

# REVS News Letter

## July 2021



### News.

Club Nights now up and running 8pm to 10.30pm approx.

Tribute to club member John Bloxham, this issue.

Happy Landings first event back for OMC with new organisers, great day enjoyed by all.

Hero Trial attended two days by a number of OMC marshal's.

OMC rally competitors getting very frustrated with numerous cancellation of events.

AGBO RALLY has new sponsor, planning to start soon see page 3.

Rally History Grp. B day Weston, details page 5.

OMC Graham Hill Sprint receives full entry + reserves, 12 OMC entries.



In this issue of REVS, we pay tribute to John Bloxham, one of Owen Motoring Clubs most successful drivers. With the family's permission a copy of the Eulogy given by Mike Sones at Johns funeral is reproduced within, it details some driving history that can never be repeated. Above. John in action with Richard Harper. Below. A number of local Rally cars turn out in respect at Johns funeral at Penn Church in April.



[www.owenmotoringclub.co.uk](http://www.owenmotoringclub.co.uk)

**Club Contact Information.**

Based at **Great Barr Golf Club**, Chapel Lane, Great Barr, Bham B43 7BA

OS map Ref, 139/ 048 958, GPS N52° 33` 27.54 W1° 56` 7.99

Club Meet Every Wednesday, 9.00pm.

Committee Meet First Wednesday of Month, 8.00pm

**Club contacts and club event responsibilities as follows:**

President. David Owen OBE

Chairman. Anton Bird, AGBO Rally & OMC Rallies Archive, REVS *Editor*, Club Event Pictures Archive. [antonbird@talktalk.net](mailto:antonbird@talktalk.net)

Vice Chairman. Simon Whittick ...Web Site co ordination & Slithering Santa PCA Cymson Dynamo Auto Solo, Graham Hill Sprint .[simonwhittick@btinternet.com](mailto:simonwhittick@btinternet.com)

Club Sec. Roger Tolley.... [r.tolley@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:r.tolley@blueyonder.co.uk)

Treasurer. Michael Ward ... [michael\\_ward70@btinternet.com](mailto:michael_ward70@btinternet.com)

**Committee members:**

Derrick Wallbank. Competition Sec. All Events, [doubledecker460@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:doubledecker460@hotmail.co.uk)

Clare Jennings AGBO Rally, Social Sec. Child Protection Officer.

[clarejennings22@outlook.com](mailto:clarejennings22@outlook.com)

Barri Wilmot. Club Equipment Officer. Happy Landings Grass Auto Test team.

[barriwilmot@aol.com](mailto:barriwilmot@aol.com)

Ruth Langford. Trophies Officer..... [pinkfairy66@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pinkfairy66@hotmail.co.uk)

Daniel Lister. AGBO Rally..... [dan-lister@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dan-lister@hotmail.co.uk)

Melvyn Cox. Bright Sparks PCA & Championship scorer.

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Martin Parkes. Classic Section Coordinator [martin6parkes@gmail.com](mailto:martin6parkes@gmail.com)

David Allman. Chief Marshal [david-allman@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:david-allman@tiscali.co.uk)

Dean Forrest. Assistant Chief Marshal. [scouts8th@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:scouts8th@hotmail.co.uk)

**Other Contact details.**

Club Archives. Lynn Whittick. [Contact through Simon Whittick]

Hilary Bird. Membership Sec. ....[hilarybird1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hilarybird1@hotmail.co.uk)

Roger Tristram. Classic Section Assistant ...[rtristram@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rtristram@blueyonder.co.uk)





# AGBO STAGES RALLY

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## OWEN MOTORING CLUB

AGBO Rally 2021 will be taking place on **Sunday 26 September**. This decision was taken early on in the year by the event team due to restrictions which were in force during March with the Covid 19 situation.

**We welcome a new sponsor Land & Estate Maintenance, proprietor Oliver Davies who has won the AGBO Rally 8 times.**

It will be a new look AGBO, as we have lost the use of the Bradford Estate section of road (we call the back road). This is due to a break down in the relationship between Weston Park & Bradford Estates management teams, nothing to do with OMC.

