hour life seemed worthwhile. "Many cars overtaken," said my notes. The lake bed was open and fast with traces that diverged. Overtaking was a comparatively simple matter. Then suddenly here was an unexpected ditch. The Range Rover took off and landed awkwardly with a tremendous crash. Clonking noises and he wildly pattering front axle told us the one

unstrengthened damper mount had failed. On inspection the damper shaft was bent. Two of the four turret mounting bolts had sheared. It took a good hour to effect a jury rig. This time it was all over, we were sure. A damper lashed at the top with large washers and held by two bolts at the bottom would soon fail, especially as the road into Mali immediately deteriorated into the most relentlessly awful rocky and stony trail imaginable. A puncture followed; one spare tyre left, 500 km to go, a damper mount distorting at each bump. This time we were definitely out.

At each and every unscheduled stop, natives would appear from nowhere, politely pleading for food (in contrast to Senegalese children who would



TRW 425R in parc fermé at the Palais du Trocadero - as ready as she's ever going to be for the rough ride ahead



Thumbs-up for for an Associated Press snapper from Howard and Miles on a chilly New year's morning.

demand). There seemed no need to rush any more especially when a second tyre went flat. Out once more came that impossible Range Rover screw jack (our hydraulic version had been stolen). We felt there was time to talk to an English couple who drove up in a Peugeot 404. "We're just looking around," they said! Once again we had no spare tyres and a long way to go.

50 km later, the cobble-up damper mount had not failed despite the awful hammering it was getting. It was groaning at each big bump but it held up. Our spirits rose just a little. Gradually it seemed worth trying to get to our destination within time.

What followed was a remarkable piece of driving on Tony's part. After a while we became

inured to the crashing, banging, bucking punishment, the groanings from the car's front. It didn't seem possible that the damper should or could hold, or that we should not have another stone driven through the sidewall on one of our four remaining tyres.

Tony drove with great neatness and anticipation, finding a way round the worst hollows yet all the time keeping the pace up. Darkness fell before half distance. The road surface only improved much later yet we had no more punctures. We made it to Gao with half an hour to spare, both utterly exhausted, but now with a rest day to rebuild morale, find yet more tyres and repair those damper mounts. Our troubles plus the unjust 15 hour penalty had dropped us from 16th to

62nd overall. 86 cars were left running. Those left by the way- side were presumably struggling home as best they could. It's a cruel event.

From now, on the rally would seem comparatively easy for us. A damper mount cracked this time around the bottom flange (most other Range Rover owners obviously knew of the problem and had strengthened theirs) and we had five more punctures. Vibration shattered the liquid crystal numbers in the otherwise excellent Microtrip speed time and distance measuring equipment. The differential lock jammed in. The body moved on the chassis, all vestige of synchromesh disappeared from second gear, we had continual trouble with a fuel pump change-over switch (until we threw it

away) which had obviously also suffered from the heat and vibration, and would make only intermittent contact.

Two engine mounts (replaced with Ford Capri ones due to Unipart's inability to supply) and a gearbox mount sheared. We consumed two sets of rear dampers and were on our third set of fronts by the time we reached Dakar. Within 100 miles of Dakar the standard fuel tank split (the 200 litre tank inside the car survived intact) though it suffered no obvious external damage.

By Timbuktu, sand filled every uncovered crevice inside the car. The two remaining Michelins were committed to being used as spares. We were now running exclusively on Pirelli light truck tyres.

Timbuktu: less than



Howard slips and slides through the first - 5 km - special stage at Olivet near Orléans

halfway! But now we were running better, climbing up the overall results, usually finishing stages in the top 25 - or better. As we headed south west from Timbuktu (a lively little town) to Niono, Thierry Sabine's entourage, some of the service crews and some journalists would continue ahead by air (food was scarce but air strips were plentiful).

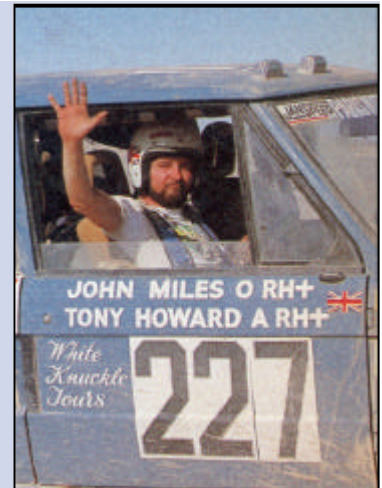
Each night, encampment left a mountain of empty cans, bottles, rags, and spares boxes behind. Imperceptibly

the tracks in Southern Mali and across the border into Upper Volta began to be recognisable as such. They were bordered by vegetation and trees. The occasional goat, dog, chicken or cow would wander across our path oblivious of the siren.

On several occasions a grossly overloaded Peugeot pick-up lurched off the road to get out of competitors' way. Most of the time the bush telegraph had worked, so we met vehicles already parked well off the road. By comparison



Passing a big artic laden with bales of cotton en route throug Côte d'Ivoire while the truck driver awaits assistance and enjoys a fine vantage point



with Mali, Upper Volta seemed like a paradise. We washed all over for the first time in days in the Hotel Ram in Bobo Dioulasso. We managed a decent meal and a night's sleep next to the hotel swimming pool.

Better still were the conditions in the Ivory Coast where - thanks to the good offices of the BP garage in Korhogo - we were able to seam weld the damper turrets, wash the car, and blow out some of the sand that had collected inside.

Lasting impressions

were of the utter relentlessness of the event. Then the sheer pleasure of staggering through the cutting that led to that extraordinary beach of white sand stretching the 120 km from Tiougoune to Yof (Dakar) and at least as far in the other direction. The memories at the end were mostly pleasant; washing in the sea, tinned fruit salad for pudding, watching a camel and its wild looking rider take off from the kneeling position and reach 25 mph in about 3 sec then

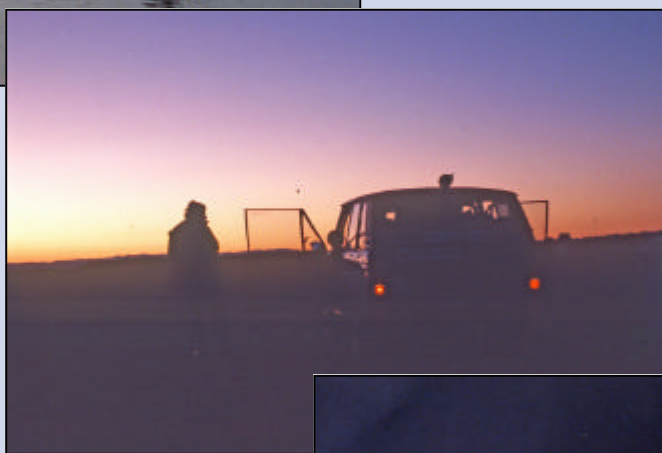
galumph off into the dusk at high speed. The following day we drove virtually flat-out down that gloriously smooth sand, following the line of the breaking sea where the sand was damp and therefore firm. We only dabbed the brakes for the yumps.

The mayor of Dakar duly appeared at the prize-giving as did his opposite number in Paris, Jacques Chirac. He gave a long impassioned speech. Even Jean-Marie Balestre had taken time off from his F1 wrangles with Bernie

Ecclestone to add pomp and his official seal of approval, so the Rallye Paris-Dakar looks like being a hardy annual.

There was no real party, no dancing girls, no long-term friendships gained, simply an odd feeling of emptiness, a seven-hour flight back to Paris (seven hours!) and, inevitably, that irritating feeling that if given the opportunity you would go through the whole thing all over again.

by John Miles
Autocar 21 March 1981



White Knuckle Tours



Driver's-eye views



gulped a hasty meal from a field kitchen, serviced the car, and arranged for more of those punctures to be repaired. Then, like dusty, stinking refugees, we threw our sleeping bags on the sand to snatch five hours of fitful slumber before doing it all over again.

At times, we were near despair. A run of punctures would leave us vulnerable again. Another impact with the scenery made us wonder just how much longer the car would survive. After rushing through the night, picking a way between close-packed thorn trees at 70-80 mph, I began to hallucinate, gritting my teeth to maintain concentration, trying not to smash the front suspension again in one of the many culverts.

At the end of that section, the half-way mark, to which only half the 180 starters survived, my co-driver said: "If it goes on like this all the way to Dakar, there is no way we can possibly make it."

Shame

But we survived to join that triumphant band of only 40 cars classified as finishers after a final glorious dash along the beach to Dakar. For me it was a great reward just to finish, after having so narrowly failed the previous year, only 450 miles from the end.

That first attempt was a saga in its own right. Near Timbuktu, the car ahead overshot a corner and reversed into its own dust cloud - an act

of criminal stupidity, especially as I was just turning into the corner. The impact smashed our radiator, battery, steering and a brake calliper. Yet, with the help of a local blacksmith, we were on our way again within 2½ hours - albeit having to drive for three days with no brakes.

Later, in the middle of the night, two bullocks stampeded across our path. The 100 mph impact did no good to them or our Range Rover. Yet we were able to continue for another 1,000 miles before the steering succumbed. I shall never know whether we could have actually made it to the finish if we hadn't been discouraged by a lugubrious French mechanic's despairing shrug and our own exhaustion.

Why do it? Why face the perils of the vast, empty desert? It is not an experience for the faint-hearted. You never know, until you try, what you will see revealed of yourself. You may crack up, and have to live with the shame of that for the rest of your life. Or you may come through with flying colours, and remember with deep satisfaction: "I did it - nothing in life will ever faze me again."

The Sahara has seduced Western explorers for centuries, often rewarding their curiosity with death. This vast desert stretches 4,000 miles from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and 2,500 miles from the Mediterranean into

the Tropics. It is one of the most uncompromising places in the world. To survive there takes all the resources the human frame and mind can muster. That is why the local people, the Tuaregs, seem distant, self-contained, but not unfriendly.

What is a formidable challenge to a European, in an area that is blessed if gets rain once in ten years, is everyday life to the Tuareg. If Mark Thatcher and Charlotte Verney have encountered Tuaregs, they will find that the code of life on the desert is much the same as on the ocean, that no "mariner in distress" is left abandoned.

On the other hand, misreading their compass by a degree or two may have led them on a false trail 50 or 100 miles to the wrong side of a mountain range. And they may have run out of fuel, despite rules demanding tanks big enough for a range of nearly 500 miles. I hope they have the sense to stay close to their car, taking advantage of what little shade it offers

by day and warmth by night, keeping distress flares close to hand.

Outcry

Outcry

Rally rules also demand that each car carries five litres of water per person, which they must conserve as long as possible. For with thirst comes desperation. The worst that may have happened is that they have driven unwarily over the top of a vast sand dune and plunged off the deceptively steep edge at the far side.

To cope with this sort of emergency, the organisers have medical crews on the ground in four-wheel-drive vehicles, helicopters and a fully-equipped aircraft ready to fly injured crew members to hospital in Switzerland.

Whatever the outcome, I hope it will not lead to an outcry for the event to be banned. For this would mean one fewer among a dwindling number of opportunities to come face to face with yourself.

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Anthony Howard for
Daily Mail





About as far removed from national rallying as it's possible to get while discussing the same sport, the Rallye Paris-Dakar remains one of the last ultimate tests of man and machine. Distances are immense; the temperatures searing; terrain ruthless; the pace fierce. And once in, there's only one way out....

Tony Howard reports

"BONJOUR, HENRI. How goes it?" Pause. Gallic shrug. "OK. But I think it's a little boring – just driving from place to place like this."

"More boring than driving round and round a race circuit for 24 hours?" Gallic shrug.

There are the opposing views on long-distance rallying. Multiple Le Mans winner Henri Pescarolo and I were pacing up and down in the chill dawn, after guarding our places in the petrol queue overnight.

Four days of hard charging – over the

rugged Atlas Mountains and across rolling expanses of the world's largest desert – had put 1,400 miles between us and Algiers. We were at Bordj-Mokhtar, a small outpost in the Sahara, on the frontier between Algeria and Mali.

This was just the beginning of the Rallye Paris-Dakar – 6,000 miles and three weeks that surely constitute the toughest regular event on the international calendar.

The petrol had been sent across the desert in a huge tanker. Its amiable crew were patiently

pumping by hand – 250 litres at a time – into the 120 thirsty cars, and a similar number of motor cycles had to be fuelled.

A water tanker had also been sent in. An Algerian carefully rinsed his tin mug in the last few precious drips.

Bodies began to stir from their exhausted slumbers on the stony ground. The desert still was broken by nervous laughter – someone had caught a scorpion in a bottle. It was angry, translucent, venom-packed tail arched – a reminder to check your boots every time before putting them on, always assuming you had had time and energy to take them off.

Watching the rapidly brightening sun, I remembered twiddling the radio the night before. Through the mush had come John Peel's late show on BBC Radio One, remarkably clear from London, more than 2,000 miles away.

For Henri Pescarolo, it was a little boring. For Mark Thatcher, a subsequent Rallye Paris-Dakar was to prove an embarrassing debacle; the whole thing was run by a bunch of cowboys, said his father when he "came to the rescue". Not so, I argued in various writings. But, anyway, thank you both for putting the event in the headlines in Britain.

For me, this first attempt at Paris-Dakar, back in 1980, was seventh heaven – space, sounds, smells, clear bright skies and a novel challenge every morn-

..a severe test of willpower and stamina, with the potential to break friendships as well as people...

ing. When I lived there, sages said Africa never lets go of you. Now, after a three-year absence from the continent, I knew how right they were.

The experience was none the worse for being shared with this crowd of French lunatics, among whom we had been given a heroic send-off from Paris early on New Year's morning, a week before.

Two months before that, I had never even heard of Paris-Dakar. Since leaving Africa, I had been satisfying my wanderlust elsewhere. An old chum, fellow-journalist Anne Hope, had been invited by British Leyland France to pick a partner for this new type of rally in Africa. Next thing, we were in Paris to learn all about it at a slap-up champagne reception. They were all posing like mad. The speeches were interminable, the food and music were North African, and the crumpet was smashing. All this bore absolutely no relationship to what we were about to undergo.

"Bonne route et bonne chance," they said as they flagged us away from the Trocadéro. I was later to sense a similar, if much more poignant, atmosphere among the crowds along Southampton water,



Top right: The start of the Tamanrasset section which sorted the men from the boys. It began as rolling sand, but rapidly turned into a moonscape with fingers of razor sharp flints standing proud on the surface. Corrugations were so bad that Howard didn't realize a tyre had punctured until he smelt the burning rubber, by which time the wheel was square.

Left: In the encampment of Niro du Sahel on the border of Mali and Mauritania. This was the normal method of obtaining petrol. As many as 80 vehicles would queue up to be filled at a rate of five litres a time, each competitor perhaps wanting as much as 300 litres!

Right: Our heroes set off on the road to Timbuktu.

watching the QE2 steam away to the Falklands. On both occasions, everyone must have pondered on how many would return, but nevertheless thrilled with a sense of adventure.

The first short special stage south of Paris was an odious mixture of sand and mud; the objective was to seed us for the re-start in Africa. To try too hard here could mean immediate ignominy. But, with dust about to be an ever-present companion, a reasonable placing was

desirable.

