

# ALL IN T

The EDITOR  
Covering the



**S**NOW looks very pretty on Christmas cards and on posters advertising Winter Sports. For my part, I can truthfully say that I have had all the snow (and ice) I want for many months to come. Covering the 1952 Monte Carlo Rally was more like a Polar expedition than a trip to the Sunny South, and in the Principality itself, Good King Wenceslas could have looked out and seen plenty of his crisp and even stuff.

That nightmare run to Valence was unforgettable. The snow was so thick that the dipped amber headlamps caused the hallucination of hundreds of whirling golden porcupines hurling themselves against the windscreen. The wiper blades froze to the screen; my 1½-litre M.G. was not equipped with a heater, and forward vision depended solely on the efficiency of an electric defroster. Snow piled on the lamp glasses, and reduced the output of the lights to about one candle power; even the "Death-ray" couldn't cope with the blinding blizzard that played havoc with time schedules on that fateful night and early morning of 24th-25th January.

*Snow clouds roll up on Mont-Blanc: taken during a brief appearance of the sun, on the Megeve-Annecy road.*

George Phillips and I drove through what seemed a lonely wilderness of white. About 20 kilometres from Valence, a glimmer of headlamps heralded an overtaking car. We drew into what we guessed was the side of the road, and in a flurry of snow, Sydney Allard's Allard shot past, closely followed by Peter Harper's Hillman Minx.

At the Valence control there was a sorry tale to tell of non-arrivals from Glasgow. Sydney appeared to be the only one to clock in on time, Harper was 24 minutes behind schedule, and there was a strange absence of G.B. plates in the parking space. It was bitterly cold, and we fortified ourselves with hot coffee and sandwiches from an all-night café.

Dawn was breaking as the M.G. entered the township of Crest on the road N93 to Gap. The roads were extremely slippery, and on one occasion the car started an almighty slide, which might have ended in

disaster. This was caused by a flat tyre, the wall being cut into by slivers of ice formed by a frozen mass in the wheel arch. The wheel was changed, and it was then that I noticed to my horror that instead of the proper spare, I had brought along a practically bald cover.

All the way over the series of Cols my mind kept thinking of that dicky tyre. The slightest sideslip, and I was certain that it had blown out. The padding of the wheels on the thick snow seemed to say "Clot-Clot-Cloppety-Clot"—and I'm sure Phil couldn't have agreed more.

Rounding a bend in the Col de Cabre we came upon Charles Eyre-Maunsell and Gordon Neill of the Ulster A.C., who were having some obscure trouble with their Humber. We stopped to see if we could help, and had a frightful job trying to restart. With the aid of several shoulders, and Phil bouncing on the back, the M.G. got under way again, boiling like a neglected kettle. Less than a kilometre along, we came down a vicious left-hand bend to find a Dutch-owned Citroën almost hanging over a precipice. The only thing that kept it from a 500 ft. dive was one of those invaluable red-tipped posts they stick up around these parts.

Stopping to help I asked the Dutchmen if they had a tow-rope. They replied "Ja", and produced a clothes-rope! Naturally this parted as soon as any strain was applied.



# THE DAY'S WORK!

Recounts Some Experiences Whilst Recent Monte Carlo Rally in a 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -litre M.G.

In the midst of these rescue operations, a Vedette arrived, and did a complete about-turn, blocking the road. It was man-handled to face its proper direction, and just at that moment Bob Foster's Javelin whistled round, missed both Citroën and Vedette by centimetres, scattered the characters doing the rescue job, and shot on its way without a trace of a slide.

Eventually the Citroën was retrieved, and we set off for Gap. Some 12 kilometres from that town, the M.G. did a violent swerve, completely revolved, and finished up on the opposite side of the road facing its proper direction. That wretched tyre had burst good and properly.

There was nothing else for it but to proceed as gently as possible to the nearest garage. Not far away was a village, but the local garage proprietor wasn't interested in repairing or selling tyres. Off we bumped towards Gap, at a steady 5-10 m.p.h.