Weston Park have built a gravel access road, accessed to the left 500m in from Lichfield Gate. This will traverse the fields over to the tarmac road at the stone pillars just inside the Weston estate boundary. This will allow us to run the section of road should we wish, but the public road section to access this has PR problems. It will not be used on the 2021 event. If we only utilise this new layout we only lose 300m of stage without the Bradford section, a result for us as we get the decent stretch at no extra cost (previously extortionate).

**The second AGBO meeting has been set for Wednesday 28 July, 8.00pm at our Great Barr Golf Club HQ. Please attend if you wish to assist with either the running of or set up of the event. We are very short on the organisation front and could also do with many more hands to help set up the park on Saturday 25 September. Please email Clare Jennings, if you would like to attend the meeting and be involved.**

**[clarejennings22@outlook.com](mailto:clarejennings22@outlook.com) / or call 07837 212015**

If you want to marshal at the event, registrations & signing on will be required previous to the event online only. This will apply to ALL marshals, radio`s and officials. This will be via the AGBO section of the club website, the new 2021 event section should be up & running by mid / late July. Or email David Allman [david-allman@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:david-allman@tiscali.co.uk) or Dean Forrest [scouts8th@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:scouts8th@hotmail.co.uk) to pre register.

Radio`s please register with Clive Chinnick (Radio Controller) [clive@chinnicks.com](mailto:clive@chinnicks.com)

Any prospective competitors please take note, signing on & scrutineering will be self declared online ONLY. Entries (open estimated mid to late July ) will be online ONLY. Service crew is restricted to two, they must also be pre registered via the competitors signing on declaration. Access to the venue for all entrants, service crew and officials will be by wristband only (issued by post prior to event). Any Covid requirements at the time will be enforced. No competitors will be allowed in Weston Park on Saturday 25th under any circumstances.



# 'BLUEBIRD'

## An Owen Organisation contribution to an immense project

BLUEBIRD'S world land speed record attempt on Australia's Lake Eyre unfortunately had to be postponed in May through flooding.

For almost a century after its discovery in 1848, Lake Eyre was regarded as one of the world's great salt pans, but it is only in the last few years that it has been considered to be possibly the finest spot in the world for high speed motoring.

Since the arrival of Bluebird in Australia, freak storms covered the bed with a few inches of water making any serious attempt out of the question, although in the intermittent drying out periods, Bluebird made test runs.

A large amount of effort was entailed in removing salt islands. Water seepage seriously affected the original chosen course and a new one had to be found. But all these efforts were of no avail when the lake became completely flooded.

Floodwater from Southwest Queensland where only a few weeks previously whole families had to be evacuated gradually pushed down into Cooper's Creek which channels into Lake Eyre, the first time for over seven years.

The Bluebird team, which included technicians from some of the major sponsoring firms in Britain suffered many setbacks since establishing base camp at Malourina sheep station near the Lake, and with the hand of Nature against them time completely ran out.

The outcome of this "dilemma in the desert" is uncertain. It will be many, many months before Lake Eyre can be considered as a further possibility. An alternative venue may yet be found, but whatever the outcome, no effort will be spared to justify the immense amount of work and support which has been given to this £1m. project by British industry.

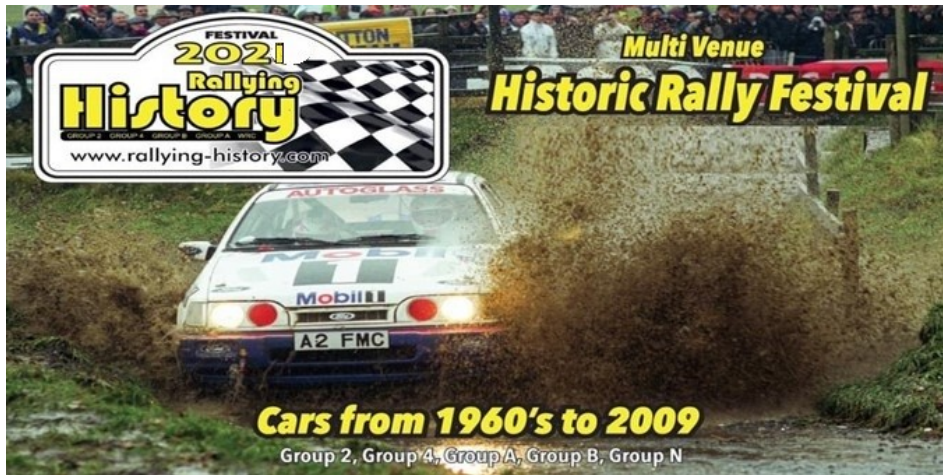
The Owen Organisation has played perhaps the leading role in the Bluebird story, the complete car having been built at their Motor Panels factory in Coventry, with other Owen companies also contributing their own specialist services.