Our comparatively standard Range Rover settled down nicely. Where the track was wide enough, it could be chucked with considerable abandon, sliding into a controllable power oversteer. Nothing came loose, and the extra equipment – roll cage, full safety harnesses and a 200-litre additional fuel tank in place of the rear seat-all seemed firmly attached.

In Algiers, we filled both tanks to the brim for the drive out to the

first desert bivouac. I noted at the time: "Definitely aware of fuel surge trying to drive out the tail of the car. Inadequate baffles?" But, once in the desert, I was in my element – the rattle of stones and the shoosh of sand under the wheel arches have the same evocative effect as the rushing slap-slap of water under a yacht's prow.

The nights were bitterly cold but, only a couple of hours after sunrise, it was scorching, particularly inside a hard-driven car. And, we quickly slipped into a routine that was to keep us sane for the next two and a half weeks. We kept a big stock of mineral water – £1.50 a bottle when you could get it, and far more palatable than local eau laced with purifying tablets.

Every 20-30 minutes, I would guzzle water, often with a salt tablet, an essential to keeping a clear head while working hard in intense heat.

Crossing the Sahara was tough work, but fun, particularly when compared with what followed. Soon after each day dawned, we were re-started in an order taking account of cumulative scores. Each day's run was a special stage, maybe 400 miles long and taking five and a half hours if you were lucky and quick, or 15-20 hours if you got into trouble.

The route notes gave instructions such as: "Bear to the left of large sand dunes – follow

...a kind of automotive outward bound course...

compass bearing 275." Often, the only landmarks were areas of particularly soft sand, the odd burned out vehicle, oil drum or abandoned tyre.

Desert surfaces, contours and colours varied continually. For 50 miles, firm gravel allowed you to fly along flat-out, but very warily. Driver and navigator had to concentrate hard all the time, scanning the horizon for landmarks, keeping to the compass heading, looking out for soft patches that might bog us down, anticipating yumps into deep troughs that could shatter the front suspension.

All this had to be done without the aid of conventional perspectives. And a high bright sun meant there was no shadow to help in judging the wave form of undulations, making it even harder to pick the right speed at which to take them.

Suddenly the pace would slow dramatically as the surface changed. Running into heavy sand might knock the speed down from around 100mph to 20-30mph in seconds, as though the brakes had gone on really hard. To hesitate then was disaster. You had to collect a lower gear smartly, maybe lock the central transmission differential, and charge even harder than before, throwing the car from side to side to keep it free of the



Above left: Breaking camp shortly after sunrise at Quatre Chemins, the prelude to a 74-kilometre drive over open desert to Tamanrasset. The temperature drops to below freezing overnight.

Main picture: Flat-out at around 100mph in the Grand Erg Oriental of the northern Sahara, following in the tracks of three other competitors. Vigilance is vital, for yumps and holes can easily wreck an axle, and when the sun reaches a certain angle, there are no shadows to enable crews to pick out the holes. After sunrise, the temperature soars to around 100 degrees....and this is winter! Sahara dust is exceptionally fine and percolates through even the most determined precautions.

sand.

To get stuck here would entail hours of heartbreaking labour, digging and heaving to move the car forward to firmer ground a few feet at a time.

You would be forgiven for thinking that, once the Sahara was crossed, the worst was over. You would be wrong, however. For, in the Sahel, the fringe area where vegetation fights a losing battle with the desert, the going is often far more difficult.

In a case study, writing

at the time to provide feedback for BL and others, I said: "Thick all-pervading dust was a continual companion. Surfaces ranged from glutinously soft to coarse and firm sand, from baby-smooth dried-up lake beds to destructive potholes and rocks.

Pullquote

Only the most optimistic and resilient spirits survived the discovery that each successive day was worse than the previous, in a way not envisaged before the start.

"Thierry Sabine (the organiser) has a reputation for creating man-breaking as well as car-breaking events.... Much more than a long-distance motoring competition, it was extremely interesting psychologically, being a severe test of will-power and stamina with the potential to break friendships as well as people. It was a kind of automotive outward bound course that opened up new vistas in one's personality and awareness.

"The event was orchestrated with increasing pressures. So only the most optimistic and resilient spirits survived the discovery that each successive day was worse than the previous, in a way not envisaged before the start.

"The hard facts of life, lived rough between drives, held further potential for undermining morale of the flagging spirit. At the majority of overnight halts, we slept in the open desert, or in the bush, or among the stinking litter attendant on primitive settlements. Flies, mosquitos and children on the scrounge were constant pests. For the most part, we queued like refugees for food from the field kitchen that was the focus of each night's camp.

"Water was often scarce and had to be conserved for drinking. Washing was necessarily cursory – a most unwelcome fact to face after driving 600km flat-out through thick dust

and high temperatures and then spending four or five hours working on the car. A clean T-shirt was brown with dust within an hour after being put on. And one reached the point where to spend half an hour with a bucket of water and a bar of soap was occasion for joyful frolicking – hotels with showers and swimming pools were forgotten dreams.

"With this change in values came the realisation that one could survive and compete under these conditions. Then, too, there was the challenge of keeping the vehicle in fettle night after night with minimal equipment or assistance. Even for the best-organised, that was a considerable undertaking."

In the desert we were slowed by a power loss that came and went for reasons we couldn't divine. But that was to be the least of our troubles.

On day 10, we were still battling hard. Using the choke to maintain some semblance of power, a practice that proved embarrassing when the need arose to slow rapidly, we managed to pass 20 cars early on the 350-mile stage from Gao to Mopti in Mali. Then we spent 15 minutes extracting the car from a cloying mulch that all but enveloped the axles, the penalty for a split-second's indecision.

Forty five miles from the end of the stage, the brakes packed up – a

JUST DESERTS

continued from page 28

a canal bridge, followed immediately by a sharp right. Anne began counting "no down." We knew that turn must be in a dense cloud of dust that hung among trees. I braked, started turning, saw the bridge.



on our way. But, 20 miles later, the earth lead, hastily attached, fell off the battery. It didn't take it enough of a charge to start the engine, yet there was no way we could bump start it, so that was the end.

There was nothing for it but to wait, attempting our engine and battery. Radios were in our hands, like walking off to find help, but only in vain. There was no power before a sweep-up operation, and the surprised crew gave us a jump start from their battery.

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turn must be in a dense cloud of dust that hung among trees. I braked, started turning, saw the bridge.

Then, in the corner of my eye, a red shape loomed from the right. I hit the brakes. Bang! The driver ahead had wrong-slotted, then reversed into his own dust cloud – bloody fool!

First priority was to ensure other competitors were warned to slow. Next was to fix the Range Rover.

The battery, radiator, right-hand wheel and brake caliper, steering dampers, steering slave and track arms were all scrap. Anne started negotiations to buy the local police chief's battery for an outrageous price. A blacksmith said he could straighten the steering arms. Willing hands heaved on a rope to pull out the battered wing. Others fished out the shattered battery – water was brought from the canal to rinse the acid off their hands.

Mechanics from BL France arrived, took one look and were ready to give us up for lost. But we weren't having any of that. So they produced a radiator and lightweight battery, and we set to work. Two hours later, we were on our way.

But, 30 miles later, the earth lead, hastily attached, fell off the battery. It hadn't taken in enough of a charge to re-start the engine, yet there was no way we could bump start it, so thick was the sand.

There was nothing for

it but to wait, conserving our energy and sanity. Panic measures in that heat, like walking off to find help, finish only in calamity. Three hours passed before a sweep car appeared, and the surprised crew gave us a jump start from their battery.

Then we laboured on across the most depressing expanse of soft sand I have ever encountered, much of it second gear work that kept the temperature gauge permanently in the red. Total absence of brakes was hardly a problem. Exhausted, we arrived in Timbuktu at midnight, experiencing brief satisfaction at everyone's amazement.

Sealing the hydraulic line to the broken caliper restored braking to three wheels, and we pressed on next morning to slog through another 260 miles. Unable to slow the car all-square, there was little choice but to fly off an unexpected six-foot ledge at 60mph. The Range Rover landed true, but the impact made the chassis engine mounts concave and sheered one of the Metalastics.

Luckily for us, a French competitor had earlier gone a real box of tricks in his Range Rover. From its already dismembered components, I was able to select a caliper and Metalastics. These were fitted overnight by two brothers, en route for East Africa, while we snatched five hours kip. We were back in the hunt.



Above: Flat-out at 100 mph as the Saharan dusk rushes up from the east. Endless dust trails mark the presence of competitors ahead

The 850-mile transport section that followed was as demanding as any special stage. We had three punctured tyres repaired and a bent rim smashed back into shape – the repair man darned the rents in the tubes with needle and cotton before sticking on the patches.

Sixty miles out from the end of the section, two bullocks rushed out of the night into our a path. They were killed immediately – in a lower car, we might have been too. But we kept going, with all-too-frequent stops to refill the now leaking radiator, later repaired quickly by another village blacksmith.

At Bamako, the Malian capital, after 16 days of DIY-in-the-dust, we

found a large workshop given over to rally servicing. A man in a white coat waved me over a pit and allocated a mechanic. Worried by the impact of that accident on the steering drop arm ball-joint, I asked if they had a replacement. It was produced, but we didn't realise, until too late, that the splines were different for left and right-hand-drive models.

The old arm had been smashed irredeemably by a Mohammed Ali-size mechanic in his efforts to remove it. So they attempted to re-work the splines on the new arm with a hacksaw blade and file. Despite my anger, they worked on doggedly, and the car was back on the road at 5am. We got to

Dakar – they guaranteed it.

Two days later, that repair failed, and we knocked over the biggest thorn tree in the world. We had little choice but to load the car and ourselves onto a goods train for a 60-hour journey to the coast. It was hard to take, just 400 miles from the finish and with all but 90 of 3,000 special stage miles behind us.

Next year it would be different. With the benefit of that first experience, we would try harder, do better. Luckily, others agreed, preparation of a Range Rover was set in hand, and Grand Prix driver-turned-journalist John Miles was persuaded to share the ride.

Word was that the earlier-Sahara-stages had been “too easy”, and they had been revised to make the event tougher, longer. Success in this objective was devastating for many.

Special stage mileage was increased to 3,400, about eight times that of Britain's Lombard RAC Rally; it included a second stage in France, and was re-routed to cover much nastier parts of the Sahara.

The entry increased by one third: 114 motorcycles (running in a “separate” but simultaneous event); 170 cars (mainly 4WD); 15 heavy trucks (competing in a class of their own, but really there to provide support for the richer teams).

Sharing the driving, day-on/day-off, we put the Range Rover into

19th place overall, leading our class, for the restart across the desert.

Those first three days in Africa went reasonably well for us. Despite three blow-outs and a broken front damper turret on the 1,300-mile run to Tamanrasset, we moved up three places and retained the class lead, one third of the rally distance covered.

With three tyres and a wheel destroyed, we were fortunate that a trading post in Tamanrasset stocked Pirelli truck tyres in a size that fitted our remaining spare wheel.

We were going to depend on them.

The next 800 miles to Gao, half-way mark, were real killers. Only 88 of 170 cars got there. We had three more flat tyres, embarrassing in the desert when you have only two spares. The sidewalls of our original Michelins were being slashed through by sharp stones. Two blew out simultaneously. By accident or design, the mechanic who had fitted one of the Pirellis left a six-inch nail inside – no wonder the thing went flat within minutes.

Another driver stopped to help, running his Land Cruiser back and forth across the tyre to break the bead so we could get at the tube and repair it.

Next day, we bought two more of the rugged Pirellis, and were really glad of them when the remaining pair of Michelins punctured again. To cap it all, the second damper turret

fractured, and we had to bodge a repair with large washers.

Each of those two days' runs took us 15 hours, much of them in the black of night, guided largely by instinct and the compass. During that desperate bid to remain among the classified runners, we saw our position slide from 16th to 62nd. It was no consolation to realise that, but for that lost time, we could have been well up, for we had the pace.

I can't speak for other competitors, but I can put my hand on my heart and say I have only once been frightened on the Rallye

Paris-Dakar. It was not the prospect of driving "blind" at night across 200 miles of open desert; it was not being stranded without electrics or tyres; it was not hallucinating with fatigue as I threw the Range Rover between thorn trees, eerily stark in the lights, trying not to break that fragile turret repair.

It was in Gao where we decided the only way to do the job properly was to take out that damper turret. This meant getting the blacksmith to knock up a couple of clamps with which to compress the road spring. Standing in the pit, my head in the

wheel-arch and face to face with the potentially-explosive spring and clamps was not the most tranquil of moments. Imagine – if all that pent-up energy were unleashed in a confined space.

Fortunately for me but not John, he was the only "industrial accident" of our attempt, slipping into that pit and wrecking his ankle. For the remaining 10 days, it was so sore he couldn't drive much; but sitting in the "shotgun" seat was almost as painful. What's more, he didn't give a lot for anyone's chances of finishing – if the second half was as rough as the first.

It was. But we soldiered on, giving a fair account of ourselves and conserving the car. As 46 more dropped out of the running, so we clambered up again to finish 27th among an exhausted but happy 42, led home by Rene Metge's BL France-entered Walkinshaw-prepared Range Rover. Soap and sea water aren't a great combination, but the "bath" I took when we arrived by the Atlantic Ocean was the best yet. I can't wait to try again – in the same car.

CCC, September 1982

It didn't fall over

DURING a visit to Solihull in 1970, I was driven round the test track in the new Range Rover - a handsome and innovative beast devised by Spen King and his team, it was to endure for 26 years. But, at the time of its introduction, most people's experience of 4x4s was limited to utilitarian boneshakers such as cart-sprung Land Rovers and the odd Jeep, laden with Jack Russell terriers or sheep and sacks of grain.

After a couple of laps on the tarmac, my host turned smartly off across a field. Pretty startling, especially because if anything he drove even faster. Amazingly, the suspension simply mopped up the ruts, and the device didn't fall over.

Little did I dream that, 10 years later, I would drive a Range Rover in my first Paris-Dakar Rally - with my old mate Anne Hope, publisher of VE. 'We'll never be the same again,' she said. Thus began an all-consuming, expensive obsession that continued into the 1990s.

If I learnt anything amid the dunes and wide horizons of the Sahara, it was just how many adrenalin-fuelled liberties one could take with a Range Rover - attaining myriad crazy angles at speed, without parking the thing on its roof.

Much the hardest part was marshalling the necessary hardware and money - these days, they call this sponsorship marketing. Getting the car built to



any kind of standard in double-quick time was a bit easier. And competing in the rally itself seemed like kid's stuff by comparison.

These efforts relied hugely on the goodwill and behind-the-scenes support of key people with the gumption to see the point. In turn, their capacity to abet these ventures mirrored the ups and downs of Land Rover Ltd, then a division of BL.

The task became progressively more difficult

as the company began its cultural shift towards shag-pile carpets and walnut door cappings, appealing more to urban buyers, an astonishing number of whom apparently seemed unaware they had four-wheel drive. So associations with mud, sand, dust and greasy motor sporting hooligans came to be disdained as outré. It was a bumpy ride. Say no more.

**by Anthony Howard
for *Vehicle Engineer***



Dakar, the capital and port of Senegal, stands on Cap Vert, the western-most point of Africa. British Caledonian can fly you there in comfort and safety from Gatwick in just under six hours. But there are always some people who have to do things the difficult way. One of them is Tony Howard the only Briton to have driven twice in the Rallye Paris-Dakar, the world's toughest annual motoring event. He plans to do it again in January. But even he doesn't quite understand why...

