

## PRE-1940 TRIUMPHS AND THE MONTE CARLO RALLY

Through the 1920s the Triumph Motor Company steadily built a reputation for the manufacture of quality vehicles, and although reliable and containing innovative and luxurious features, they were never thought to be in the vanguard of competitive motor sport. Several of the popular Super Seven cars entered reliability trails of the day; the noted racer Vic Horsman built a Super Seven based car to compete at Brooklands; success in reliability and economy trials were reported from South Africa and across the world in Australia where Triumph dealership principle Bill Buckle and others enjoyed notable success in Super Sevens on long distance endurance trails. But things were about to change when a young

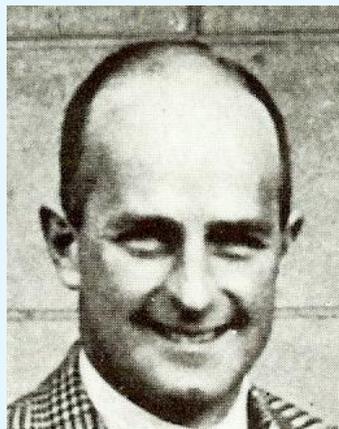


Donald Healey entered a Triumph Super Seven in the 1929 Monte Carlo Rally. Healey, described as “an enthusiastic Cornishman” elected to start his rally from Riga in Latvia but the bitter January weather meant that he was unable to get to the frozen Baltic port. Switching his plans, Healey started from Berlin, which apparently was faring little better

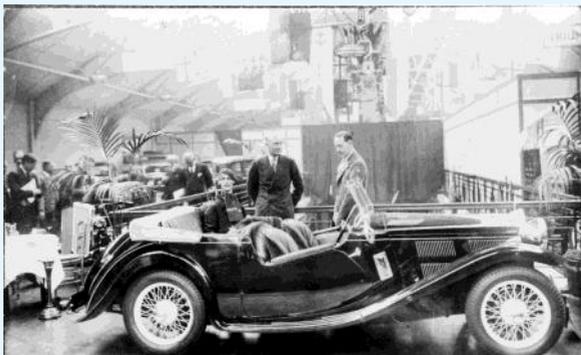
weather wise, and having fought his way through blizzards and driving much of the way on ice he arrived in Monte Carlo, some 2000 miles later, just two minutes outside the time limit.

Donald resolved to try again and in 1930, in that same Super Seven, WK 7546, and battling much the same weather, he brought the car home in seventh place – and the first British car to finish. In a car with a maximum speed of just 47 mph and yet averaging 30 mph on the entire run, it must have been a flat out drive for both Healey and the poor car but it was an acclaimed performance.

DH disappeared from Triumph’s radar for a period spending his time in 1931 and 32 developing and driving Invictas, but by 1933 the Triumph board of directors were beginning to appreciate the value of competitive success and asked Healey to join the Company as their Technical Manager.