Entering the control, Stirling Moss's Sunbeam-Talbot passed, obviously with plenty of time in hand. Stirling hung out of the passenger's window and howled. "Hi!—You've got a flat tyre!" Quickly Phil and I replied as one: "No we haven't—it's a new type of wheel: doesn't need any air!"

A quick lunch-cum-breakfast whilst the car was being fixed, and

tact, as he demonstrated when he hurtled past a few kilometres on.

Monte Carlo meant plenty of work for Phil and me. Reports had to be written, negatives developed, and information sought. The Regularity Test on Sunday entailed a trip up to the Col de Castillon, where we hoped to get some good pictures.

Up at Castillon there was every appearance of a secret time check. Being patriotic Britishers, we seriously thought about procuring a large sign and lettering it "SECRET CHECK AFTER TUNNEL". However, it was decided that the neutrality of the Press must be maintained, and in any case we discovered that the so-called check was a phoney.

The hotel-café at Castillon was peopled by many of our countrymen, including Gilbert Best and Wally Waring. By the time the first car appeared it was snowing like fury, and the descent of the Col de Castillon was more than treacherous. Our party rushed to the aid of Stirling Moss whose Sunbeam-Talbot arrived when the surface was at its worst, and overshoot the tunnel corner. Tommy Wisdom's 8-cylinder Daimler was also in trouble; he pulled over to let Peter Bolton's Vanguard pass, and both cars became ditched. They were speedily released from the grip of the snow. Many others also found that the tunnel corner was not just a simple right-hand bend, but a complete skating rink hazard.

There were cheers when Sydney's Allard was spotted, but these turned to groans of dismay when it was seen that his nearside front wheel was flapping around, and appeared to be due to leave the axle at any moment. However, Allard, Warburton and Lush all wore huge grins, and didn't seem to mind having uni-directional steering.

That evening the results were announced provisionally. When it was learned that Great Britain had scored a one-two victory, folk from this country went mad with delight. There were celebration dinners everywhere. Jack Reece did his "Man with the Ill-fitting Suit" act to an appreciative audience at "Cesar's". When an empty place was set by mistake beside him, the proprietor gleefully fell in with the idea of a "Harvey", and the non-existent rabbit was treated as a very hungry customer. Later the man from Liverpool managed to win the jack-pot from the fruit-machine.

(Continued overleaf)



(Above) The Rochebrune Téléferique, which carries ski-ers from Megeve up over 1,800 metres to some of the finest "pistes" in the French Alps.

(Left) A pole prevented this Citroën from taking a dive of some 500 feet down, in the Col de Cabre.



we were soon on our way again. Several cars passed, obviously badly pushed for time, and nearly every one of them bore traces of contact with things vegetable or mineral. Near Digne we met Bertie Bradnack, who recounted the tale of Stokes and the Chiron Alfa, a tale which has now become a classic "Monte" yarn. The Mark VII Jaguar certainly looked more than a trifle bent, but to Bertie's delight, his "Da-De-Do-Da" triple windhorns were in-



The M.G. had to plough its way over hundreds of kilometres of this sort of stuff.

#### All in the Day's Work—continued

After reports and negatives had been despatched by air from Nice, Phil and I made plans for returning to England. As I had agreed to go with Marcel Becquart to Anney to have a "looksee" at the proposed course for the Alpine Sporting Trial next June, Phil went back with Les Odell in his Javelin. I left Monte Carlo at 11 a.m. on the Wednesday, and on the road met up with Johnny Clegg and the crew of his Sunbeam-Talbot. I suggested lunch at a hostelry I wot of near Brignoles, and there we found a number of British competitors, including Maurice Tew, Pat Starke, Jack Kemsley, Philip Fotheringham-Parker and R. J. Morton. Unlike last year, this "Hostellerie" bore rather a startling resemblance to a clip-joint, with a "prix fixe", for a very mediocre meal, of 1,100 francs—and 150 extra for a cup of coffee, plus service and tax charges.