WHEN the British Prime Minister's son Mark Thatcher got lost in the Sahara, and his father called the rally organisers "a bunch of cowboys", my friends smiled knowingly.

I thought: "There but for the grace of God..." For the Tanezrouft ta-nahenet (desert within a desert), where that much misunderstood incident happened, is an awesome place to be entered only with the greatest of respect.

The only route across it is a piste interdite (forbidden trail), often kilometres wide and wandering through vast areas of shifting sands

that alternate with equally-barren, rock-strewn landscapes.

Here, and throughout the rest of the 6,000-mile (10,000km) Rallye Paris-Dakar, the challenge to competitors means more than just avoiding the many snares of this hot waterless region.

This particular section, 340 miles (540km) from Tamanrasset in southern Algeria to Timeiaoune near the Mali frontier, was a 'special stage', on which we all raced flat-out - against the clock and each other. The lucky ones got through in six or seven hours; many had to battle with

mechanical trouble, cloying sand and fatigue for 15 hours or more; others faced the lonely despair of failure.

This was where disaster taunted us with a challenge to give up. For the first third of the rally we had led our class, moving up steadily.

I had felt pretty smug about how well we were pacing ourselves to conserve the Range Rover yet stay among the front-runners.

The smile had started to disappear the day before as we bucked across corrugations so severe that the wheels were hardly ever in contact with the ground. In

all that noise, dust and confusion, I began to suspect that a tyre had gone flat.

By the time I could stop the car, it was too late - the wheel was square and all that remained of the tyre were smouldering shreds.

Replacing it left us with two spares that soon had to be used when more tyres were slashed by razor-sharp stones. Now we were faced with the daunting prospect of driving across hundreds of miles of open desert with no tyres in reserve.

However, we made it to the finish of this stage

Captions: Howard in the driving seat (far left) on the rugged trail away from Timbuktu. Intense concentration and effort are demanded for 15 or more hours at a stretch.

Rally driver's eye view (top) of one of the Sahara's ever-changing vistas - the Tanezrouft.

The Tony Howard and John Miles Range Rover (centre left) goes through its paces on the first special stage near Orléans in France

Main photo: Associated Press

in reasonable time. But this satisfaction was short-lived. The remaining 90 miles (140km) to Tamanrasset were along a tarmac road so badly pock-marked that its deep potholes were unavoidable.

Next thing we knew, a front shock absorber mount succumbed to the relentless pounding it had endured.

We were in trouble. Without all shock absorbers working properly, the car would be uncontrollable at speed. And, no matter what the price this far from 'civilisation', we had to have more tyres if we were to continue with any chance of success.

To our amazement and relief, we found a pair of suitable rugged Pirellis among piles stacked on the sand beside some petrol pumps.

Next day, after some frantic welding in the freezing dawn, the shock absorber mount was repaired just in time for us to depart on schedule.

It was a good feeling, but not for long. Two more tyres soon went and one of the replacements was flat within minutes. We were sunk - with only three inflated tyres, our rally was over.

For, in that intense heat, our efforts to remove tyre from wheel to replace the tube were quickly exhausted. Precious time ticked away until the driver of a Land Cruiser stopped - he drove back and forth across that stubborn tyre until it came off the rim. Inside was a six-inch (15m) nail.

When, hours later, we had re-inflated it with a hand pump, the day's adventure was only just beginning. Taking a compass bearing from Silet, a tiny settlement, we picked up the trail towards a mountain range where, promised the route notes, a gap would open into more desert.

In the hours that it took us to reach that gap, one of the most important rules of desert rallying was re-affirmed.

It is that you must have faith in your own instincts about which way to go, and not be confused by the doubts of others. As we followed the trail, it was matching the route notes nicely - until we encountered six back-markers coming back.

This was the wrong way, they advised, gesturing towards our left. Thrown off the scent, we followed their lead into a cul-de-sac, hemmed in by vast dunes. Here we joined dozens of other

vehicles, milling around in the axle-deep sand, desperate to find a way out and not daring to stop for fear of getting stuck fast.

"Let's get the hell out of here," I yelled to co-driver John Miles. There was nothing for it but to return to square one to replenish our 280-litre petrol tanks, in preparation for the Big Push.

Determined to make up lost ground, I took advantage of the smooth-going next morning, and merrily flew past a succession of other cars. With 470 miles (740km) to go that day, we might even regain our earlier placing. But smooth gave way to rough with a sickening crash that smashed another shock absorber mount.

Despair came near as we toiled to complete a repair; for hundreds of miles we were on tenterhooks, waiting for the next crunch that would shatter the mount for good. Instead, two more tyres gave up, and now we had only four Pirellis to rely on.

Having come this far, no way were we going to give in. For hour after hour, I drove as hard as I dare, yet striving for fingertip accuracy for fear of another breakage or puncture.

Towards the end of those 14½ hours of intense effort and concentration, I was so weary that I began seeing things that were not there - I vividly recall a large thorn tree assuming the appearance of a neon sign in New York's

Times Square.

And so we came to Gao, the rally's mid-point, in northern Mali. Those three days had all but put paid to our chances so many times, dropping us from 16th to 62nd position in the process. But we were among the lucky ones.

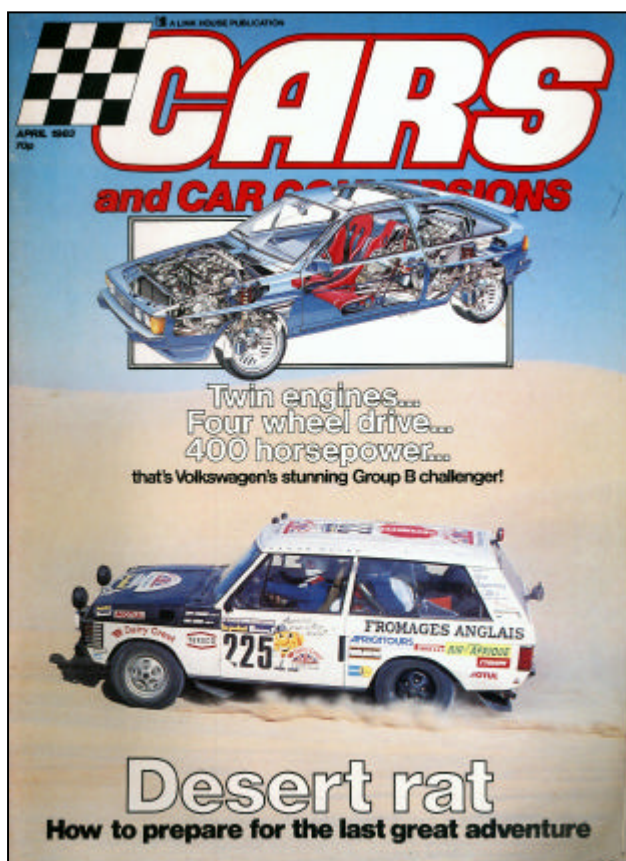
Only half the 170 starters survived this far, and the rally had only run eight of its 20 days.

The subsequent 3,000 mile (5,000km) sweep around West Africa eliminated many more, smashing machinery and crushing all but the most indomitable of spirits. And there is the challenge - to be among the happy few still trying hard at the finish. It was what, mysteriously, gave us the resources to fight our way back to 27th place among the 42 finishers in Dakar.

The first delicious swim in the balmy Atlantic somehow made all the danger, filth and fatigue really worthwhile. There are many easier ways to go bathing, but they are nothing like as satisfying.

Let's Go - British Caledonian in-flight magazine, 1982





Our man in the Sahara with the teapot and the bowler hat is Tony Howard, who, almost recovered from his latest Paris/Dakar adventure, (it was won by the little known Jackie Ickx for Mercedes) divulges the secrets of how to survive the Sahara

THE WORLD is upside down. Yesterday, for the first time in nearly two months, I went to an English pub for a Sunday lunchtime pint. The cosy claustrophobia almost blew my mind with a sledge-hammer blow of culture shock.

Today it is snowing outside, laying a dreary patina on London's streets as I force myself back into the sedentary discipline of the writer - strong coffee and a large ashtray close to hand.

Yet I'm fit, suntanned and bright-eyed -for how long? - after three physically and mentally demanding months, preparing for and competing in the Paris-Dakar Rally. It's the

toughest of them all, with an hypnotic grip on the French imagination, though much misunderstood in Britain.

The event takes three weeks to cover more than 6,000 miles, largely across some of the most inhospitable terrain on earth. The lure is, I suppose, that you may overcome all the odds and be among the few who are actually in the running at the finish - only 40 or so cars from among 200 starters achieve that each year. Bitter disappointment awaits the rest, out there in the overwhelming Sahara.

The scope and challenge of the event seem enigmatic enough in that smoke-filled bar with a

fire blazing merrily in the hearth. Even more difficult to explain are 1) why one should even contemplate having a go, and 2) that the easy part begins when you **It's the toughest of them all, with a hypnotic grip on the French imagination...**

are cheered on your way from the start ramp by the assembled multitudes at the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

Putting together a Paris-Dakar entry consists of three phases: a) raising the money; b) preparing the car; and c) going out to the desert and doing the best you can with the package you have been able to create - with more than

a little bit of help from others.

Each phase presents considerable difficulties and satisfactions, demanding non-stop tenacity and imagination.

First, it pays to come to terms with the fact that - even if you are good-looking, urbane, well connected, chock full of driving talent and a sure-fire winner (a thoroughly deserving case, in fact) - it matters hardly a jot. This is not to suggest you set aside your conviction that what you are trying to do is thoroughly worthwhile as a personal challenge. Nor is it to denigrate an ability to switch into the "executive suite mode" - clean

shirt and fingernails - to make your pitch.

Both will help when you set out to persuade a potential sponsor that yours is the team to back. But he is unlikely to do so on the grounds that here is a never-to-be-repeated opportunity to help you push back the frontiers of adventure.

Assuming you get a hearing - and this can take months or even years to achieve - all your audience will want to know is how you will help them sell more widgets in West Africa or gaspers in Germany. This will be assessed in terms of how many people will be smacked between the eyes with the sponsor's message - the likely column inches, television time, the number of people who turn out to watch the event.

Should backing then be forthcoming, do not just grab the money and run to splurge it on your dream rally car. For you now have an important client who has every right to expect his money's worth. And, if you have done your job properly in the first place, he will already be persuaded that he must go for the lion's share of his mileage before your car even turns a wheel in anger.

For, perish the thought, even the best of us can so easily plant the car between the trees or in the biggest hole in the world, never to be mentioned again in reports of the event.

From the moment those signatures go on

the agreement, you are a hired hand, there to play but a small role in a complex marketing process by driving a high-speed advertising hoarding.

The key to getting that far is preparedness to look at all the angles to find a neat "fit" between what you are trying to do and the marketing aims of a backer. It's a matter of coming up with the right ideas at the right time and place.

In the autumn of 1981, I read in Campaign, the advertising trade's weekly paper, that the Milk Marketing Board was initiating a five-year programme to promote British dairy products on the Continent. Through Sponsorship Promotions Ltd - "our name says what we do" - I was already in touch with a French newspaper group, offering direct participation in one of the "hottest sporting stories of the year". The MMB then expressed polite interest, but subsequently said there was not enough time to exploit involvement adequately in an event so close to hand - January, 1982. Could we come back to them later with a proposition for the 1983 rally? You bet.

Meanwhile, spurred by very encouraging noises from France, preparation of the car began. All that was needed now was a board meeting in Paris, any day now, to affirm the sponsorship. Christmas loomed ominously closer. Foul weather and delayed aircraft caused several



postponements of the meeting.

The organisers telexed a rally number and the time and date that the car should be presented at scrutineering - we were in.

On Boxing Day, we finished work on the car, still hoping for that second vital call from France. None came - the rally left without us, our only consolation being a letter of abject apology for indecision. That arrived on January 5.

It is at times like this that the phenomenon, known as the Credibility Gap, comes into play. Onlookers think: "So he was bullshitting after all." And you feel bruised, wistfully regretting all the wine, women and song you have foregone, not to mention the lucrative best-sellers you could

have written.

But the heritage that gave us the stiff upper lip also provided the immortal lines: "T'is a lesson you should heed/ Try, try again/ If at first you don't succeed/ Try, try again."

Thus fortified, we were to return once more to the Milk Marketing Board with the proposition that British participation in one of the year's great sporting spectacles was bound to turn a lot of French heads. After consultation with the French distributor of Dairy Crest Fromages Anglais, it was agreed. The race was on to a) push out the promotional boat for Dairy Crest, the MMB's commercial arm, b) build the best possible car in the time available. Not including weekends and the Christmas holiday, we



had 35 days before scrutineering. First priority was to have the car painted white, a colour more suited to dairy products, and signwritten. As a way of getting the publicity ball rolling, I had suggested competing in that famous "race" to bring home the first of the Beaujolais Nouveau, taking Miss Dairy Crest along as co-driver.

No such luck. The idea was turned on its head, rather neatly I thought. Instead, I was to run my own single-handed "un-Beaujolais Race" from London to Paris, bearing gifts of Stilton and English wine to be handed over to the Misses Dairy Crest at an opening of the international food fair.

During this assignment and subsequent visits to France the magic was

unmistakeable. Every time we parked the Range Rover a crowd would gather - housewives, school children, businessmen, tourists, all intrigued with the car and the evidence that Les Anglaises actually made cheese too. One shopkeeper we visited was so enthused that he thrust a bottle of vintage champagne into my hand "for you to celebrate with in Dakar".

This was living. But there was also more serious work to be done. For a Paris-Dakar car cannot be prepared overnight, following a sketchy briefing. Attention to the minutest detail is essential and, if the people building the car have not experienced the event itself, they cannot be expected to understand fully the extent of the bashing a

car will have to sustain.

With the advice of Peter Armel, Land Rover Ltd's engine development expert, we settled on a set of options to give us the right balance between power and reliability. Low compression - 8.25:1 - is a must. For, while good petrol is obtainable until you pass south of Algeria, quality is dubious thereafter.

In place of the Range Rover's standard Zenith-Stromberg CD carburetors, we substituted SU HIFs from the SD1 saloon, the benefit being a 25 per cent greater throat area. Other fans of the Buick or Rover V8 suggested much more exotic forms of aspiration, such as four Webers or a Holley. But, out in the desert, the devil you know is always preferable.

Choosing a camshaft for this sort of event is tricky. Anything too wild can leave you embarrassingly short of bottom-end performance which is essential when slogging through really soft sand. Accordingly, we fitted BL Motorsport's WL9 camshaft, for which amazing claims are made - in an otherwise unchanged SD1 V8, it is said to raise the power to 193-197bhp. In the event, the WL9 proved to have magical properties.

When I went to Janspeed to collect the cylinder heads, I was in two minds about fitting them to the engine - so beautiful were they to behold that they merited a place on a mantle-piece. They were highly

... but he is unlikely to do so on the grounds that here is a never-to-be repeated opportunity to help you push back the frontiers of adventure...

polished with matched ports and Rover Vitesse-profile valves, and had been machined to accommodate the special springs and caps that go with the WL9.

A pair of Janspeed fabricated exhaust manifolds feeding into a single big bore pipe completed the system.