Carl Noble of Electro Hydraulics Ltd., was a member of the Bluebird team in Australia. Maurice Britton, engineer in charge of the building programme at Motor Panels also visited Lake Eyre to make certain the efficiency of the car had not been impaired since it left Coventry.



*A project is born. Early discussions between (left to right), Maurice Britton (Chief Planning and Development Engineer, Motor Panels), Donald Campbell, J. M. Phillips (Managing Director, Motor Panels) and Kenneth and Lewis Norris, designers of 'Bluebird'.*

Coventry Motor Panels, part of the Rubery Owen Group, were responsible for building the Bluebird land speed record car as seen above. Now, did anyone watch The Antiques Road Show on BBC on Sunday March 14?. On the table in the picture above is a scale model of Bluebird, during the road show programme a person produced very similar mounted on a wooden plinth, with this he had some documents of authentication. He thought it to be a wind tunnel test piece, but was decided by the interviewer this was not the case, it was a panel fit mock up. The model however was valued at £5-8K wow. I know where there is another one of these. When a club member reads this he might be a little shocked re the value of what's on top of the cupboard. !!



## Rallying History Grp. B, Weston Park / Telford Aug 21 & 22

Owen Motoring Club are contracted to the event to supply stage furniture, set up & management on Sunday 22 August. There are only two stages each run twice in opposite directions (8 in Total).

Should you wish to marshal at this event contact Tim Harding (Chief Marshal)  
[tim.rally@btinternet.com](mailto:tim.rally@btinternet.com) NOT OMC

For Owen MC members it has been negotiated with Rallying History & Weston Park that on production of your 2021 OMC membership card you will get FREE entry to the event on Sunday at Weston Park. **YOU MUST PRODUCE YOUR Current 2021 OMC MEMBERSHIP CARD on entry, no card no entry. Gate Staff will have 2021 club card copy as reference.**

Any members wishing to assist with Saturday set up of stages please get in touch with [antonbird@talktalk.net](mailto:antonbird@talktalk.net) as soon as possible. Sunday Management & turn round teams now finalised. OMC Club marshals are required to assist at Tong Gate (Stage Start & Finish area & at the Holding Zone for competitors between stages in the park on Sunday, contact asap.

**Tribute to a club legend.**  
In Loving Memory of  
*John Bloxham*  
14th February 1943 - 10th March 2021



Service to be held  
at  
St Bartholomew's Church, Penn  
on  
Monday 12th April 2021 at 2:00pm

Followed by Committal at  
Gornal Wood Crematorium

Service conducted by Reverend Ben Whitmore

The following pages contain the eulogy written & delivered at Johns Funeral by Mike Sones.

## **John Bloxham 1943-2021 presented by Michael Sones**

John was born in February 1943, a second son for Norman and Jessie, a younger brother for Richard. His younger life was as enjoyable as anyone can be during wartime, and post war rationing was still in place by the time he found his way to Warstones Primary School, but a degree of stubbornness and single mindedness was to surface when, rather than go to Tettenhall College, he wanted to go to Graiseley Secondary School to be with his friends. His view prevailed!

The garage business provided little attraction for John, and he enrolled in an Agricultural College, where his studies complimented a natural affinity for animals of all kinds, and weekend placements were found on a farm near Aberystwyth, tending whatever stock he could find.

This life pattern was interrupted however when Richard received his call-up papers for his 2-year period of National Service, and John had to return to take Richard's place in the running of the garage. One thing that didn't change, a dog was always at his side, even until his death.