There was a little ice around, and I did a hectic revolving act in avoiding a jack-rabbit which looked like a young kangaroo. For many kilometres I followed the Moss Sunbeam-Talbot, being driven by Desmond Scannell. They must have stopped at the Nougat racket town of Montelimar, for I lost sight of the S.-T., after passing it on the descent from Donzère—by permission of Scannell, of course!

After a fairly decent meal at Valence, I headed for Anney by the snow-covered road to Grenoble. It was so bitterly cold that when it began to snow I discovered that my wiper blades froze to the scuttle. The roads were "verglas", and I continually met up with camions stranded at the foot of slippery hills.

My fuel gauge registered dangerously low, and then began the

hunt for a petrol station. I have come to the conclusion that the majority of petrol pumps in France are symbolic of tombstones. They stand guard over mausoleums containing the corpses of garage proprietors. After 10 o'clock, the traveller can sound Gabriel's Trumpet—with as little effect as playing bagpipes to an audience of deaf and dumb mutes.

Eventually I discovered a lovely row of glistening pumps marked "Esso". Sustained pressure on the night bell evoked a small gnome-like creature who silently put 30 litres of "super" in the tank. I handed him 2,000 francs, and he vanished into his bureau, slammed the door and I awaited vainly for my change of some 100 francs. He must have retired to his mausoleum, for the pump lights went out, and the silence of the grave descended on the petrol station. Even the night bell was silent!

I spent the night at Grenoble.



(Above) This camion headed a queue of others, ice-bound, on the main road from Bourg to Rheims.

(Below, right) A Christmas-card setting with Mont-Blanc in the background.

Next morning it was still snowing hard, and the road from Ugine to Anney had several inches on the surface. In Anney itself it was pouring of rain. Marcel Becquart met me at the "Splendide", and after a first-class lunch at one of his pet restaurants, we set off to see the course for the trial. He told me that Cyril Corbishley and Doc Hardman had already been there,

and had expressed themselves as delighted with the ground. By the time we reached the spot it was snowing a real blizzard.

The course lies in a private park by the lakeside, and from what I saw of it under its blanket of white, should provide the owners of trials specials with just the sort of terrain they like. There are several steep hills, and all rise sheer from the shores of the lake, being a mixture of grassy banks and paths. Becquart believes that rocky Alpine territory might prove a trifle dangerous, and in any case would cause lengthy delay if cars became stuck. He and the Mont-Blanc club officials are rather keen to run the event on the lines of a "Motocross", or "Autocross" as we should call it, giving each competitor timed runs on a full circuit, and sending them off at stated intervals. However, that is a matter for the organizing committee to decide.

Next I set off for Megeve to see a proposed speed hill-climb course. I might have saved myself the trouble, for the snow was so thick, that one couldn't see where the road began or finished. On the way, a minor avalanche fell on the M.G., just outside a tunnel on the gorge near Faverges. With the aid of a bus-driver, two roadmen and the owner of a Renault, we dug the car out within an hour. Trying to get away caused the engine to overheat and the radiator to boil furiously. On arrival at Megeve I found that the head gasket had blown between Nos. 3 and 4 cylinders. A local garage removed the head, and also discovered that an exhaust valve had stretched and seized in its guide. Fortunately I had an M.G. Continental spares kit, which contained a gasket and spare valves.

All the time I was in Megeve it



snowed—and snowed. It was so thick on the “pistes”, that even experienced ski-ers decided that it was too risky. At Rochebrune (1,861 metres), the main runs had something like three feet of snow on them, and visibility was a matter of a few yards. It was the lack of visibility that was the real danger.

The return to Dunkerque was a story of hundreds of kilometres of snow and ice. Shortly after leaving Megeve I drove straight into a snow-drift and remained there till rescued by a horse drawing a sleigh. From Annecy to Nantua, the roads were deep in slush, and passing traffic ploughed through it chucking up waves of filthy brown and grey liquid. Out of Nantua, the surface was frozen hard in deep ridges, which tested the excellent suspension of the M.G. to the utmost.

From Bourg it was a continual battle with blizzards and slippery roads. I stopped at Dijon for some food, and when I came out of the café I had difficulty in finding my car under its blanket of snow. From the town the main road to Rheims was exceedingly treacherous, and at times drifts made it impossible to see where the edges of the road began. There wasn't a soul in sight.