The great debate between Janspeed's Jan Odor and myself as to where the silencer should go will no doubt continue ad infinitum. Jan insists the optimum position is at the very end of the system but, in Paris-Dakar terms, it's vulnerable there.

After thumping it hard on two events, we shall have to sacrifice a few horses and re-position it out of harm's way, closer to the centre of the car.

Cooling is a problem because of the wide range of ambient temperatures encountered. In January, it freezes not only in France, but also at night in the Sahara. Yet daytime desert temperatures soar past 95 degrees Fahrenheit, making heavy demands on the system, particularly when soft going keeps speed down and revs up. A combination of heavy-duty radiator with high-capacity water pump and engine-driven fan with thermostatic viscous coupling seemed to lick the problem,

aided by a water thermostat set to stay ahead of the game by opening at low temperature.

The philosophy has to be: keep it simple; keep it light; and fit components you understand well enough so that you can bodge a repair in a sandstorm. We thus avoided fancy ignition systems, and stuck with Joe Lucas's original equipment.

Unfortunately, it's not always possible to follow this rule to the letter. The need for an 800km range requires a lot of extra fuel to be carried. In our Range Rover, the 80-litre standard tank is supplemented by 200-litre tank mounted in place of the back seat, which means a fairly complex supply system, at the heart of which is a work of art that would make a modern sculptor proud.

Four Facet Bendix pumps with accompanying Aeroquip hoses and unions are contained in an aluminium case about the size of a shoebox, from which a single feed runs to the engine. A pair of pumps (one is a back-up to be switched in should the other fail) draw from each tank. Changing tanks is simply a matter of flicking switches, and remembering to re-direct the spill-return by means of the valve at the driver's right hand.

A density of around 0.75 kg/litre means that the top tank contains 150 kg (330 lbs) of petrol when full. It is obviously desirable to burn that off first so as

.In the event, the WL9 camshaft proved to have magical properties.,

to improve the vehicle's trim. However, a certain amount of fuel does run back through the pair of pumps which are not in use. So it's necessary to switch to the bottom tank from time to time to de-pressurise it and so avert a fracture that might otherwise occur during a hard landing.

At this, our third Paris-Dakar attempt, we had at last created a fuel system that never missed a beat, seemingly untroubled by vapour-lock, vibration or surge.

If nothing else, tackling an event like this one brings home very forcefully just how dependent the competitor is on the enthusiastic support of a lot of people. Thus he carries with him a considerable responsibility to all those whose efforts have put him on the start line and whose hopes ride with him.

All around, there were people working like trojans-to produce the cylinder heads and camshaft quickly, supply the dampers, tyres, lights and endless other components and then, at Talon Engineering, to bring them all together in the one throaty beast.

Switching on the new fuel system for the first time created a fine cascade of petrol inside the car. Disappointed, the small crowd that had gathered for the start-up ceremony repaired to the pub while I applied a firmer hand with the Aeroquip. By 10pm, we



were cranking up some oil pressure, and she fired first time.

One beauty of this engine is that it's completely without temperament in traffic. Yet it perceptibly gets up on the cam at around 3,000rpm, requiring considerable restraint to avoid falling foul of the Boys in Blue.

A session on Janspeed's rolling road, trying a variety of carburettor needles, soon produced 112bhp at the rear wheels at 4,000 and at 5,000 rpm, equivalent to 220bhp plus at the flywheel.

To keep the car as accelerative as possible, a gearbox with an earlier - 1.123:1 as opposed to the present 0.996:1 - transfer ratio is fitted. With Pirelli WS45 tyres fitted, I have seen 5,500rpm in top on a

level road in still air - I'd better not say where because a calculation indicated almost 112mph. (With a fair wind, marginal help from gravity, and disregard for the engine's longevity, I dare say you could crank it up to 6,000rpm - 122mph - given the space.)

If you were to use that pace all the time in the desert, the car would pretty soon be destroyed. A more important reason for having all that extra horsepower is to be able, so to speak, to aquaplane: across the top of soft sand instead of having to plough through all of it as the less powerful cars do.

Reliable performance is perhaps half the Paris-Dakar battle. The other half lies in making the car durable enough



to be driven at a competitive rate for three weeks over special stages that are as long as 617 km (380 miles), and in being brave enough to keep the weight down by carrying few spare parts.

Previous experience counts for a great deal. Nobody who hasn't been there really believes the accounts of shredded tyres, bent axles, sheared engine mounts and shattered dampers. Much of the evidence lies out there buried by the sands of time.

A priority is to fit check straps to the axles to save the dampers and springs from having to restrain their downward travel every time the car lifts off. This certainly saves the suspension, but it does create other problems. While cornering, an inside wheel is

picked up, losing traction earlier than it would otherwise do. In extremis, this translates into heavy, snatching loads going through both propeller shafts into the small centre differential. Frightful noises and eventual cessation of transmission can result from long days of this kind of abuse. But don't worry - we now reckon to be able to slap in a new diff in about 2½ hours if the heat is on.

Other demon tweaks include welding braces across the undersides of the axles, fitting skid-plates under the differentials, double-skinning the engine brackets, duplicating the Metalastics, and fitting brackets to restrain the rise and fall of the engine.

On the Range Rover,

the only skin panels that are not aluminium are the bonnet and lower tailgate, so there is plenty of cost-effective weight loss to be had from replacing these with glassfibre.

Substituting perspex for glass in the side and rear glazing also has to be the way to go if you're running in one of the "modified" categories.

One of the great fears on this event is that the electrics will give up in some mysterious way after days or weeks of being shaken about. The only answer is to ensure as far as possible that nothing will become disconnected, and arrange things accessibly so that it's easy to check for faults such as blown fuses and dud relays or switches.

No matter how carefully the inner car is prepared, it will all be for nothing without tyres and dampers that can withstand almost unimaginable punishment. On the 1981 Paris-Dakar Rally, John Miles and I had to endure 11 punctures in less than three days. One tyre gave up on corrugations so bad that I did not realise until there was nothing left but a smouldering carcass on a square wheel. Others were ruined by sharp rocks leaving bullet-like holes in the side-walls.

Fate led us to some Pirelli truck tyres at an oasis. Their roadgoing tread pattern meant the car handled like a pig on sand, but the wearisome

wheel changing ceased. This is how we came, after a deal of head-scratching with Pirelli's new European competition tyre co-ordinator, Derek Walters, to fit Cinturato WS45 M+S with an eight-ply rating.

With ice and snow expected in France, a first set was supplied with cold weather compound which wore rather fast during a try-out in mild weather on the rough stones of Bagshot. The important thing was that none of the dreaded punctures occurred - at 70psi, the load rating of the WS45 is 2,150lbs which, multiplied by four, leaves a handsome 3,068lb margin over the standard car's 5,532 gross weight, a figure the rally car undercuts considerably.

The Australian outback is just about - if not actually - the most rugged place on earth, I hear. It was for use there that Bilstein developed a range of gas-filled dampers for 4x4 vehicles. With a pedigree like that, the Bilsteins had to be worth a go. After a very satisfactory initial experience across rough country in Ireland, we decided to use them in the desert.

Set up with four dampers at the rear, two at the front, stiff rising-rate springs, and warmer weather versions of the new Pirellis, the Range Rover was taut, neat and eminently chuckable - magic. Good enough to move up 70 places in one day's blast across the

A more important reason for having all that extra horsepower is to be able, so to speak, to aquaplane across the top of soft sand instead of having to plough through all of it as the less powerful cars do. Nobody who hasn't been there really believes the accounts of shredded tyres, bent axles, sheared engine mounts and shattered dampers. Much of the evidence lies out there, buried by the sands of time...

desert, as it turned out. But there's many a slip ..

Threatened by a family lynching party, I had to give up playing cars to be at home on Christmas day. After lunch, the 'phone rang - my co-driver calling from Paris. A printing dispute threatened to jeopardise his magazine. Could he come to London tomorrow to introduce a replacement to me? Holy Cow! We were due at scrutineering in four days.

One door closes, another slams in your face. But not always. I had decided on a French co-driver in the first place partly in Dairy Crest's interests and also because of the obvious advantages when running in a major French event. It's always a difficult choice - sharing a car for three weeks with someone you know really well can prove a disaster under the physical and mental strains that Paris-Dakar imposes.

At least I had known Etienne four years; he was an experienced Paris-Dakar hand, and wanted to go again. Now I was to be lumbered with a complete stranger. Fat chance I had of finding anyone else with so little time before the off.

No-one likes being

faced with fait accomplis. But my ears pricked up when, here in my study, some pretty searching questions were being asked by this newcomer. For instance, what was my attitude to the black inhabitants of the countries we were about to visit? He couldn't tolerate anyone who wouldn't behave civilly out there.

This Yves Génies was just as concerned as I was about whether we could hit it off. As it turned out, we had so many ideas in common, it was uncanny. But there had to be a couple more heart-stoppers before we could put this to the test.

On the way to Dover to catch a ferry, there was this unfortunate encounter with Kent Constabulary, during which allusions were made to a velocity I would have scarcely believed possible at half throttle.

However, the big prize went to Messrs Sealink. Hardly had the ferry got outside the Dover breakwater than there was a dull thud, the lights went out, the engines cut, and the ship heaved-to like a wounded whale in the swell.

Even the radio telephone was kaput, so there was no way of telling anyone that I



would have to go straight to scrutineering and not to the other rendezvous. When we put the car into parc fermé in the Place de la Concorde that evening, I knew what the man meant who warned against unwinding so far that you come off the spool.

We had even had to argue hard to prevent them slapping the car numbers across Dairy Crest's "Mister Cheese" cartoon character, painstakingly signwritten on the sides. But come New Year's morning, all was smiles as we made our bid for Britain.

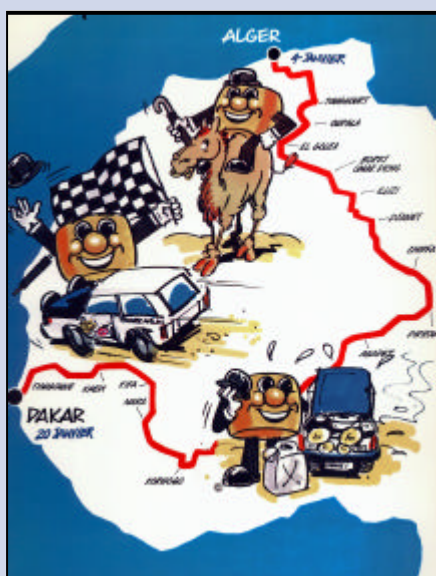
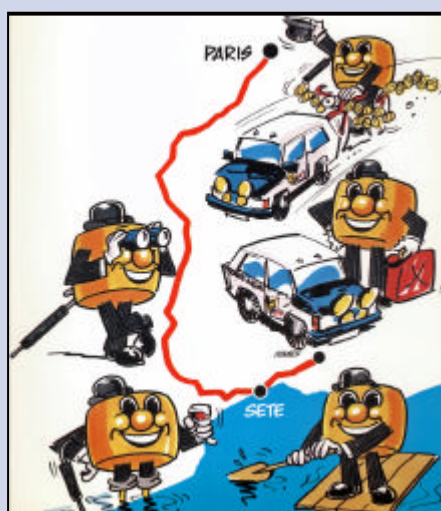
A net crammed with Fromages Anglais balloons adorned the Range Rover's roof. We moved up to take our turn on the start ramp with two trumpeters, Corporal Milner and

Bandsman Barry, from the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment sitting smartly on the tailgate. As our countdown began, they shut the tailgate with military precision and took up station to send us off with a rousing fanfare while the balloons went up.

It was knock-out. "Mister Cheese" had really arrived in France. And the easy part of our rally had begun...

CCC, April 1983







Actualités en plus





THIS very intriguing Range Rover was central to the first all-British entry to complete the formidable Paris-Dakar Rally across the Sahara desert .

In his second attempt on the three-week event in 1981,

class for maybe the first third of the rally before encountering a variety of setbacks with suspension and tyres, not to mention a quite unwarranted 15-hour penalty, later acknowledged as "a mistake" by the organisers.

nalist Yves Génies as co-pilot.

On this occasion, to compensate the Algerian government for the expensive hoo-hah when Mark Thatcher disappeared on the wrong side of a sand dune in 1982, the organisers imposed a surprise 10,000-franc levy per crew member, supposedly to fund the department of forestry's research into desert rescue. Yes, indeed.

Howard and Génies were delighted with the performance and handling of the re-fettled Range Rover, which ran well in the early stages.

However, an oil control ring began breaking up in southern Algeria, causing the engine to pump oil/smoke. As Range Rover V8 pistons "never broke" nobody carried spares.

Had a replacement been available, overnight fitment might very well have propelled the pair



Brief history and provenance

Anthony Howard was partnered by his *Autocar* colleague John Miles, son of actor Bernard, F1 driver for Lotus in 1969-70 and latterly noted as one of the world's finest chassis development engineers.

Sharing the driving day-on-day-off, the pair led the unmodified

Nevertheless, they recovered sufficiently to finish 27th overall – of the original 179 that started from Paris, only 42 cars survived to arrive "in time" at Dakar.

Howard returned with TRW 425R for the 1983 rally. After interviewing half a dozen French candidates, he enlisted TV jour-

onwards to Dakar.

Rather than risk abandoning the car even deeper into the Sahara, Howard reluctantly opted to fight another day by trickling home gently for a repair in Paris.

Registered to Land Rover UK Ltd in May, 1977, TRW 425R began life as a factory development car - first with LHD, then RHD and finally LHD.

The blue two-door body – aluminium skin panels, steel bonnet and tailgate – was later painted white and fitted with a GRP bonnet.

After contesting his first Paris-Dakar, partnered by Anne Hope, in 1980, Anthony Howard approached BL with a view to a second attempt.

The vehicle came as part of a package instigated by David Boole, BL Cars' director of product and international affairs, and sanctioned by Mike Hodgkinson,



Land Rover's managing director, who also sent encouraging telegrams.

TRW 425R was facilitated by John Bilton and George Hassall, managers respectively of product strategy and company vehicles at Lode Lane.

In addition, a budget was found for preparation by Jan Odor's Janspeed Engineering in Salisbury, where Howard delivered the car in early December 1980.

Howard put in his own money, and also found sponsorship in various forms, notably from BP thanks to the persuasive powers of Bernard Miles, mastermind of the Mermaid Theatre at Puddle Dock on the Thames.

Among other ID, the car bore the legend "White Knuckle

provenance:

1 the place of origin or earliest known history, esp. of a work of art, manuscript, etc.

2 origin.

[French from provenir from Latin provenire (as pro-1, venire 'come')]

Oxford Compendium, Concise, Ninth Edition

Tours", inspired by the "White Knuckle Airways" motif stencilled on the radome under an RAF Avro Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft seen at an RAF Abingdon air show.

Preparation

Janspeed's endeavours embraced replacing the Stromberg carburettors with a pair of bigger SU HIFs, a warmer camshaft, cleaning up the cylinder heads and induction manifold while retaining a low compression ratio to cope with poor-quality fuel.

Fabricated large-bore manifolds fed to a straight-through exhaust system.

All ancillaries were to "hot" market specifications, engine mounts were duplicated, and two batteries were installed.