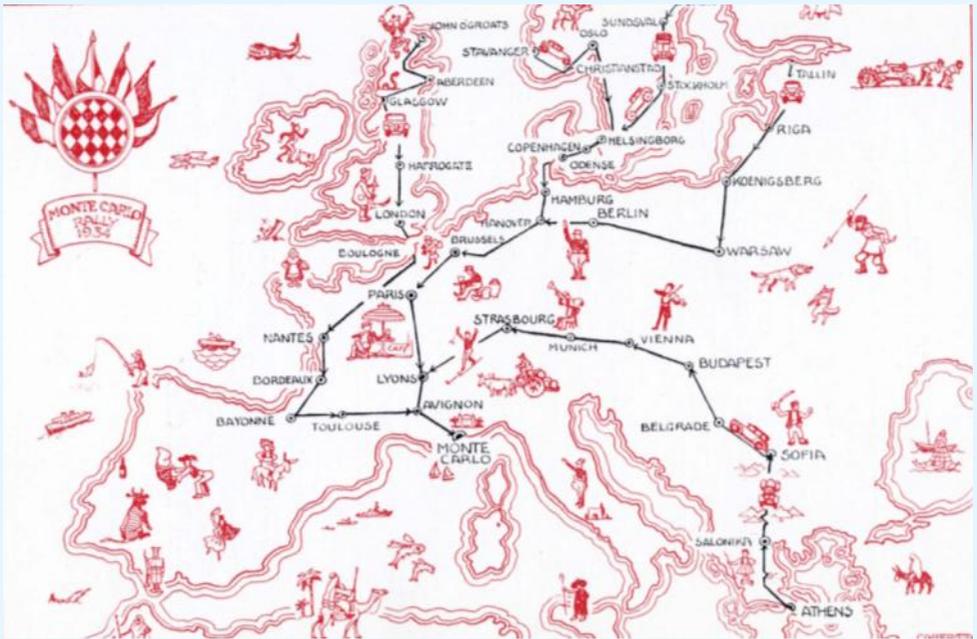
His arrival coincided with another change of direction for the Triumph Motor Company as, at the October 1933 Motor Show at Olympia, they had unveiled their new range of cars bearing the “Gloria” badge. These rakish cars were a major departure from the



“boxy”, upright cars that had benefited the Triumph name for so many years; their low, appealing body designs made possible by running the chassis below the rear axle. Competing with the likes of Riley and SS they were an instant hit and I’m sure that the young Healey, having cleaned up some aspects of the car’s design, didn’t take long before he was convincing his Board of Directors that a Company sponsored assault on the 1934 Monte would be both fun and hugely beneficial to their sales drive.

Of course, it would take a huge effort from the Company as the starting date was a matter of just weeks away but the Board committed to running seven cars to showcase both their luxurious saloons and their sporting open tourers. . These cars, comprising two standard Gloria Saloons, three Gloria tourers which were extensively modified to lighten the chassis, provide increased fuel capacity and equip them with twin spare snow tyres and two “hybrid” cars using Gloria mechanicals married to the straight, slightly higher chassis of the earlier Southern Cross model were prepared by Triumph’s Competitions Department. Six of them were sequentially registered with the Coventry numbers KV 6901 to 6906 and one of the Gloria Saloons, KV 5339.

The Monte had a number of starting points throughout Europe. Each car had either two or three passengers/co-drivers and the two teams headed by Healey and the Company’s competitions manager, Jack Ridley chose to start from Athens in the two “specials”, KV 6904 and 6905. Major Montague-Johnstone and his wife set off from John O’Groats in the green tourer, KV 6901; Jack Hobbs in tourer KV 6903 and Miss Margaret Allan and her team of ladies in the Gloria Saloon KV 5339 selected Umea in Sweden as their start point; John Beck jnr. with his team mate Reg. Tanner in the blue tourer KV 6906 departed from Tallin in Estonia and,



finally, Edgar Kehoe and C.J.K. Scott in the Gloria saloon KV 6902 left Stavanger in Norway.

Despite the January weather, the worst of European roads, accidents, mishaps, blown headgaskets and fatigue, the drivers and their seven little Triumph cars all completed the task, arriving safely at Monte Carlo and, in the “Light Car Class” covered themselves with glory. Healey’s effort was outstanding, finishing 1<sup>st</sup> in the category and third overall despite the might of the opposition with their much larger and more sophisticated machinery. Ridley’s team were 6<sup>th</sup>, Beck and Tanner 10<sup>th</sup> and Hobbs, with a very battered car, 12<sup>th</sup>. Poor Miss Allan could only make 26<sup>th</sup> place, having to complete the rally and participate in the acceleration tests on only two cylinders; the Montague-Johnstones, handicapped by the “easy” route from John O’Groats were 31<sup>st</sup> and the unhappy Kehoe fell away to 38<sup>th</sup>, despite a trouble-free run from Norway, his time being severely affected by being held for 1 1/2 hours at the point of a gun in France where his tourist petrol coupons were not recognised!