About 10 kilometres out of Dijon, I saw a very faint glimmer of light from the roadside on the left. To my amazement my headlamps

picked out a hand apparently sticking out from nowhere. I braked, and immediately turned completely round like a spinning top. The hand belonged to a motor-cyclist who was lying in the ditch with his machine on top of him; the small glimmer that I had perceived came from the sparking of his lighter flint.

I tried to lift the heavy machine—it was a Czechoslovakian Jawa—and its rider groaned terribly. A quick examination soon revealed that his leg was broken. It was no easy matter to get that bike off him, but with a desperate heave, I finally managed it. I gave him some brandy and a cigarette. He told me in a mixture of French and English that he was a Czech miner, returning to his own country, and that he had been lying in the ditch for over an hour.

The problem of getting him to hospital was considerable. I eventually took everything out of the car and put it on the roof rack, then removed the front passenger seat. With a struggle I managed to lift him by the armpits and drag him into the back. The pain of movement was so great that he fainted clean away—which was probably just as well. At Dijon I stopped at the first café I saw lit, which was most fortunate, as on enquiring the way to the hospital I was answered by—a doctor. He took over, and within 15 minutes had procured an

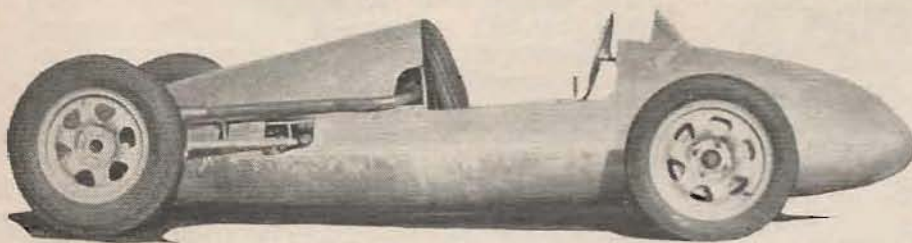
ambulance and had roughly set the unlucky Czech's leg.

I continued on my way, and from Dijon to Langres I never saw another vehicle. The only wheel-marks were mine, and the semi-obliterated track of the Jawa. It was indeed a lucky chance for the Czech that I had decided to push on that night. Arriving at Langres I felt that I had had enough, and after a search, discovered the Hotel de la Poste, where I stopped the night. In the morning I telephoned the hospital at the number given to me by the doctor, and learned that the motor-cyclist had spent a fairly comfortable night, but had suffered a compound fracture of the right leg.

The rest of the trip included a great deal more snow right past Rheims, and a curious accident in a village near St. Dizier, where a couple of articulated camions had their trailers immovably mixed up in the narrow street. This involved a detour of several kilometres, over country lanes where oxen strayed at will, and the potholes were like bomb craters—and probably were!

On the whole it was a most instructive trip. It taught me many lessons of winter driving, and caused me to marvel how Sydney Allard, Stirling Moss, Dr. Angelvin, Marcel Becquart and the others managed to average the required 31 m.p.h. over icy roads deep in snow, on tortuous mountain roads.

## The New Mackson “500”



THE accompanying illustration reveals that the Mackson “500” jointly produced by “Mac” McGee and Gordon Bedson, is as advanced in appearance as it is in concept. The low built, smooth contoured bodywork is mounted upon a tubular frame, with helical spring i.f.s., the wishbone links of which pivot on the frame tubes themselves. The rear wheels are mounted on swing axles, Kieft fashion, and total dry weight of the car with twin o.h.c. Norton engine is a modest 480 lbs. Fuel

is carried in two 3½-gallon tanks flanking the driver's seat, wheels are Dunlop light alloy, and Lockheed 2LS hydraulic brakes are employed. The appearance of this newcomer in 1952 Formula 3 races will be keenly anticipated.

(Top) The low-built Mackson “500”. (Right) “Double-Knocker” Norton engine in situ. One of the radius arms controlling the swing-axle rear suspension is also seen.