Inside, equipment included a full roll cage, Recaro seats, Luke full harnesses, a rev counter and compass. In place of the rear seat, a fabricated 200-litre additional fuel tank was sited on the platform immediately behind driver and co-driver.

This tank was filled via a quick-release recessed in the roof and feeding into a vertical down-pipe.

Fuel pipework was all Aeroquip, and pressure was maintained by four Facet Bendix pumps, two for the upper and two for the lower standard tank. A valve immediately by the driver's right hand allowed re-direction of fuel spill return to one tank or the other.

Underneath, fabricated guards protected both axle banjos and the lower fuel tank. At the front, a

second steering damper was fitted and the damper turrets were heavy duty.

At the rear an additional pair of dampers was installed – so that each side featured one inclined forward and another inclined aft – and an anti-roll bar was attached via the radius arms.

As required by rally regulations, a pair of blue lights – denoting the unmodified class – was attached to the front right of the roof.

Night-time vision was improved with the addition of Cibie lights, a pair on the front and a pair mounted out of harm's way at either side of the scuttle.

Howard narrowly missed concluding sponsorship for 1982, and remained in London, making jour-





nalistic hay of Mark Thatcher's disappearance in the Sahara.

Re-fettling

Changes to the car for 1983 included new axles and transmission fitted by Land Rover Ltd at Solihull.

Engine upgrades comprised a BL Motorsport WL9 camshaft and Rover Vitesse competition cylinder heads prepared by Janspeed and matched to new fabricated exhaust manifolds. The 112 bhp at 5,000 rpm delivered to the rear wheels on Janspeed's rolling road only hint at the full-time

4WD transmission losses.

Four Facet Bendix pumps and accompanying Aeroquip were re-plumbed to increase resistance to air locks and other feed problems. Additional mounts were installed to better control engine and gearbox movement.

Rising-rate springs and Bilstein gas dampers further stiffened the suspension, and a front anti-roll bar was added, greatly improving directional response.

Narrower-diameter coils were inserted concentrically within the rear springs to better cope with roll and the rear-platform load of fuel, three or four spare wheels, tools and parts.

A pair of catch-straps was fitted to each axle to restrain downward suspension movement and stresses when airborne, and the front damper turrets were reinforced.



All mounted at the front this time, three pairs of Cibiés augmented the 100-Watt headlights.

TRW 425R was re-sprayed white and bore title sponsor Dairy Crest's "Mr Cheese" ID as part of the organisation's strategy to introduce English cheeses – Fromages Anglais – to the French market.

Other additions included Delta Mics lightweight alloy wheels and an alloy guard to protect the steering, front axle and sump, especially during "nose-in" situations.

In his judgement after the £10 million Old Number One racing Bentley court action – at the Royal Courts of Justice, London, 1990 – Mr Justice Otton discussed three criteria for assessing the provenance of a motor car. These are equally applicable to TRW 424R:

1 Historical continuity: substan-



tial documentary, editorial and photographic records.

2. Physical originality: the car has never been cannibalised. Changes over time include engine upgrades, axle and transmission replacements, new suspension components and wheels, and many detail improvements to

enhance durability and reliability. Nevertheless, the body, glass, chassis rails and many other parts are identical to the day the vehicle came off the line.

3. Owner's intent: it has always been Howard's intention that TRW 425R should continue as an entity.

Technical specs

Engine: Rover V8; 3,528cc.

Compression ratio: 8.25:1.

Carburettors: twin SU HIF with BAC needles.

Camshaft: BL Motorsport WL9.

Cylinder heads: Janspeed - gas flowed, polished, inlet and exhaust ports matched to manifolds, Rover Vitesse-profile valves.

Cooling: Middle East specification high-capacity water pump, and fan with temperature actuated viscous coupling; heavy-duty radiator; thermostat set to open at 72 degrees F.

Exhaust system: Janspeed fabricated manifolds into single big-bore pipe with single tail silencer.

Fuel system: Standard tank - 82 litres. Upper tank on load floor - 200 litres.

Feed system: four Facet Bendix pumps; spill return with switch overtap; Aeroquip hosing throughout.

Transmission: Four-speed synchromesh, driving through two-speed transfer box; constant four-wheel-drive with lockable centre differential.

Suspension: front- live axle with two radius arms and Panhard rod; rising rate coil springs; Bilstein gas filled dampers. Rear - live axle with two trailing links and A-bracket; rising rate coil springs; Boge self-levelling unit; four Bilstein gas filled dampers.

Wheels: pressed steel; 6.00 JK X 16; Delta Mics.

Tyres: Pirelli Cinturato WS45 195 R 16 C; eight-ply rating; maximum load at 70psi - 976 kg.

Weights:

Standard two-door Range Rover unladen: 1762 kg, 51/49%.

EEC kerb (inc full 82 litre tank, and driver): 1895 kg, 48/52%.

Standard gross: 2510 kg, 40/60%.

Rally car all-up (inc 282 litres of fuel, two crew, two spare wheels, tools, spare parts): 2421 kg, 43/57%

Power at rear wheels: (front propshaft removed and centre differential locked) - Janspeed rolling road, (20/12/82):

Needle BAF			BBW		BAC	
Revs	BHP	%CO	BHP	%CO	BHP	%CO
2000	47	6.19	48	5.74	38	5.7
3000	82.5	3.55	90	3.41	86	3.4
4000	105	0.80	112	1.81	112	7.62
5000	106	0.42	112	1.72	112	7.71
5500	102	0.66	106	1.77	108	7.18

Performance: (calculated from observed maximum revs of 5,500 with Pirelli WS45 tyres).

First gear: 27.4 mph; second gear: 45.6mph; third gear: 74.2mph; top gear: 111.7mph. Top gear mph/1,000 rpm: 20.31.



- A fever that sweeps all across France.
- Cursing as you watch fine jets of petrol squirting from all the Aeroquip joints the first time you switch on your carefully assembled four-pump system.
- Working on last-minute tweaks to the car until past midnight on Boxing Day.
- Being pinched for speeding by an unsympathetic policeman on the M2, missing your ferry, then boarding another one that has an engine room explosion and circles for an hour like a wounded whale off Dover Harbour.
- Discovering an electrical fault that almost starts a fire as you queue for scrutineering.
- Rushing about Paris trying to find a print shop to ring-bind a massive wedge of route notes into manageable day-by-day chapters.
- A sinking feeling on the evening before the start when you realise you can't find the insurance and registration papers-then tearing about Paris with an increasingly unhappy taxi driver, re-tracing yesterday's steps until a beautiful girl at the organisers' office calls you a silly boy and hands back the file with a big smile at 10 pm.
- A farewell New Year dinner party with pea shooters, paper Napoleonic hats and champagne - when the lights go out at midnight, anything goes.
- Making a 'voluntary' contribution to a 'fund for research into desert rescue' in the wake of Mark Thatcher getting lost.
- A minor state of shock at the bill the first time you fill the 300-litre fuel tanks to the brim.
- Grateful surprise when your sponsor's PR consultant does turn up at the start with two bandsmen to blow a fanfare and 500 balloons to release from a net on the roof when you leave the starting ramp-

- and 50,000 people in the Place de la Concorde cheer to the echo, laughing their heads off.
- Being wished 'bonne route et bonne chance' by a World War 1 veteran, dewy-eyed at the thought of the daring adventure ahead. Huge crowds of well-wishers all along the route to the south of France.
- Curiosity at a minor steering vibration at 100 mph, then amazement when the car slumps down on its right-hand corner and you see the wheel bounding away along the autoroute. You're told, if you hadn't braked to stop the car before an accident developed, it might have been unnecessary to change the brake disc! Next you listen, dumbstruck, to suggestions that a possible cause was a rival mechanic loosening the wheel nuts.
- Queuing all night to put the car on the ferry when your colleagues have said they are exhausted and are sleeping their heads off, and wondering how they're going to handle it when the bullshit really stops in the desert.
- The first smell of Africa, dusty and warm.
- Frustration at 'French queuing' and other antics as every competitor simultaneously tries to buy compulsory insurance at a small counter in the Algiers customs building.
- Hilarious, hair-raising taxi rides from the airport as you bargain black-market currency rates with a driver, while he waves his arms, counts money and does almost everything but look at the road.
- A thrilling feeling of anticipation as you reach the top of the Atlas Mountains, and see the first great expanse of Sahara spread out before you.
- Satisfaction that you can find your way and you are on the pace after finishing your first 150-mile desert special stage.

- Oil, sand and sweat matting your hair.

Crashing out exhausted in a sleeping bag thrown down on stony sand, and enjoying a last cigarette with a slug of precious Scotch as you stare up in wonder at the clear, starlit sky.

- Walking across the desert in the chill dawn to a discreet distance from the bivouac to answer the call of Nature.
- Shivering like a refugee as you wait before dawn at the Africatours field kitchen for breakfast-hot chocolate sloshed into your billycan and dry bread smeared with a little honey, sticking to oily, dusty hands.
- The spine-jarring crunch as you come off a 'yump' wrong-footed, and smash a damper mount.
- Driving by fingertips for the next eight hours, wondering if your improvised repair can possibly hold up that long.
- Finding one morning that the results service has mysteriously dropped you from 16th to 140th place, being told to start from there and they'll put it right tomorrow, then successfully fighting your corner so you don't have to battle back through the dust of all those slower cars.
- Destroying tyres in quick succession on razor-sharp, flinty rocks and abandoning smouldering black shreds on three-penny-bit-shaped wheels.
- Wrong-slotting into a cul-de-sac valley surrounded by huge dunes, where 80 other vehicles are milling around in a confusion of fine sand.
- Finding the right way through the mountains in late afternoon, heading into the sunset across 200 miles of open desert, feeling the way through black night with compass and stars, then glimpsing the first wisps of dust and tall lights of cars ahead.
- Getting stuck fast on ruts, baked hard as cement, and lying on your belly to claw the axles free with your bare hands.
- Thirst so dry and dusty that you gulp water by the pint and pop salt tablets to keep a clear head.
- Being overtaken at 100 mph by Jan de Rooy's 1,000 bhp DAF turbo racing truck.
- The roar of a swirling wind that whips up sand so hard it stings your face and rattles on the bodywork.
- The stench inside your crash helmet after driving 500 miles in temperatures soaring into the 90s - a gorilla's armpit has nothing on this.
- Paying £2-plus for a bottle of water.
- The sickening crunch as the rear crown wheel breaks 20 km into the second desert stage; then, 100 km later, the pistol-shot crack of a front half-shaft breaking.
- Discovering how much fun you can have with half a bucket of water and a bar of soap after a week without a proper wash.
- Losing your way in a sandstorm where 50ft visibility makes it impossible to find the right way through the dunes.

- So much dust in your cameras that the shutters sound like pepper mills.
- Being robbed of your chances of winning by car thieves.
- A gust of wind snatching a Kevlar door so fast it snaps off its hinges and hits the ground before your feet.
- Being continually surrounded by children cheerfully demanding pens, stickers, T-shirts, presents.
- Catching AIDS after a motor cycle accident necessitates a blood transfusion.
- Driving for 18 hours a day for three or more days on the trot, then hallucinating for the last 100 miles.
- The click-clack of typewriters - 'like Rhode Island Reds pecking corn' - as journalists squat on the sand pouring forth thousands of words.
- Watching the price of a Heineken rocket from £1.30 to £13 in a night.
- A lullaby of distant generators in the still desert night as service crews work on their charges.
- Losing so much weight and waist-line that your once tight money-belt keeps slipping down round your backside.
- Jean-Marie Balestre calling you "a small-time navigator who is now Bonaparte of the pyramids and Napoleon of the dunes".
- A frightful pong that remains for hours after you hit an errant goat at 100 mph.
- Waiting for your chance to overtake a motorbike that ejects its rider. One goes left, the other right, and you nip between them, stopping immediately.
- The only reason the girl rider wants you to stop is that the machine is too heavy for her to lift on her own.
- Mouth-watering tanned girls who see you off every morning, and are there, fresh as daisies, to greet you, filthy at the end of a long dusty day's battle with the desert.
- Sand so fine you're lucky to get into third gear all day. And, if you have to stop to change a wheel, the car sinks on its jack faster than you can do the job.
- A rude awakening at 3 am when some lunatic decides to test his motor cycle or mis-firing V8 up and down the desert, not 100 yards from where you've been sleeping.
- The acrid smell of the engine pumping hot oil as a piston ring breaks up. And you know in your heart of hearts that another 2,000 miles of this will blow up the engine. You're done for.
- A bloody fool who wrong-slots, then reverses into his own dust just as you are being counted down into the corner. You snatch a glimpse of a shape in the murk, then bang! A blacksmith straightens the steering links, you replace the smashed radiator and battery and, 2½ hours later, you force on.
- Confirming that Timbuktu really does exist. Ear-to-ear grins when you find your car's so good you have moved up 80 places in a day.

- Running with only three brakes for two days, unable to stop before leaping off a 10 ft ridge at 80 mph.
- Knuckles bleeding from honeycomb-shaped wounds as you smash them into the radiator when a spanner slips.
- Your co-driver telling you at the end of the first week that, if it's going to be like this for another 14 days, then there's absolutely no chance of reaching Dakar.
- Having to listen to the photographers' jokes.
- Amazement at how fast camels travel when they run in front of your car.
- Frenchmen telling you Paris-Dakar is so crazy it must/should have been invented by an Englishman.
- Fording wide rivers so deep they almost drown the engine. The far bank is so steep and slippery wet you scarcely dare believe you'll drive up there.
- Air filters so clogged with dust it's a miracle the engine runs at all.
- Knocking over a thorn tree when the steering breaks 350 miles from the finish, and having to accept it really is insane to try to drive there because no welding gear is available.
- Putting the car on a train that takes 72 hours for a journey scheduled to take 27.
- Sitting it out in agony with knee and ankle like footballs after being pitched off the train 24 hours before you reach Dakar.
- Learning that shampoo doesn't work too well in sea water as you gambol gratefully in the Atlantic before that wonderful final stage, blasting down the beach to Dakar.
- Glum journalists sitting around in bars with no alcohol to quench their thirst.
- Flaming sunrises and sunsets.
- Dawn calls to prayer echoing from distant mosques.
- Learning to say no, firmly but politely, to all manner of temptations, often nice but naughty.
- Fleet Street newspapermen who think you're talking from somewhere in Bangladesh, then ask for a number they can call you back at when you've spent four hours queuing in a sweltering aircraft in mid desert, competing with pushy French, Italian and Spanish hacks for a precious share of a single satellite phone.
- An incredible welcome from smiling Senegalese - not everyone's a taxi driver who thinks he's just found another sucker to charge four or five times the regular fare.
- Huge anti-climax when it's all over and everyone gratefully disperses to smart hotels to shower luxuriously, lick their wounds, swim in clear pools, gulp cold beers, eat their heads off and make long slow love....

by Anthony Howard for CCC



"Napoleon of the sand dunes, Bonaparte of the pyramids"

I HAVE ALWAYS rather liked Jean Todt. I went on Paris-Dakar as a journalist - instead of as a driver - several times.

One year I flew in the Peugeot team aircraft with Jean. When we arrived at the episode where Ari Vatanen's (now an MEP) car was "stolen", a great Keystone Cops escapade began.

My sparring partner Mike Calvin from the Torygraph and I were waiting in the midst of a large mob of French media poseurs at Bamako airfield in Mali when rumours began to circulate.