But it didn’t end there as in the later judging of the vehicles, John Beck’s car, KV 6906 came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the competition for the most comfortable and best equipped car.

The “Triumphant” team lined up together in the Monte Carlo sunshine.



**GLORIA  
TRIUMPHANT**



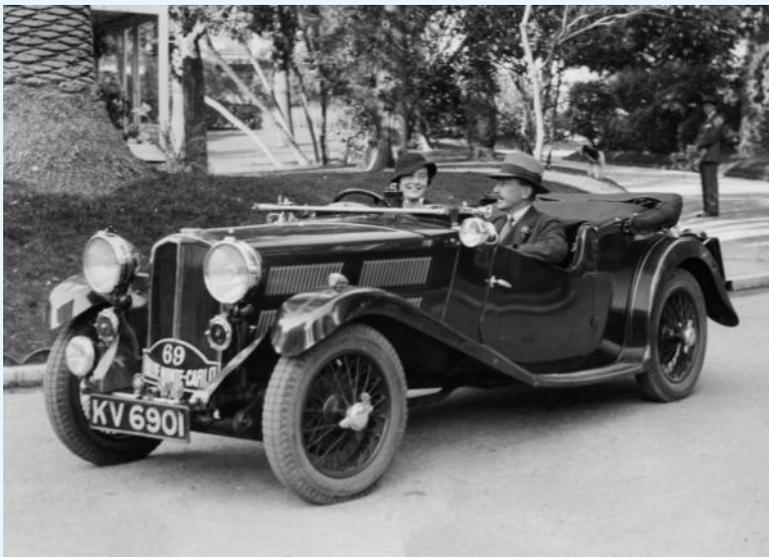
BEING THE STORY OF THE  
TRIUMPH SUCCESSES IN THE  
XIII<sup>th</sup> MONTE-CARLO RALLY

Elated by their success, Triumph commissioned and printed the publication “Gloria Triumphant” which gave a blow by blow account of the epic adventure. Interestingly, it is noted in the final paragraph that each of the cars motored home safely to England in perfect order and without incident, some clocking up speeds of 70 to 80 mph on the long straight French roads and “entirely unaffected by four thousand miles of motoring in arduous winter conditions”!

Little is really known of what happened to these cars subsequent to their heroic efforts but extensive research and the examination of the records of Coventry's Motor Vehicle Licensing records reveal their fate. Miss Allan's saloon **KV 5339** was the prototype G10 Gloria saloon and features in the collection of photographs owned by Walter Belgrove. It was "presented" to Triumph's designer at the time – Frank Warner – for £100 who ran it as the family car. It was last licensed in March 1959 and we presume that it was broken up shortly after that.



**KV 6901**, stayed in the hands of the Montague-Johnstones for a time and they campaigned it in the 1934 Lands End Trial. After that the trail goes cold but the last license was purchased in 1960 and the owners address was in Belvedere, Kent.



**KV 6902**, Edgar Keogh's car was still on the road in 1942 in the hands of a Mr Brandreth. At that time it was still in Coventry so perhaps it didn't survive the bombing of the city or was scrapped for its material content.

**KV 6903**, Jack Hobbs' tourer was in a poor state when it finished the rally but, once repaired, it made it home. In 1936 Mr William H. Smith purchased the car from a garage in Andover and took it to Preston. These pictures were taken



in 1939 and 1946. It stayed with him and in the family during periods in Staines and Ipswich and was finally sold by them in the early sixties. The final license in 1962 was in the name of a Mr. Hosford who was then stationed at RAF Bentwater. After that it was confirmed as broken up.