The garage that Robin and I refer to was "Warstones Service Station, proprietor A. N. Bloxham", a tag line that prevailed for years, situated on the Warstones Road. It's a fuel Station now, but always easy to locate by reason of the electricity pylon conveniently sited in the back garden towering above the adjacent houses, and a variety of foreign cars were sold and serviced on the premises. Fiat, Renault, Saab and Simca were the main makes, all of them sampled at one time or another by my father and his 2 brothers.

Ultimately the business was to concentrate on Fiats, and new premises were established near the centre of Wolverhampton, on the inner ring road, but not before a variety of rally cars had found their way to Warstones Road. If agriculture and animals had been the focal points of John's early life, cars, and particularly rallying, soon provided an alternative attraction.

Robin has described their early days of rallying together and mentioned that one of the cars that John bought was the ex-works Austin Healey 3000 that Pat Moss used to win the notorious Liege Rally, a car that he subsequently struggled to sell. It's now worth over £250k!

Following the Healey, John decided to become a little more serious about the machinery being used, and a full-blown Mini Cooper S, surely the car of the day, was acquired and, together with Richard Harper, they quickly became a force to be reckoned with, their best result being 2<sup>nd</sup> overall in the Motoring News Rally Championship of 1967.

Their signature year however was to be 1969. By happy coincidence, a trio of enthusiastic spectators decided to follow the Motoring News Rally Championship and write an informal history of the year. The "trio" aspect features quite often in John's year, and I'll return to that theme later. The year started in a Lancia Fulvia kindly sourced by Oliver Speight, but this was quickly replaced with a new Ford Escort Twin Cam (then the car of the day) which was to be used, with one exception, for the rest of the year in a remarkable demonstration of reliability and driver consistency. The one exception happened when the Escort was being repaired after a rally in Portugal, and John decided to take the Fiat 125 S demonstrator, Mum's car, on the Plains Rally. A no doubt disgruntled Jim Bullough and Don Barrow were set to follow them off the start line, but then all they saw was a clean pair of heels as John and Richard finished 2<sup>nd</sup> overall.

That result saw John put one hand on the winner's trophy, becoming the only driver on record to win the championship using 3 different cars. Another "trio" achievement had happened earlier in the year when Richard, committed to family holidays, missed 2 of the most difficult events. John calmly arranged to take Don Barrow on the Gremlin Rally in South Wales and won. The following weekend, he took Paul Stephens on the Bolton Rally, with only 9 finishers, in North Wales, and won. Richard returned on the following weekend for the unforgiving Cilwendeg Rally in South-West Wales and won. That's three different navigators, on three consecutive weekends, and three wins.

*Continued.....*

By this time John had been a member of Dudley and District Car Club, and was now Club Captain of Owen Motoring Club, and both John and Richard had been invited to join what Raymond Baxter once called the most exclusive motor club in the world, Ecurie Cod Fillet. Created by regular competitor Roy Fidler and his one-time navigator John Hopwood, practical jokers such as John were ideal members, and on one hilarious weekend on the Isle of Man, John and his long-time friend Tony Cox won the Golden Grope Award, of which no more in this house.

By winning the Shenstone Rally towards the end of the year, John became champion, but Richard still needed to confirm his title on the last round, the Targa Rusticana, they won both the rally and the championship.

All sorts of invitations followed the championship win, the most immediate of which was an offer to drive one of the works Datsun 240Z on the 1969 RAC Rally, and the following year the World Cup Rally from London to Mexico in a Hillman Hunter sponsored by JCB. A new Escort Twin Cam was built for 1971 and I remember a titanic battle with Paul Faulkner in a similar machine on the RAC Rally of that year, made famous by the film named by Henry Liddon as "From Harrogate, it started", and the soundtrack of The Who's "I can see for miles and miles", the atrocious snowbound roads saw many stages cancelled as being inaccessible. John also contested the Circuit of Ireland in 1972 in the BMW 2002 prepared by Tony Hennin's Autoextra concern.

An agreement was reached with the Birmingham Post and Mail to go stage and road rallying, and various cars were pressed into service, including Avengers, SAAB 96s, and several Triumph Dolomite Sprints from British Leyland's Special Tuning division.