Then I - but apparently nobody else - noticed Jean arrive, consult briefly, then turn on his heel. So I signalled Mike to follow me discretely without alerting anyone else.

As Jean jumped into a car and sped off, we leaped into the back of a battered Peugeot pick-up, saying "Suivez ça voiture la, mon chef" to the driver who happily trod on the gas in hot pursuit.

Clinging on like billy-oh and hurtling and dodging in and out of donkeys, goats, camels, chickens and other vehicles, we eventually came upon the stranded rally car.

Once we had returned to the stage start, the organisers were "désolé", but Ari could

not depart because he was out of time. Jean unclipped the mandatory briefcase stuffed with 500-franc notes, lodged his protest accompanied by a hefty deposit, and away Ari went to elbow his way back to the front through the dust of the 80-odd cars that had started ahead of him.

That afternoon we landed in Mauretania to await developments. A satellite dish was set up, and half a dozen of us sheltered from the blazing heat under an aircraft wing.

Then via a news agency came the first torrent abuse from FIA president Jean-Marie Balestre at the Place de la Concorde.

"Under no circumstances should the Dakar organisers have allowed the competitor Vatanen to re-start in the rally.

"This is against the laws of the FIA, the motor sporting ultimate authority, and I forbid him to continue any further. Who does this Jean Todt think he is?

"Once he was a small-time navigator. Now he finds himself to be a member of the international jet set with an apartment on the Avenue Foch. He is the Napoleon of the sand dunes, the Bonaparte of the pyramids."

To which Jean retorted quick as a flash: "Better to be that than the

Emperor Bokassa of the Place de la Concorde."

Later, while on the final approach to Dakar, part of the landing gear stuck, and we had to go around several times before the crew finally managed to get all three wheels down.

So it was dark when we landed, the airport apron was chock-a-block, and we were parked out on the far side with no transport. There was nothing for it but to heft our gear out of the hold and stagger half a mile to the terminal.

Just as we neared the building a huge six-wheeler fire engine came past and drew up at the steps. A door of the high cab was flung open, and out dropped several large bags, followed by one J Todt. "He didn't get where he is today..." thought I.

So, when Luca Cordero di Montezemolo recruited Jean to step in and sort out Scuderia Ferrari, I knew he was just the man for the job.

Five years ago, I spent a memorable few days in Maranello with my South African chum Allan Trim at the time of the Nürburgring GP.

Rory Byrne - a really nice, quiet-spoken, unassuming fellow - took us on his full personal conducted tour of the Gestione Sportiva, driving us around in a dusty Fiat diesel coupé

of all things, and the *respecto* shown to him everywhere was palpable. "The world's most beguiling toy shop," I called it. The tweaks we saw them working on in the wind tunnel on the Friday afternoon would be on the cars - via satellite - for next morning's first practice.

That evening, we ate supper at a local ristorante - owned by the engine shop manager. "Please come to front of the queue, Signor Byrne, your table is ready." On the Sunday, we had lunch chez Byrne and Or, his delightful Thai wife, then watched the race on TV.

Moments after the finish, the 'phone rang. It was Montezemolo. "Si, Avvocato...thank you very much."

Rory told us that, for several days after the end of his first championship winning season with the team, he needed police protection - from deliriously happy tifosi.

One day, he was called up to Montezemolo's office and asked to sit down. Saying scarcely a word, Montezemolo reached into a drawer for a set of keys and slid them across the desk to Rory, simply saying: "For you."

He has since owned two 360 Modenas and an F430. Now that's *respecto*.

Anthony Howard

Regrouping after the last civilised lunch we were to see for days, we drove 200 miles through the darkening Atlas mountains to Moudjbara on the northern fringe of the Sahara to make our first desert bivouac in freezing cold under an inky star-crammed sky. We queued like prisoners of war or refugees waiting to have our billy-cans filled first with hot soup and then couscous ladled out by chefs from a large 4X4 Renault truck kitted out as a field kitchen and operated by Africatours.

That first desert dawn is quite an experience. Pale blue fingers of light precede an orange fireball over the flat distant horizon, and highlight the golden strata on the red rock of the mountains opposite. Unshaven and stiff with cold and from sleeping on hard ground, members of this odd mobile community slowly came to life, realising the preamble was over and the real adventure now lay ahead. Except for an upward mobility of temperature, this was to be the pattern of our lives for almost three weeks.

Politely, the vulnerable motor cyclists were allowed away first at 30 sec intervals, and then a half-hour gap ensued before the fastest car went off - the theory being that the poor devils on two wheels wouldn't be mowed down and showered in dust and pebbles by those of us sensible enough to have a wheel at each corner.

This was a mere 24-

mile work-out, starting with a tortuous rocky trail between barren hills which suddenly and amazingly opened out to reveal wide open desert across which we sped, taking a choice from many tracks and passing other competitors maybe 1 mile on either side. As was to be the experience for so much of the rest of the way, the going was firm for long stretches, interspersed with glutinously soft sand that gave the impression of water-skiing into treacle, knocking our speed down suddenly from maybe 80 mph to 50 or 60 mph in the winking of an eye.

Back on the tarmac after 75 miles, one was all the more aware of how wide were the horizons because there was less need to concentrate on avoiding ruts and rocks. Stark rock outcrops occasionally broke up the horizon and, once, we passed the cheering crew of an oil rig who had come to the roadside to see us through. The desert was ever present, drifting like snow across the road.

Three days and 800 miles south of Algiers we finally quit the tarmac at Ain Salah, a dusty oasis with palm trees and a mud fortress looking like something out of a Rudolph Valentino movie.

Compass bearing 260, said, the route notes. This was the start of a 175-mile special stage, flat out across open desert to Reggane, another oasis. " For the first kilometres, the track

[illegible]

is hardly visible. The start of the stage is marked with oil drums and old tyres....follow the chain of mountains on the right."

Shimmering dunes of shifting sand rolled out ahead, some looking deceptively easy but in fact steep enough to send the car yumping a little. Then the terrain opened out again, subtly changing to a harder, flatter expanse with sharp rocks hidden in the sand. One of these smashed through the sump shield of the only

other British-crewed car in the event - the Citroen GS of Peter Dalkin and John Washorn. Their rally over, just 70 miles into the stage, they plugged the hole in the sump with Tupperware eventually, and drove home to England.

Rushing across the desert at 90 mph with sand and stones blasting the underside of the Range Rover was something akin to power boating. Wide flat horizons, and an undulating surface to provide the

Range Rover TRW 425R **43**



Ten minutes digging had the sand cleared from ahead of the Howard/Hope Range Rover which then hauled itself free

wave motion.

Far ahead and behind, as well as to either side, high plumes of dust, like smoke screens from destroyers, reassured us we were on course with the "fleet". If we were lost, so were all the others!

Then, with a continuing and extraordinary sense of discovery, we descended a rock escarpment to find the control. The small group of organisers, looking cool as cucumbers in their pale blue overalls, and two of the girls fresh out of bandboxes. We wiped the sweat from our eyes, and remembered flying was so much easier.

Then came four hours' patient queueing while two pe text scan and edit afh 28/07/2012

trol pumps dispensed precious fuel, 60 to 80 gallons at a time. For next morning - seven days out from Paris - came the 400-mile special stage through the Tanezrouft.

More of the same

More of the same recipe, but a much larger helping with daytime temperatures in the 90s

and shimmering mirages all around. To our right, 1,000 miles of empty Sahara between us and the Atlantic. To the left, 3,000 miles across shifting sands to the Red Sea.

Soon the inadequacies of two-wheel drive started to show up. There in a morass of deep sand were four Peugeots and Citroens, sideways, stuck fast, their only hope a tow from a 4X4. It wasn't many days before we'd worked up a snappy drill for hauling out these unfortunates.

On the map, there's a confidently straight line running diagonally to the northwest across the desert. It can mean nothing to the nomads, but for us it was the Algeria-Mali frontier. There, after 5½ to 12 or more hours' hard driving, depending on your luck, you came to Bordj-Moktar, a small outpost, no doubt once sternly manned by the French Foreign Legion.

At Gao, with dusty streets, one petrol pump and a fly-blown hotel where the plumbing had long since ceased to function, we found the

police swishing lengths of knotted rope to keep local children at bay from the square where we parked. After a night's sleep on the hotel verandah, there was half a day to service the cars - strictly do-it-yourself - before taking the ferry across the wide river Niger to start the 1,300-mile westward loop via Timbuktu and back to Gao.

The leaders

At this point, Audi development engineer Freddy Kotulinsky had moved up to the lead in one of the four VW Iltis with a penalty of 15 hr 34 min 40 sec. Three minutes behind was the Sihpar-converted 4X4 Renault 4 of the brothers Marreau whose earlier recce was paying off. Next came Pierro Zaniroli (Iltis), Jean Ragnotti (Iltis), Andre Costa (Citroen CX 2400 GTi), Christian Neveu (Range Rover Turbo) A Kerk (Sinpar Renault 12), Bourgoignie (Range Rover), Christine Dacremont (Lada), J-P Simon (Range Rover). And Rene Metge in the Leyland Marathon led the truck category from two Algerian-built Sonacomes.

The loop took four days and consisted of: the 320-mile Gao-Mopti special stage, a hard slog across cloying sandy bush country and then along rock-strewn mountain trails; a 320-mile transport section from Mopti to Niono, mainly along pock-marked tarmac roads through country dotted with baobab and fever

trees; the 360-miles Niono-Timbuktu special stage, first along fast sand roads alongside canals irrigating miles of sugar cane plantations, then a barren stony plain, then undulating heavy sand, thick with thorn trees; a 270-mile special stage back to Gad, first along the narrow strip of green belt between the River Niger and the Sahara, and then more rolling desert.

After barely a night's sleep in Gao, we were off again with 32 hours allowed for an 820-mile transport section, much of which was indistinguishable from special stage motoring. The road following the Niger was a beauty running along its own embankment to keep it clear of the flood plain, but with frequent fords through which water could rush during the rainy season. Invariably one came up on one at about 80 mph, seeing it at the last second, and scrabbling to a near halt on the loose surface.

Across the frontier in Niger this rock strewn tyre tearer miraculously transformed into a well-graded sand or gravel road with fast sweeping bends through the bush. Suddenly rallying was fun again.

In Upper Volta, crashed trucks were frequent - hardly surprising in view of the pace at which these huge Mercedes-Benz artics were driven along roads, as hard as concrete now and gouged into a crazy patchwork of ruts and potholes.

Next morning, 16 days into the rally and with 1,250 miles to run, we continued the run westwards towards Mali with a 76-mile stage to Kologo, snaking through hill country where the dust hung thick between the trees, making overtaking an activity attempted by only the bravest. The 27 hours allowed for the 420-mile ride from Bobo to Kolokani sounded generous, the idea being to allow a decent rest en route. But many weary crews spent nearly all night in the Malian capital, Bamako, keeping garages busy rebuilding their battered vehicles.

The 185-mile Kolokani-Nioro special stage must have been the most tedious part of the event. A fast gravel road soon degenerated into a grind along narrow tracks between

thorn trees with the temperature at about 120 degrees F.

Of the Nioro-Kayes 155-mile special stage, the route notes warned: "This is the most uneven, eventful section of the rally. It is the most mountainous and the most stony." But it started off deceptively, with a satisfyingly-fast gravel road that was good for morale early in the morning after 20 tough days at the wheel. Interspersing the fast gravel sections were stretches over rocks the size of footballs. After taking a bridge across the ¾-mile wide torrent of the Senegal River - no time to fall for the temptation of a cooling swim - the route meandered westward, fording the River Faleme, on the way to the night halt in Bakel, Senegal.

Day 21 was a 230-mile

section to Linguere. Day 22 was a 120-mile run, with a 55-mile stage, to Lompoul on the coast north of Dakar. After camping by the sea, the final day's route took a 30-mile special stage along the beach towards Dakar, beckoning with clear swimming pools and cold beer.

Of the 86 motor cycles to set out, 25 were classified as finishers, and six arrived out of time. Of the cars, more survived with 30 out of 109 classified as finishing, and 20 arriving out of time. And seven of the 10 heavy trucks got through.

The incredible Cyrile



Darning punctures before sticking on the patches

Neveu won the event outright for the second time on his Yamaha 500 XT. Audi development engineer Freddy Kotulinsky, in a VW Ittis to try out the 4X4 system used in the Audi Quattro, won the car class and took third place overall.

Autocar 15 March 1980



WITH PETROL stations few and far between, probably the first priority in the preparation of our Range Rover was provision of additional fuel capacity.

So the rear seat was taken out and replaced with a 40-gallon tank to supplement the 17½-gallon standard tank.

Dust, sweat and bloody-minded determination

Autocar News Editor Tony Howard and Special Contributor Anne Hope took a Range Rover on the Rallye Oasis. By Tony Howard

Inside, we had a roll cage with foam rubber cladding, compass, map light, fire extinguisher, full-harness seat belts, tool box, spare parts box, and plenty of foam rubber and anchorage straps to keep everything secure over rough going. A pair of green lights on the roof made the car easier to find from the air. The front axle had a shield, bolted under the differential housing, and there were adjustable Koni shock absorbers. A two-tone

air horn, Marchal auxiliary lights and a pair of spare wheels completed the ensemble.

This was our "home" for 23 days, and the need for comforts had to be set against space and weight. So we dispensed with tents and beds, in favour of five 10-litre cans for water.

"We'll never be the same again," I joked at the start, little realising just how true this was. The invitation to compete had conjured a vision of Spike Milligan's

"ragged idiots" wandering, bewildered, around their expired vehicles, lost in a sea of sand. And, all too often, this was what we were to see. Strong men wept with frustration at the seeming impossibility of making further progress through axle-deep sand. And others, cooped up in the confined space of their vehicles for days, got on each others' nerves so much that they just abandoned the rally.

Keeping the vehicle in



Clockwise from top left:

Blasting across the Tanezrouft in southern Algeria;

The Howard/Hope Range Rover being passed by motor cyclists on the Plateau Tademait in the northern Sahara - parking for 3 million cars;

Ferry over the River Niger crossing from Gao

Sunset over El Golea, oasis in the northern Sahara;

Taking on 50 gallons of petrol, hand-pumped from Timbuktu's only petrol pump

shape was, for most, very much a do-it-yourself business. So after maybe eight hours of hard driving through dusty desert in 100 degree F temperatures, one faced the prospect of long hours replacing shock absorbers, cleaning clogged air filters, or making repairs.

The hard facts of life lived rough between drives were that water was invariably scarce, and washing was cursory. A bucket of cool water and a bar of soap became the occasion for a joyful half hour frolic that one didn't want to stop. And everything we possessed was brown with dust - hotels with showers and swimming pools were forgotten dreams.

With all this came a change in values, the satisfying realisation that one could survive and compete under these conditions, and an increasingly-bloody-minded determination to finish.

Much of rallying is about ifs and buts and optimism. And our rally, crammed with incident as it was, became a severe test of our British phlegm. This we retained by getting into a routine of letting off steam with a short, sharp row, maybe once a day, after which we got back to working on our mutual objective. And six weeks after it was all over, we're still talking.

The partnership shook down well in the first few days. The car ran sweetly, the stowage

was secure, and Anne quickly became adroit with her evening translations of the following day's route notes while I serviced the car.

