

# And Now for Something Completely Different! Paul Wignall

## Paul reflects on The 2008 Maroc Classic

It's always interesting to do new, different events and after recommendations from Stan Williams /Tony Davies and Mike/ Marjie Ridley who did the event in 2007, eleven British crews ventured onto the African continent between March 15<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> to take part in the running of the 15<sup>th</sup> version of this Moroccan event. Starting in the Nation's capital of Rabat on the west coast, the 2300km route took in the cities of Tangiers, Fes, Ouarzazate, not to mention a night on the edge of the Sahara under canvass in a Bivouac, with the finish in Marrakech. The very imaginative route was an ideal way to see Morocco and the beautiful Atlas mountains.

So how was this event different from the normal long distance event?

What's your normal course opening car in the UK? I guarantee it won't be a Le Mans winning Matra 560 with V12 engine, open exhausts and a sound that hurts your ear drums on half throttle. That was for the first three days. It was then swapped for an open-wheel, straight 8, un-silenced Bugatti Type 35 for another couple of days before reverting back to the Matra!



How about this for organisation.....we delivered the cars to Dover, they were shipped out to Morocco by the organisers, when we jetted in, there was our car, lined up in its correct starting bay, washed, all stickers applied and covered in a swish red waterproof car cover, just a hint of things to come. The sponsorship on this event was impressive; here are some of them; Peugeot who not only supplied the aforementioned covers but also all the cars for the organisers and at least six cars for use by competitors whose cars broke down, all being transported around the rally route on a car transporter;

Mumm Champagne, Shell, Zurich Insurance, First Rent a Car, Royal Air Maroc, Castel Beer (who provided free beer!), the Moroccan Tourist board and many more. Why is it that Foreign organisers seem to be able to attract so much more sponsorship.....are European companies more agreeable to part with their cash or are we not trying hard enough?

Now to classes, there were two categories, Classic and Prestige. The Classic catered for anything built up to 1981, for the Prestige class any GT or Sports car made after 1981 - simple! This meant that here was an event for anyone with a 'prestige' car to enjoy fast motoring in a country with a 'relaxed' attitude to motoring laws, particularly vis-a-vis speeding! Hell, why not, the President d'Honneur for the event was the King's brother who likes cars!! Top of the glamour list had to be a Mercedes SLR McLaren costing a reputed £350,000 followed by a couple of modern Ferraris, a 360 Stradale and an F430. It was ironic that as these three scored maximum pose points at the start, by the end of the second day all were on the transporters and their owners driving round in rental cars!! How about this, one of the Ferraris dented a rim, the tyre went down, he continued, broke the rim, end of rally.....replacement rim and tyre rumoured to be £7000!!

The most popular make of car in both Classic and Prestige was Porsche, ranging from modern 911Turbos to a rarer-than-hens-teeth 356 Cabriolet Carrera 2 with four cam engine and very impressive performance. Undoubted top pose marks in the classic section went to another Ferrari, a 250 GTO (£6million to spare anyone?). But it still needed a push start all week due to failed electrics. Anyway, top marks to the owner for driving this precious car on some of the roads we used.

The route instructions were in the form of a simple but detailed Tulip Road book ideal for a newcomer to the sport. The competitive element of the event consisted of 17 regularities varying in length from 3kms to 40kms, timed to the tenth of a second using a transponder attached to the vehicle windscreen by Velcro. You knew not where the timing points were as there were no marshals at the TPs - just a hidden transponder receiver which recorded, to one tenth of a second, the precise time you and your cars passed the timing point. Think about that for a second, or even a tenth of a second if you like.

That means you can't see the timing point, so you can't speed up or slow down as you approach



it gets rid of the early or late presser of the watch factor, it gets rid of the time spent chipping the time card, it enables the organiser to produce rapid results, but one thing it doesn't do, is allow the competitor to check his results because

you never knew the ideal distance, which was compounded by the fact that more than one car was used to measure the route. Consequently you couldn't make accurate adjustments to your trip and it lead to a lack of transparency in the results system, but having said that, most of the other competitors didn't seem to care, as they waded into yet another sumptuous buffet at another five star hotel and into some more supplies of wine and beer supplied with the compliments of the generous organisers. We did our best to help!



Talking of distance recorders, the Regulations stated that these were free except for computers and ATS pp3 loaded in the car, whatever that was. When is an all singing and dancing Terratrip not a computer? Nevertheless some extremely impressive times were put up, whatever the equipment was being used. At the end of the event the winning margin was 1.1 seconds and 5 seconds covered the first five cars!

What a joy it was to drive in a camera-free country for a week with police on every junction encouraging you to go faster, road sections with average speeds of 100kph, and if you wanted to go faster nobody was going to complain!!!!!!!. The regularities had a choice of a fast speed or moderate speed (the fast speed sometimes being as

high as 90kph!!). We soon learnt that slower was best, especially when the cunning organisers would put a Passage Control 200 meters before a timing point!