Road rallying remained the first love of both John and Richard, and the business move nearer to the centre of Wolverhampton happily coincided with the build of a rear wheel drive Fiat Strada, and then the arrival of Fiat's answer to the Escort Twin Cam, the Fiat 131 Mirafiori. John was not to win the championship again, but their efforts got a second championship win for Richard in 1977 when John was 3<sup>rd</sup>, and they both finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1978.

Robin has mentioned the Round Britain Economy Drive of 1986, but both John and Toney Cox were involved in another escapade in 1978 when they took up the challenge of driving round the UK, a recognised route of approximately 3750 miles, against the clock. No speeding, no running red lights, etc., all monitored by instrumentation in the car, a standard Chrysler Alpine 5 door hatchback. Something like 88 hours, 42 mph, a time that still stands in the Guinness Book of Records today. They were both rallying on the weekend before, and after, the attempt!

And what of family life? Robin's described a lot of it. John and Sue decided to tie the knot, and got married in December 1974, conveniently situated you'll note between the RAC Rally of 1974, and the start of the Motoring News Rally Championship of 1975. Norman and Jessie were no doubt grateful for the relative peace and quiet, but the neighbour's reactions in Norton Close aren't recorded here. Nick, Anelli, and Jonty were introduced into a world where dad was always playing with cars of some sort or other, and trips to the seaside were but the matter of a moment, with practical jokes being played across all and sundry, but always that helping hand if things went wrong. Anelli now lives in Spain, but a phone call to dad never failed to see John on his way to help, at literally 100mph, distance was no object to a man who simply loved driving, and when it was time for Nick and Jonty to go rallying, all three of them now members of Wolverhampton and South Staffs Car Club, who was first there, and always there, with the spanners, and no doubt, "I used to do it this way"? John. I well remember the pride on John and Sue's faces as they sat at the front of the audience to watch the prize giving of The Tour of Cheshire last March (2020) where Nick had secured the outright win.



John's most recent escapades included helping the Historic Endurance Rally Organisation with their Arrive and Drive rally car hire business and giving demonstration passenger rides to an appreciative audience. He and Sue were often to be seen out marshalling on various events, including the Per Ardua Ad Infinitum historic rally last December.

In summary, we've got a much involved Rotary Club member, a tremendously quick rally driver, a practical joker, an ever present helping hand, and a proud father of three successful individuals. He remains to this day the only driver ever to have won the triple crown of rallying, the BTRDA Gold Star Championship, the Motoring News Rally Championship, and the RAC British Rally Championship all in the same year, 1969, and the only words I can find are taken from the delightful book that originally set out to chronicle a rally championship, and rose to be a cult possession of rally enthusiasts everywhere, John lived life to the full, at truly Nineteen to the Dozen.

Michael J Sones, 7.4.2021

Just a few lines from a Eulogy written by Richard Harper, Johns long term navigator, this was delivered in Church by his Daughter Jane.

"We did 97 events together in many parts of Europe. We won 79 of them and were placed in a further 5. In 1969 our most successful year, we won the three major British Championships , BTRDA, Motoring News Road Rally Championship & The RAC Gold Star."

This I think says it all.



**August 21/22. OMC @ Rally History Grp B, Weston Park.....**

Contact. [antonbird@talktalk.net](mailto:antonbird@talktalk.net) ... Event Details and Prospective Marshals see page 7.  
**HELP REQUIRED.** Saturday Set up..

**Sept 19. OMC Tony Matthews Classic Car Tour.** Entries for this event are open now, running in most parts of scenic Derbyshire. Start Location TBA.

Contact. Details, Roger Tristram...[rtristram@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rtristram@blueyonder.co.uk)

Entries to.. [clarejennings22@outlook.com](mailto:clarejennings22@outlook.com)

**September 26. OMC AGBO Rally. Weston Park,** 75 car entry available, new stage layouts on offer, run to latest Motorsport UK rules. Regs available July, entries open in Early August.

Marshals see AGBO page 3 this issue for registrations.