Power loss

We re-started in Algeria, 21st in the car category as a result of the special stage in France, and hopeful of holding our own. But a mystery power loss that was to dog us throughout the rally came to light on the first desert stage. The car would start the stages like a bird, and we'd overtake as many as 25 other vehicles in 40 or 50 miles before the engine went flat. And we lost hours going slow or stopped trying to trace the fault.

After 10 minutes with the engine stopped, it would re-start and give full power for maybe another 100 miles before disappearing as mysteriously as it had returned. Changing all sorts of things like the coil and points, cleaning carburettors and re-routing tank breathers were to little avail.

After four days of this, I yanked out the choke in desperation and this cleared the problem for quite a lot of the time. And thus we ran on full choke for nearly 4,000 miles.

On the Gao-Mopti stage we ran the last 45 miles with no brakes, but managed 15th fastest time while 26 competitors were out of time. A rock had sheared the hydraulic line at the junction on the left rear brake

caliper. And we were guided to a back-street garage where a mechanic, working with worn-out tools, brazed on a length of pipe with nipple from a crashed Land Rover. A repair that went the distance.

When our turn came to start the Niono-Timbuktu stage, we had recovered to 27th place after dropping to 40th at Gao. With that choke out, we were managing enough pace to put on a good show, and our morale was up.

But not for long. Our plan to make up a few more places that day was thwarted after 35 miles. We had passed 12 cars as we approached what the route notes warned was a sharp left over a hump-back bridge crossing a canal. Dust hung thick over the corner as I turned into it. Then wham. The driver ahead had over-shot the corner, and was reversing back on to the stage and into his own dust.

Our damage: battery and radiator crushed; track rod and steering slave arm contorted; both steering dampers destroyed; right-hand front wheel scrapped and brake caliper fractured. But we were running again in two hours with the help of villagers and two mechanics from BL France. We got a new radiator, slave arm and lightweight Varley battery from the Leyland Marathon. A local blacksmith straightened the track rod.

But, 30 miles later, we were halted for another

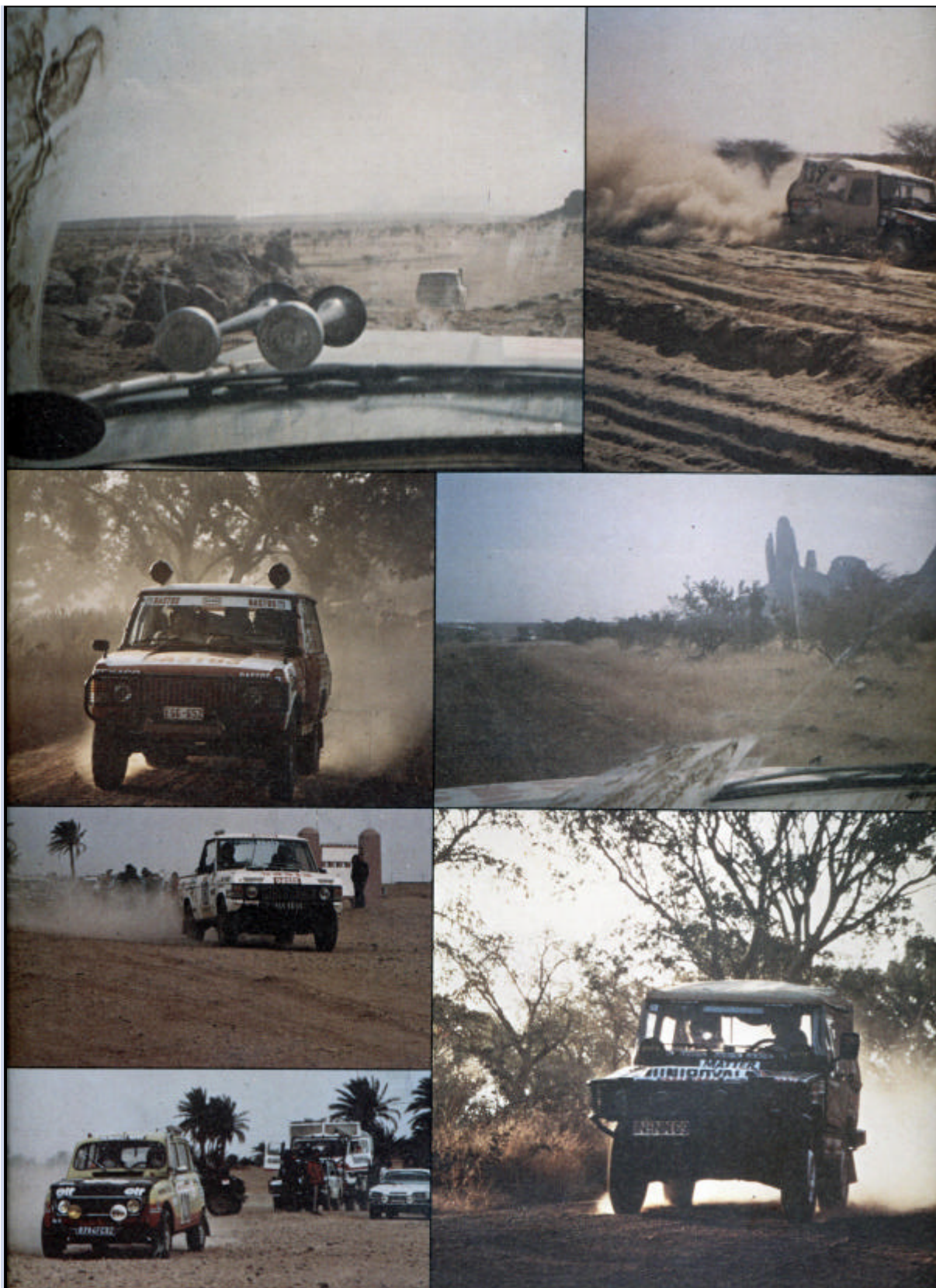
four hours. The earth lead, secured to the terminal post by being clamped between two washers, fell off. When I'd opened up the pleating and jammed it over the post, I found the battery hadn't yet taken on enough charge to re-start the engine. And the sand was too thick for the two of us to bump-start the car. We had to sweat it out until an organisers' sweep car came through, and we took a jump start from its battery.

We drove the remaining 300 miles to Timbuktu with no brakes across depressingly deep, seemingly endless sand, and arrived, much to everyone's surprise, at midnight.

Removing the broken caliper next morning meant I could make a jury-rig with three brakes which made driving very interesting. Especially when we crested a sand dune at 60 mph and found a "super-yump" - a 6ft ledge off which we leaped. Had I used the three-wheel brakes, we would have gone off sideways and rolled conclusively, but we landed straight and broke only the rubber in an engine mount.

We bought a brake caliper from a crashed Range Rover that night in Gao, and another team gave us an engine mount. So, by morning, with the help of two English brothers motor-ing through to East Africa, we were back in the hunt.

Repairs en route include having a crack in



Clockwise from top left:

Over sparse bush country on the stage to Mopti;

the Gumpert/Eder VW Ittis kicks up a bow-wave of dust;

Mont Hombori - helpful landmark on the trail to Timbuktu;

Freddy Kotulinsky's winning VW Ittis;

The Marreau brothers who finished third in the car class

with their Sinpar converted 4x4 Renault 4;

The Christian Neveu Range Rover Turbo starts the special stage from Am Salari;

Ladies' Prize winner Christine Beckers sets off at dawn from Kolokani with her lightweight Range Rover

Pictures by Anne Hope and Tony Howard

the radiator brazed up, and three punctures repaired by a man who darned gashes in the inner tubes with needle and thread before sticking on the patches.

In Bamako, the Malian capital, the Land Rover agent was pulling out all the stops help competitors, but this eagerness to please was ironically to be our undoing.

While all the oil filters were being changed, I checked the underside of the car and found the steering drop arm ball joint had also succumbed to the accident. To my delight the produced a replacement drop arm from the stores, but they didn't have the right puller to remove the old one. So a mechanic the size of

Muhammad Ali got to work with hammer and chisel.

Fighting on

Despite my pleas that he and the workshop director forget it and tighten up the nut, they finally succeeded in removing the drop arm and destroyed it the process. But, when they offered up the replacement, it had the wrong splines.

Undaunted, they set to with a hacksaw blade and file to re-work the splines to fit, and eventually succeeded in jamming the new drop arm on the steering box spindle. And, at 5 am, I took a test drive around the town, sceptical but at least will a tenuous chance of still finishing.

That hope lasted

another three days.

Halfway through the Nioro-Kayes stage, we came over a yump and, as we landed, I turned the wheel to follow the road to the right. But there was no steering response and we knocked over a huge thorn tree that enveloped the car. Once had extricated the car everything still worked, except those drop arm splines. We had a little lock to the left and hardly any to the right. So there was nothing for but to teeter to the end of the stage, our rally over with all but 85 miles of special stages behind us and only three days and 500 miles to the finish.

With no chance of getting a replacement drop-

arm we had load the car aboard a goods train for the nastiest railway ride of a lifetime - 400 miles in 62 hours, unable to wash and living off tinned beans and hot Coca Cola.

Rallying certainly is full of ifs and buts. If it hadn't been for over-eager steering repair, I'm convinced we'd have gone distance. If a fool hadn't reversed into his own dust, we might have finished strongly. But, nevertheless, we were well pleased with getting as far we did. And, addictive as the Rallye Oasis is, we're look forward to trying again in 1981, very much wiser than we were before.

Autocar 15 March 1980

Teddy is ready to launch a Dakar crusade

By CHRISTOPHER HILTON, DAILY EXPRESS, Friday December 19 1986

TED TOLEMAN stood in that most English of places - Savile Row - and said: "Now we're ready to tackle the Paris-Dakar rally." His bid is being supported by the Daily Express and our famous Crusader symbol will be on his Range Rover. Yesterday Toleman had the Range Rover in London parked outside another of his supporters, the tailors Gleves and Hawkes. They have presented him with a replica of the consul's cap they made for the explorer Livingstone when he went to darkest Africa over a century ago. And yesterday they gave him a wicker bas-

ket - they call it a survival kit - containing, among other things, strong drink and a tin of Fortnum and Mason's thick oxtail soup. It was all terribly British, but it didn't obscure the main purpose: to mount a serious assault on one of the world's toughest events, starting south of Paris on January 1 and spanning some 9,000 miles.

"The vehicle has been completed, we've been

testing it. All systems are go," Toleman said.



DRIVING AMBITION Ted Toleman, Barry Lee, Tony Howard and Robert Gieve, head of the family tailoring firm who presented Ted with a consul's cap as made for African explorer David Livingstone

An aptitude to enrage, yet capable of awesome generosity

Anne Hope suffered a heart attack while on holiday in Tenerife with her husband Tom Smith. She died on June 20, 2012 at the age of 80. Anthony Howard pays tribute....

AFTER we first met in the mid-1960s, Anne and I dove in and out of each other's lives down the decades, as one does.

Enterprising and energetic, she had an aptitude to enrage one to the extent of wanting to klop her with a shovel at one extreme and at the other was capable of acts of awesome generosity. Nowhere was this writ larger than during my first foray across the Sahara with her in 1980. By this time, I was news editor of *Autocar* after some years getting African dust up my nose, and she was one of our stringers, persistently feeding stories to me.

One morning she rang, and the conversation went something like this: "Fancy a drive across the Sahara?" "Oh, er, right-oh," said I. And next thing you know, we were at a very swanky party in Paris, seemingly attended by everybody who was anybody.

The Widow Cliquot flowed generously at my optimum rate, exotic bands played toe-tapping music, bare breast-fed African maidens swayed in harmony, and delicious Maghreb snacks were served.

Along one wall, the mainsail from Eric Tabarley's ocean racing yacht Pen Duick was

draped across an echelon of Range Rovers, waiting to be unveiled. Even that early in Paris-Dakar's history, one sensed that the winning vehicle would instantly become the bolide of choice among the smart people on the Champs-Élysées, or Elysian - celestial - Fields as simpletons like me sometimes say.

Anne and I returned to Paris after Christmas, accompanied by Marcus and Claire, and were entertained royally by Leyland France PR director Humbert Carcel, the canny hand behind our involvement. Humbert and I also found time for a bit of fancy footwork to complete preparation and equipment of the Range Rover allocated to Anne and me.

Nursing gentle hangovers on New Year's morning, we set off on *le grand adventure*. A month later, Claire told me she and Marcus hadn't a prayer of seeing us strut our stuff through the first special stage near Orléans as, to the exclusion of all else, their hosts were so intent on a decent lunch.

Next thing we knew, we were bivouacked high in the Atlas mountains, teeth-chatteringly chilly. After queuing through the night for 300 litres of go-juice to be hand-pumped into our

tanks, we found a brisk pace and Anne's navigational bent became apparent.

However, we were periodically thwarted by a mysterious decline in power, which would revive after we had been at a standstill for 10-15 minutes, allowing us to re-pass many who had overtaken us while stationary.

Months or even years later, the diagnosis emerged that the cause was fuel pump suction clustering fine sand around the conical micro filter on the pick-up in the tank.

After Timbuktu, a competitor ahead wrong-slotted and reversed into his own dust cloud just as we arrived at the corner. Want to be xenophobic? Then go ahead and say it could only have been a Belgian.

Jury-rigging repairs, we pressed on with only a small Varley battery strapped in place of the shattered original, no fan and no front brakes, which made the next three days quite interesting. But, all through this, Anne sat cheerfully egging me on.

Eventually, the steering failed as a result of well-meaning repairs at a workshop in Bamako.

Cresting a yump, I steered into a corner, and then we sat helpless as the car keranged straight on into a tree

with a dreadful shriek of thorns across bodywork.

Thus we completed our run to Dakar sitting in the Range Rover, itself lashed onto a flat-bed rail freight truck. During the 70-hour journey, I was pitched off the truck onto the track, and had to sit immobile for two days in some pain with knee and ankle the size of footballs. That was another of my nine lives gone for a Burton.

When eventually we did arrive exhausted in the early hours and found a small rat-infested hotel, surrounded by pretty tarts offering me a good time, it was Anne who went way beyond the call of duty or friendship by contriving that her invalid driver should unwittingly have the only remaining bed while she slept on a bench.

This was the same Anne who a week earlier had dropped our Range Rover's bonnet (45 kg if I remember rightly) on me, when forgetfully she rushed off to greet a friend while I was in up to my shoulders fettling the engine. She certainly knew how to make an impression.

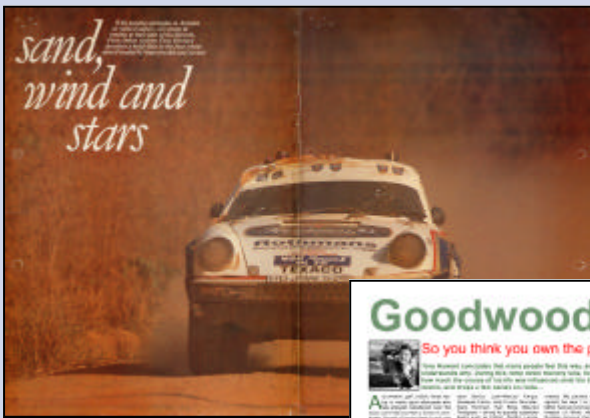
And she wasn't wrong whenever she repeated what became the leitmotif of our little adventure: "We'll never be the same again."