**KV 6904**, the famous "Special" driven by Jack Ridley had a chassis number unlike any other; H.J.S 1, and it was run competitively for a number of years, most notably by that star of the thirties, the wonderful Joan Richmond, who brought it home in the 1936 Monte in 20<sup>th</sup> place as well as competing in a whole host of hill climbs, trials and other muddy events. At some stage it had a "facelift" which included the installation of a Rover engine and grill and the motoring journalist Wilson McComb christened it "Red Rover" during his ownership of the car in the 1950s. Before he had recognised the car's true identity and history, he had let her go into the hands on a bunch of university students in Cambridge. The last trace is that she was owned by Lawrence Drury and the last license was issued in 1961.

**KV 6905** was equally famous. Healey's special had starred at the 1934 Monte and he and the car returned to a hero's welcome. In 1935, cosmetic changes were made to the bodywork for the Monte and Jack Ridley took charge. He and Donald, who drove straight to disaster in the Straight 8 Dolomite, started from Umea in Sweden and it was Ridley who collected the prizes. Gathering the Riviera Cup for first place in the Light Car Class the car went on, that year, to win the Barclay's Bank Cup and the Late Public Schools Cup.

However, the car's existence was short lived and it was never taxed after 1935, being only in the ownership of the Triumph Motor Company throughout its life. Presumably, it was lost shortly thereafter. Here,



Healey in the foreground with Jack Ridley to the right, stand in front of their two iconic cars at the end of the rally.

**KV 6906** came back to the factory in the safe hands of Beck and Tanner, photographed here in Monte Carlo having completed the rally. Perhaps the least damaged car, it was cleaned up, the engine was changed to a bored out 1232cc, 10.8 h.p. It was this tidied car that Triumph used as the promotional car for the launch of the celebratory Monte Carlo model.



Healey, standing and Ridley, in the car pose with KV 6906 outside the Triumph factory offices in Coventry.



Featuring in The Motor and Autocar articles of the day, she was subsequently sold by Triumph to motor

sport enthusiast, James Hawkes Whittindale. Whittindale kept the car for a year, using it in high profile events during 1934 and 35 and it

participated in Whittindale's hands in the Exeter Trial July 35 it was registered to Triumph's main sales agency in Coventry, The Bablake Garage. Whittindale is recorded in '35 as using a Southern Cross so it appears KV 6906 was traded in for a newer model and it must have taken a bit of shifting as it only found its next owner, Martin Henry Coxon of Birmingham in March 1936. His tenure appears only to have lasted a matter of days as it was quickly repatriated to Coventry and into the hands of Clifford



Waddington. In 1938 Clifford took the car with him to his new address in Blackpool and it stayed with him there until November 1956 when it was John Parker's turn. Five further changes of ownership between 1958 and 1963, all in Lancashire culminated in registration to David William Park of Preston.

David and Ruth Park used it as their "courting car" (comfy!) and in the early days of their marriage but when it comprehensively failed the MOT test in 1967 it came off the road. Luckily, they could not bear to part with it and it was pushed to the back of their garage. Sadly, when David died

in 2000, his ambition to restore the car was unfulfilled and the car went to auction and, recognising its historical importance, it deserved a place at Bonham's 2001 auction at Beaulieu. The hammer fell to Club member, Steve Jacobs and the future of this unique car was assured.



Recognised as one of the rarest surviving Works Cars from Triumph's pre-war history it deserved only the best of restorations and following months of detailed research, huge efforts to source all the correct original parts and several years of careful restoration, the results are this beautiful icon of British motoring success.



The restored car has proved to be a reliable and pleasurable car to drive and has won the Pre-1940 Triumph Motor Club's prestigious "Founders Plate" concours award on a couple of occasions. It has also formed part of the Club's display at the annual Classic Car Show at the NEC and last year was selected to form part of the historic line-up of Triumph cars with competitive history organised by Club Triumph. The highlight of the three days was when Sir Stirling Moss spotted it and wanted to stop by for a couple of minutes of friendly chat.



In compiling this potted history of one of the Company's finest hours, I'm very grateful to Graham Shipman, the Pre-1940 Triumph Motor Club's archivist and historian who has discovered so many of these lovely photographs and provided me with so much helpful information.

**Steve Jacobs**