Enquiries to: [clarejennings22@outlook.com](mailto:clarejennings22@outlook.com)

**Oct. 17 OMC Bright Sparks Auto Test Curborough**

### Happy Landings May 2021 Results:

**1st Class A , Dave Bennet .. Micra**

**1st Class B , Tom Bishop .. Micra**

**1st Class C, Chris Valentine .. Imp**

**1st Class D, Kevin Hardwick .. 205**

**1st Novice, Alister Hardwick .. 205**

**1st Junior, Connor Armstrong .. Nova**

**1st OMC Member, Rob Bancroft ... Mini**

**FTD Event Winner, Adam Evans ... Mini**



Local Artist, Christine Hammond joined us on the day again and captures the scene perfectly.

# Happy Landings Grass Auto Test, Manorial Farm 2 May

First OMC event since Sept. 2020, a new organising team Derrick Wallbank & Dean Forrest head up the event held at Manorial Farm near Sutton Coldfield which is run & managed by OMC member Bill Rushton. We would like to thank him for the use of two very big grassy fields.

A fine & sunny day, lucky as the days following were torrential rain, a 23 car entry (poor really) with a number of our usual supporters from OMC not entering. I really thought many more would have relished the opportunity to get out into the wide open spaces and have a thrash on the grass .....at last.

Six long grass tests in the morning and six tests, the reverse in the afternoon, smiles all day from the competitors, which means something is OK. Much praise received post event from the competitors means a successful debut for Derrick & Dean.

However, club members take note, the organising teams for all OMC events require strengthening. Why with a club membership of 130 members can we not get more support?. Two people should not have had to carry the work load for this event. On the day we had the bare minimum to run the event, not a fair deal for the organisers. The “camels back” will eventually break and you will be left with nothing.

OMC thank Melvyn Cox for stepping in late as C of C, Clare Jennings for event Sec, running a time control and sorting out the results on the day. Never previously having seen the timing app system now being used and never collated results before, Clare did an amazing job, something she did not expect to be responsible for on the day. Hence the comments earlier about lack of help. Thanks also to Barri Wilmot our long serving equipment officer, nothing is too much trouble for him and club members Mike Lister, Paul Langford & Richard Statham for timing and marshalling..... *[AB Event Club Steward & pictures]*



# Hero Summer Trial, June.

At last we get to go out and see some action. On arrival I didn't think much of the venue for the test, just how wrong can you be. Only a short test but with superb light conditions a stiff-ish breeze and loads of dust, it added up to making the photo opportunities perfect.

We arrived expecting to marshal but as they were well over manned we were able to relax and watch the 60 odd entries pass through. Some wonderful machinery taking part including OMC members James & Archie Holt in their Mercedes 280 SL, top down of course. Pictures *by AB* below tell the rest of the story.



## Graham Hill Sprint 2021...June 20.

Strangely rain had been forecast all day but thankfully never appeared, the event ran near faultlessly with a 68 car entry, a few timing issues during the day being the only blip. The only real incident during the day being the comprehensive destruction, rolled three times, of MG ZR driven by Jack Snape. The British Rally marshals, rescue & recovery were all on scene very rapidly, thankfully no injuries incurred to driver, just a bit shaken, it was a good one I must admit !!!

Great to see 12 entries from OMC, including new club team sprinters Melvyn Cox, MX5 & Derrick Wallbank, Peugeot 106 Rally back in action, however OMC club member Nick Pollitt's Porsche Caymen stole the show, what a car.

New rule this year for sprinting is that competitors in the standard car class do not have to wear fire protective race suits, I don't see how MSUK came to this decision, I thought it was all about safety, the car that rolled was in this class.



Member Paul Langford seen middle above doing a fine job on commentary throughout the afternoon. Some of the OMC entries seen above, including Nick Pollitt Porsche 1st in class, Chris Hetherington Subaru (sorry Chris could not get photo in.) 1st in Class, Melvyn Cox MX5, Derrick Wallbank 106 and Bill Rushton Escort MK2 and seen left above, the new Curborough fast response vehicle seen middle above, 1BHP (1 bloke horse power). Other OMC results Paul Glendenning 1st in Class, John Caldicott Best OMC. FTD went to Paul Tinsley in a very smart Dallara. *All Pics AB.*