Nobody will forget the night spent under canvas near M'Hamid where the road stops and you can only proceed further south across the Sahara in 4x4 vehicles. Unfortunately for all concerned, a sand-storm preceded the arrival of the rally which meant that most of the covers on the camp beds were covered in several inches of sand, and the fodder was very late being served. The outdoor showers did provide some warm water for a lucky few, but the loos were best avoided the following morning. To while away the evening you could take a camel ride along the line of tents, although you had to be careful where you trod in the half-light.

The local residents were generally very pleased, and often amazed, to see the rally cars pass. With 50% of the population aged under 24, there were plenty of children at the sides of the road. Most were well behaved; waving and smiling although some did throw stones which was particularly intimidating in open-topped cars. Thankfully only minor damage was inflicted.

Well what happened to the 50+ finishers? The Ismail brothers from Madagascar came from behind (5<sup>th</sup> position) on the last regularity to take victory in their 1970 911S, followed by Mr and Mrs End from Germany in another 911. First Brit was Jayne Wignall/Kevin Savage in their trusty Tiger, with Mr and Mrs Gouzer from Switzerland in a Healey 3000 4<sup>th</sup>. Paul Wignall/Fred Bent 911S were fifth, Paul/Judy Blockidge 12<sup>th</sup> after a trouble free run in their Volvo. Talking about the runs, Imodium almost became a currency, so strong was the demand! David/Jake Hall Jaguar XK140 14<sup>th</sup>, Drexel/ Pat Gillespie Tiger 15<sup>th</sup> after overheating problems and a possible blown head gasket, Mike/Marjie Ridley 24<sup>th</sup> (Giuetta Sprint), David Spurling/Ros Shallcross drove their Morgan +4 all the way from the UK and back, finishing 25<sup>th</sup> closely followed by Stan Williams/Tony Davies in Stan's now re-bodied 1937 4.3 Alvis, the oldest car on the event, along with John Abel/Suzie Pickering in their 4 litre Lagonda. David/Susie Cook in their Morgan had problems loosing a



Colvill got their large Rolls Royce round the route despite cooling problems and noises from the rear suspension that were not there when the car left Crewe.

To summarize, this was a great opportunity to see Morocco, but aimed at the participant who is more interested in the total experience of the trip/rally, rather than just the competitive element.

Paul Wignall  
March 2008

carburettor banjo but got that fixed to enable them to get to the finish, and finally Bella and Tony

*What a quite brilliantly over the top event with a bonus of excellent results for Paul & Jayne. Only the Arab world surely can run to this sort of 'luxury', WC action apart .Ed*

#### RALLYE "Classic"

1	Alexandre ISMAIL-Mathias ISMAIL	MAD	Porsche 911 2.4 S	39,9
2	Jurgen END-Yvonne END	ALL	Porsche Carrera 2.7 L Targa	41
3	Jayne WIGNALL-Kevin SAVAGE	UK	Sunbeam Tiger	42,2
4	Yves GOUZER-Elka GOUZER	CH	Austin Healey 3000 MK III	43
5	Paul WIGNALL-Fred BENT	UK	Porsche 911 S	45,1
6	Olivier LAZAR-Stephane AGOSTINI	FRA	Ferrari 308 GTS	47,3
7	Elmar WIEDERIN-Alexander HOFER	AUT/ALL	Porsche 356 A Cabriolet	47,5
8	Dr. E. Michael FEICHTINGER-Michael HABERL	AUT	Porsche 356B Carrera 2000	48,6
9	Claude LAURENT-Dominique LAURENT	FRA	Lotus Elan S4	53,2
10	Frederic THOUVENIN-Philippe MERLE	FRA	Jaguar XK 150S	57,2
11	Mmes Carine MERLE-Pauline MERLE	FRA	Alfa Romeo Giulietta	57,9
12	Paul BLOXIDGE-Judy BLOXIDGE	UK	Volvo Amazon 123 GT	60,6
13	Jean-Pierre MERLE-Alexandre MERLE	FRA	Jaguar Type E V12	62
14	David HALL-Jake S. HALL	UK	Jaguar XK 140 DHC	62,3
15	Claude CONSTEN-Bernard CONSTEN	FRA	Jaguar Type E V12	77,3
16	Daniel R. JAGMETTI-Andreas BRECHBUEHL	CH	Alfa Romeo 1750 GTV	77,8
17	Alain LIAULT-Philippe ROUSSELOT	FRA	Porsche 356 SC	81,3
18	Jean-Claude THIRIET-Jose ROSINSKI	FRA	Jaguar Type C	90,1
19	Drexel GILLESPIE-Patricia GILLESPIE	UK/IR	Sunbeam Tiger	91,4

Out of 47 finishers



