

FEATURE

Cape crusader blazes a trail



AS a youngster Dennis Greenslade recorded car registration numbers from his parents' garden in Redruth. "There weren't so many cars in those days," says the 68-year-old Cornishman.

Since that first flush of enthusiasm he has risen competitively through the ranks in a hobby that is a consuming passion. Navigating, rallying, trialing, endurance tests – all aspects of motorsports that have earned him accolades and awards.

Dennis is no stranger to such vertiginous challenges as the one-in-three gradient test climb at St Agnes. But he is equally at home competing in international historic rallies, having navigated on a number of legendary outings including the Monte Carlo Challenges, London-Sydney, and Liege-Rome-Liege.

Dennis who, before retiring enjoyed a successful career in banking, has just put the finishing touches to his seventh Cape to Cape Grand Tour this April.

This is his own creation – and one that commands considerable interest among the touring cognoscenti.

Often the best ideas are born in the most unlikely locations. Dennis can vouch for that. It was while lying on a beach in France in 2002 that he had a flash of inspiration – an event that would combine motoring adventure with raising large sums for charity.

"Trips between Land's End and John O'Groats were becoming old hat. But no one had linked the only two capes in the UK together," he says.

Dennis created the Grand Tour Cape to Cape – a testing route between Cape Cornwall and Cape Wrath in north west Scotland. Over the years other capes have become part of the itinerary – with this year's route linking Cape Cornwall to Cape Finisterre on the north west coast of Spain.

"My aim in creating The Grand Tour was to illustrate what it was like in the 1930s competing in the car trials of the day," said Dennis.

"We use a lot of the classic trials hills like the Blue Hills Mine test in St Agnes, but, unlike rallying, it is not against the clock and it is a non-damaging event to cars," he says.

This year's week-long 1,400 mile outing is no jaunt for Sunday afternoon



Roger Malone talks to a rally organiser who has raised more than £300,000 for charity



drivers. It encapsulates the romance and rigours of motoring, punctuated by overnights at posh hotels and concluding with awards and a gala dinner.

"Classic car tours usually involve driving around for a day and ending up with a cream tea," he says.

Organising this event takes him back to his love of maps. He uses his experience of navigating and world rallying to set unusual routes which blend splendid scenery with demanding motoring.

"I make it a difficult route to add to the competitiveness and the endurance of the event, otherwise it would be too easy," says Dennis.

"This is meant to test cars, navigators and drivers. It is an adventure and at the same time raises money for a good cause."

From the outset it was agreed the charity that benefited would be Macmillan Cancer Support. Dennis' wife Tricia assisted in planning the early events. It was a shock and a poignant irony that she died of cancer in 2005.

"We have had four drivers who have died of cancer that have been in these events over the years," said Dennis.

The six previous tours have raised in excess of £318,000. He is hoping for a minimum of £40,000 from the 2010 Cape to Cape, which this year will be shared between Macmillan Cancer Sup-



Kicker in here

Long and winding road to Cape Finisterre

NOW in its seventh year The Cape to Cape 2010 promises to be the best yet. Dennis Greenslade, event director and creator of this annual Grand Tour, is delighted that some 40 vehicles will be taking part.

The first run in 2004 was between Cape Cornwall and Cape Wrath in Scotland. It has since expanded to include capes in the Republic of Ireland and France.

This year, what has gained a reputation of being "the toughest classic car tour in Europe", will finish on the north west coast of Spain at Cape Finisterre. The week-long 1,400-mile adventure begins on St George's Day, Friday, April 23.

This year a larger than usual selection of pre-war cars is taking part. The oldest is a 1927 Lancia Lambda owned by Tim and Ann Riley of Porlock. There is also a 1933 Alvis



Roger and Julia Bricknell's MGB GT

Firefly and a 1934 Lagonda M45 Tourer.

A batch of 1950s cars include a Singer Roadster and a rare 1955 Swallow Doretti.

Dennis is pleased that the event attracts regular teams from the West-country.

David and Pamela Inns have again

entered their desirable AC Aceca, while Roger and Julia Bricknell of Bodmin, with their respective navigators, are entering their Triumph TR4A and MGB GT.

En route the "tourists" will tackle renowned trial hills and face manoeuvrability tests in Devon and Cornwall. Once in Spain they will traverse the maze of roads in the foothills of the Pyrenees before crossing the Picos de Europa mountains and taking the coast road to Cabo Finisterre.

The previous six tours have raised in excess of £318,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support. This year funds raised will be shared with the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Further details of this event can be obtained from Dennis Greenslade on 01872 262625.

port and the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Dennis first became actively involved in motorsports back in 1963. Known for his enthusiastic pourings over OS maps he was invited by a colleague to do a spot of rally navigating. "It was organised by the Newquay Motor Club and I jumped at it."

Dennis found himself in the passenger seat of an Austin A35 – but things didn't go to plan. "It was a disaster. I was sick. We didn't finish – and that's how it all started."

Dennis tried all sorts of cures for his nausea – from the unlikely remedy of sitting on newspaper to being given morning sickness pills by a pregnant lady. "That didn't work. I then bought my own car and took up driving so I didn't need to navigate!"

He progressed to taking part in international rallies. "I enjoy taking part, but my aim from the outset is to win. I'm

quite competitive."

He wanted to get to the top of a branch of motorsport and so he entered classic trials – becoming national champion four times. "Classic car trials pre-date rallying and came out in the 1930s which was the heyday of the sport. There were three big trials – London-Exeter, London-Land's End and the London-Edinburgh.

Along these route were tests such as Porlock Hill and Blue Hills Mine, St Agnes.

Dennis has always been keen to try and help charities through his hobby.

In 1983 he set up the Land's End to John O'Groats Association which creates an official record of all journeys between these two points whether contenders walk, cycle or motor.

Dennis, who was association chairman for six years, created it the morning after completing the fastest non-stop sole driver from Land's End to John

O'Groats and back. This was done in an amazing 24 hours 32 minutes behind the wheel of an Audi Quattro with a navigator and car manager on board. The feat of endurance raised £10,000 for charity. "Since 1963 I had been driving in rallies and trials all through the night so I was used to it," said Dennis, who was 41 at the time.

The planning was meticulous with the route worked out to the smallest detail. This included essential "pit stops".

"From leaving the motorway to the petrol station and back to the motorway we allowed six minutes," he recalls.

"There would be a loo break; one of us would refuel and the other pay in cash because we didn't want any delay with a credit card."

No wonder Dennis now dedicates himself to the relatively leisurely pace of the Grand Tours.