Getting the story out...



Daily Mirror London-Mexico World Cup Rally:
news centre at Holborn Circus

There is always plenty more, for example...



Kyalami,
South Africa



Autocar news desk,
London



Zouïrât,
République
Islamique de
Mauritanie



Labé,
République de Guinée

financial muscle behind such a hare-brained scheme?

Why, the Daily Mirror of course. In those days, it stood like a colossus in its purpose-built Holborn Circus HQ, now hub of the Sainsbury supermarket empire, and its 5 million-odd daily circulation was the world's largest.

Dickson made his pitch, saw his idea deftly appropriated, and found himself confined to the shadows. He later confided to me that he resolved thenceforth to retain firm control over any future bright ideas, for instance his 1974 UDT London-Sahara-Munich World Cup Rally and 1977 Singapore Airlines London-Sydney Rally.

As the complex, highly-politicised worlds of motor sport and the media converged the resulting ego clashes were analogous to the Large Hadron Collider. My good fortune was to be a Mirror foot soldier in the thick of all this, charged with maintaining rally news flow to the 22 countries from which the 106 entrants arrived.

This involved crucial journalist skills such as smoking, drinking and keeping very unsocial hours - long before blackberries, sat-phones, wi-fi laptops, e-mail or digital photography. For I was captive between the varying time zones competitors were in from day to day and the deadlines of British and foreign media as far afield as Argentina, Australia and Thailand - all anxious for stories.

Appropriately, the start was scheduled for Wembley Stadium where Bobby Moore was to dig up a sod of hallowed turf for replanting in the Aztec Stadium. Raymond Baxter, Spitfire pilot and the voice of BBC Television's Tomorrow's World, was signed to give the start line commentary. Then some bright spark decided the event had to be more family friendly, and hired Ginger Baker's Air Force jazz-rock band at huge expense to play a 20-minute gig

at the half-way mark. Nothing was too good for our readers.

After running out of media arm-bands in face of unannounced arrivals from all over the world, I had 100 copies of a grandiosely-worded laissez-passer roneo'd for them. Once the boys in blue detected this misdemeanour, I was twice fired and re-instated, then eventually congratulated heartily.

There was further consternation when Ginger and the boys overran their allotted time, oblivious to frantic signals to cease. They were only just getting into their stride when power to their amplifiers and huge speakers was cut. And one unappreciative competitor called the performance "a frightful racket".

Writing Where they are - day by day for the official programme (price 4 shillings) was pretty exhausting, I quipped to colleagues. So doing the real thing was bound to be a touch arduous. With exquisite understatement, IPC Newspapers chief Edward Pickering remarked: "I understand that the tougher a rally is, the more it pleases competitors. Even as a non-expert, it seems clear to me that the Daily Mirror World Cup Car rally is going to make a lot of competitors extremely happy."

To warm things up, the rally first took a brisk week-long 4,500-mile (7,300 km) tour of 16 European countries, an hour ahead of London. Once in South America, the remaining 11,500-mile (18,690 km) route was three to seven hours behind us, which mostly entailed waiting late into the night for any snippets that could be cobbled into stories and telexed to grateful distant recipients. So I lived just around the corner in the Waldorf Hotel for a month, and sustained my stamina by re-fuelling regularly at the Stab-in-the-Back, where there was a reliable telephone.

Shipping the cars from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro took a couple of

weeks, and just to keep things on the boil the Mirror hosted a major black-tie thrash for 200 thirsty automotive luminaries at London's Savoy Hotel. I don't know where they found the money, but we sure knew how to spend it. The Mirror's overall rally budget was supposedly £250,000, but the smoke and mirrors department eventually had to find £1 million plus, a vast amount of money in those days and maybe the last of Fleet Street's serious such extravagances.

Inevitably, the post-mortem found it was a jolly good jape that underscored the Mirror's prestige with established readers and advertisers. But it could scarcely have built new circulation or revenues in Latin America or mainland Europe. Furthermore, Fleet Street rivals had essayed spoilers by sponsoring likely front-runners.

The Evening Standard and Woman each backed contenders for the ladies' prize, a battle won by Standard's Rosemary Smith, Alice Watson and Ginette Derolland. The Daily Express and Sunday Express rode with a factory Ford Escort apiece, and the Daily scooped third place with Rauno Aaltonen and Henry Liddon. The Daily Telegraph Magazine drew the best cards, however, winning with the Escort driven by Hannu Mikkola and Gunnar Palm.

Great events invariably evoke widely differing viewpoints. In his lavishly illustrated new book World Cup Rally, Graham Robson makes a pretty good fist of telling it how it was from the perspective of the on-the-road organising team and the competitors. He was right in the thick of it as one of the rally controllers leapfrogging along the route. A former competitor and team manager, he is steeped in the sport, and as author of some 130 books he is a practised hand at getting the words in the correct order.

Robson calls the contest "the

longest, the toughest, and the most ambitious rally that the world had ever known", making all previous rallies look second-rate. He opines: "No other motor-ing event has ever included so many big names, so many excel-lent cars, so much ultra-profes-sional competition, and so many stupendous performances, achievements and incidents." There may be a low murmur of dissent from some of us who have tried our hands at the annu-al trans-Sahara Rallye Paris-Dakar, initiated almost a decade later, but let's not spoil Robson's entertaining party.

"Forty years on," he writes, "we know that no modern organising body would ever allow such a tir-ing schedule to be set - during the 15-day South American sec-tion there were only four official overnight rest halts - and we doubt that the 'official' average speeds set on some open-road sections in South America would ever again be nodded through by the authorities."

Certainly, down the subsequent decades, a sophisticated safety culture has taken firm root in all forms of motor sport. Though you'd be hard pressed to recall anyone going to the start line dur-ing the past century with a gun pointed at his head.

It's as well that Robson didn't wait until the rally was half a cen-tury old, or he'd have missed the opportunity to harvest first-hand recollections from main protago-nists, now in their 60s and 70s, while too many others are already no longer alive.

One of his main sources is ebul-lient rally secretary John Sprinzel, now 78, who made the first recce in South America. Robson visited Sprinzel at home in Hawaii, while others in his cast of characters read like a motor sporting Who's Who from a golden age. Among them are Paddy Hopkirk, flying Finns Rauno Aaltonen and Hannu Mikkola (fresh-faced London-Mexico winner in The Telegraph

Magazine-sponsored Ford), Stuart Turner (once Ford of Europe motor sport director), Peter Browning (former British Leyland competitions manager) and even HRH Prince Michael of Kent.

As Sprinzel and his two com-padres journeyed around South America attempting to transform a theoretical line on a map into a viable rally route, they encoun-tered plenty of obstacles. Not least of these was the world's longest mountain range, sitting slap-bang along six countries through which the rally was to pass - Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. With an average altitude of 13,000 ft (4,000 metres), the Andes extend 4,300 miles (7,000 km) north to south and 120 miles (200 km)-430 miles (700 km) east to west.

The implications of high altitude began to dawn on the intrepid trio when their car punctured a tyre 16,000 ft (4,877 metres) up in the mountains. "We got out of the car, and spent a lot of time just laughing about it," Sprinzel remembers. "We couldn't do any-thing because our brains weren't working too well up there."

This was to become a major preoccupation for competing teams, concerned lest their crews and cars performed below par while driving flat-out in thin air. The British Leyland team con-ducted tests in a decompression chamber at RAE (Royal Aircraft Establishment) Farnborough. Paddy Hopkirk said: "We were cocky about this, but they would ask us what 2 + 2 was, and we would answer 15, or something like that."

Then there was the - allegedly - apocryphal exchange of telegrams between Ford's Stuart Turner and his driver Roger Clark, on a recce in the Andes. I paraphrase: Turner - "Need to know effects of lack of oxygen at altitude. Make love to local girl at 14,000 ft (4,267 metres). Report

back." Clark - "No girls at 14,000 ft. So tried it 14 times at 1,000 ft. Will this do?"

In addition to the personalities, speed, daring and challenges of many kinds, the great attraction of motor rallying is that it leads you into all sorts wonderful parts of the world you might never oth-erwise see, and at times of day and night when you should be tucked up in bed. A choice mem-ory of mine was cresting a range of hills at dawn to see mists above the Limpopo river delta lit up from the left by a huge full moon and from the right by a blazing African sunrise - no cam-era lens was wide enough cap-ture it all.

Robson's World Cup Rally nar-rative zips along at a brisk tempo through the many twists and turns of an epic that began as a simple brilliant idea over a couple of drinks and took on a life of its own as so much talent, energy and money was thrown behind it.

I could smell the hot oil, sense the dust in my nostrils, hear the clatter of stones and rocks in the wheel arches, feel the car sliding around beneath me, and endure near-hallucinatory fatigue kept at bay by adrenaline rushes and sheer bloody-minded determina-tion. Hyperbole? Ach-yes-well-no-fine, as they say in South Africa. All that plus 250 colour and mono pictures of the characters, the action, the heartbreak and my favourites - those incredible Andean vistas.

The Daily Mirror 1970 World Cup Rally 40 by Graham Robson (208 pages hardback, Veloce Publishing, £35 UK / \$69.95 USA) www.veloce.co.uk ISBN 978-1-845842-71-0

**by Anthony Howard for
Press Gazette and Motor Sport**

MEDIA BRIEFING

PARIS-DAKAR-RALLY, January 1-20, 1981

BACKGROUND

This event covers 6,000 miles, of which two-thirds are 20 flat-out special stages, each timed to the minute. Weather varies from snow and ice to temperatures up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The route runs from Paris - taking in two "conventional" short special stages - to Sète in the South of France where competitors embark for Algiers.

The Sahara crossing via Tamanrasset and Timeiaoune is made in three days with navigation often by compass. Nights are spent in bivouacs in the open desert.

In Mali, tenuous vegetation presages a marginally less-sparse way of life. But, if anything, the going becomes even tougher en-route for Timbuktu, epitome of the most inaccessible habitation on earth. It's a difficult place to reach, but even harder to get away from with hundreds of miles of axle-deep sand to slog through.

Then comes relief on fairish roads through sugar cane fields irrigated by canals from the great River Niger.

Turning south through Upper Volta towards the Ivory Coast, temperature and humidity increase, as does lushness of the vegetation. But roads deteriorate. At this time of year, they are baked hard as concrete in the profile imprinted by large trucks on the mud of the rainy season.

This is the mid-point of the event. Tempers begin to fray, relationships become strained. And vehicles show inherent weaknesses, lack of driver sympathy, and lack of otherwise of preparation. By now, strong men have cried, or threatened their fellows with entrenching tools.

Longest special stage in the rally runs 450 miles from Bobo-Dioulasso to Kampti in Upper Volta, and three of the other stages are of a similar distance.

From the Ivory Coast, the route turns north and into Mali again before heading west towards Senegal. Fast gravel roads give way once more to rocky trails and heavy sand where it takes a hard day's drive to cover 150 miles.

For those who manage to keep going for these three weeks of self-inflicted deprivation, comes the joy of a final bivouac beside the Atlantic Ocean. This is followed by a last special stage, blasting 60 miles along the beach to Dakar.

SOLE BRITISH ENTRY

Tony Howard and John Miles are the only British crew in the 1981 Paris-Dakar Rally.

Their Range Rover, provided by BL and LAND ROVER LTD, has been prepared by JANSPEED ENGINEERING of Salisbury and WM AUTO DEVELOPMENTS of London to run in the category for standard four-wheel-drive vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes.

Additional equipment includes a specially-fabricated 45-gallon petrol tank to allow a range of 550 miles at high speed without re-fuelling.

Safety precautions include a Fire-Eater built-in extinguisher system aimed at the big tank, six-point

roll-cage, four-point safety harnesses, six gallons reserve of water for drivers and/or radiator; three spare wheels, distress flares.

Instrumentation by SMITHS INDUSTRIES includes a metric speedometer and rev counter. Special seats by RECARO are trimmed in tan so as not to show the dust.

Sophisticated time/distance measuring equipment from RAM ELECTRONICS makes use of the latest micro technology, taking its information from a small sensor at each rear wheel. Lighting by CIBIE includes four Super Oscar long-range lights, a pair of which are mounted on the scuttle in case of damage to the front of the car.

BL's UNIPART has provided most of this venture's complement of spare parts and tools, carefully chosen to make the crew as self-sufficient as possible in maintaining their Range Rover for three weeks of some of the toughest competitive motor-ing in the world. Spares include a second set of adjustable Koni shock absorbers.

BP is a major backer of this venture, flying the flag for Britain in an event largely the domain of the French.

THE CREW

John Miles (37) was a works driver with Lotus from 1967 to 1970. He was responsible for much of the team's development driving, and raced in 15 Grands Prix. He won the 1971 British Sports Car Championship and the 1972 Six Hours Race at Paul Ricard, sharing a works Ford Capri with Brian Muir. Miles then worked on race engine development before turning to journalism in 1977, becoming a member of Autocar magazine's technical department.

Tony Howard (36) was, until recently, Assistant Editor of Autocar which he joined in 1977. Before that he worked as a journalist for six years in South Africa. His wide experience of African motoring includes the Kalahari Desert, the Roof of Africa (Lesotho), as well as the 1980 Paris-Dakar Rally which he drove with fellow-journalist Anne Hope in a Range Rover. It was this that prompted him to approach BL for backing for a second attempt. Howard is possibly the fastest journalist on land - more than 200 mph as a passenger in the jet-powered Project Thrust World Lane Speed Record car.

THE COMPETITION

There are 160 entries for the 1981 Paris-Dakar Rally. Of these, 60 are motor cycles, 70 are four-wheel-drive cars, 15 are two-wheel-drive cars, and 10 are heavy trucks - the balance are "special vehicles."

Notable entries include Jacky Ickx in a Citroen CX, a "Rolls-Royce Corniche" special with four-wheel-drive and space frame chassis, and two lightweight Range Rovers prepared in Britain for BL France with five-speed gearboxes, "tweaked" engines and anti-lock brakes.

Four-wheel-drive cars are divided into two main categories - "anything goes", and "standard". It is in the latter that Miles and Howard are hoping for success....ends

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Hot rides



Just 17: with Charlie Dawkins on the Land's End Trial



GMSA's Nomad, Cape Flats



At Bob Bondurant's anti-hijack school, Sears Point. California



With John Miles after completing the Paris-Lisbon leg of an Autocar team exercise, driving the new Metro around Europe

56 Range Rover TRW 425R



Ford Cortina V6, Port Elizabeth



Ford Escort BDA, Cape Town



Ford Capri 3.0, MIRA



Range Rover, Exercise Cop Drive



Formula Finesse winner with Jackie Stewart



Ford TW35 6.6-litre turbo diesel AWD tractor



Filming Yorkshire TV's Winning Streak



VW Jetta GTi, Precott Hill Climb



Ford Grenada, Rovaniemi, Arctic Circle



Ford's Desert Challenge-winning Bronco



With Richard Noble for a first ride in Thrust II



F1 McLaren-DFV, Brands hatch



With John Surtees in P68-DFV sports prototype



With Hannu Mikkola in Audi Quattro



With Johnny Dumfries in 7-litre V12 Jaguar XJR-9 Le Mans car