

Historic rallying

Neil Campbell (totally tropical style) spends two weeks in Barbados and calls it work



RALLY-SPECIFICATION RILEY 1.5

ENGINE: 1489cc/4-cyl/OHV
GEARBOX: 4-spd manual
POWER: 100bhp@4200rpm
TORQUE: 110lb ft@3200rpm
0-60MPH: 11sec
TOP SPEED: 75mph



Food preparation, Neil Campbell style. Obviously, he should have worn gloves for this.

It was one of those phone calls you dread. 'We need an extra crew member for our Riley 1.5. Could someone from PC help?' It was Ding Boston, team coordinator of the Oxford Universities Motorsport Foundation. 'Thing is, the rally starts next week. Oh, and it's in Barbados.'

Two weeks in the Lesser Antilles with a 45-year-old rally car and a bunch of engineering students sounded like a tough assignment, but I accepted.

Seven days later Virgin Atlantic dropped us off at Grantley Adams International Airport where I learnt that the answer 'I'm staying in a beach house somewhere' was insufficient for Barbados immigration to let me into the country. Fortunately Ding had brought OUMF students to compete in the Sol Rally Barbados for the previous three years, and was used to this sort of thing.

The Sol attracts top drivers and WRC cars from across the globe and we would be

competing in the historic class (the definition of 'historic' in Barbados is pretty much anything goes as long as the car retains the original bodyshell). Our 1489cc B-series engined Riley would be up against some stiff competition.

The car had already been shipped out and was waiting for us in a service bay at Ulyett's Machine Shop Service in St Thomas. If you ever need a crankshaft regrind on the island or a space-framed 400bhp twin turbo Datsun 120Y rally car building, then these are your guys. Their facilities were to be ours for the duration, all thanks to owner George Ulyett's love of motor sport and all things BMC.

An MG Midget and a Fiat 500 Jolly in the rafters confirmed my suspicion that the Ulyetts were PC people, and a pre-Farina Cambridge parked next to a Ford 100E Pop sealed the deal. The treasures continued when I discovered a shipping container of



MODIFICATIONS – the OUMF Riley is fairly stock, apart from the glassfibre bonnet.

Minis and Minors, an immaculate sit-up and beg Ford Pop that George had restored, several A35s, a Dennis Fire engine and an NSU Ro80. According to the dealer's window sticker, the NSU had been supplied new to a garage near PC's office in Peterborough. Bizarre.

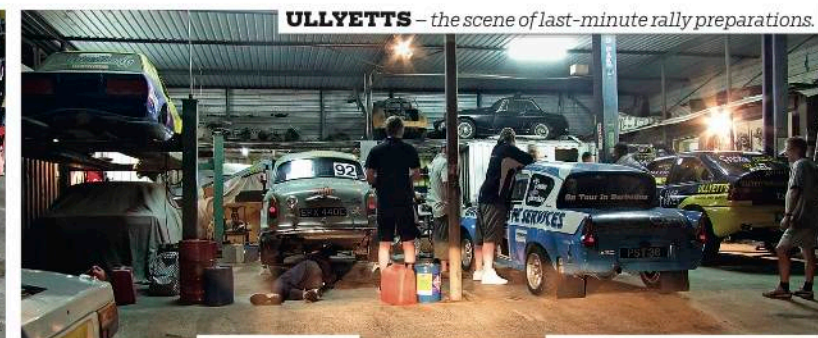
The kindness shown to us by the locals didn't end at the workshop. A buy two, get four free deal on meals was struck with Just Grillin' restaurant, and Historic Rally Carnival organiser Greg 'Hotty' Cozier lent us his \$2 million beach house. This was especially generous considering he would be battling his 2008 Ford Focus WRC-engined Mk II Escort against us. I told you their rules were different.

To compete in the main event, first we had to enter the Shell V Power King of the Hill. Several days were spent at the workshop applying stickers, checking components, stripping brakes and welding jacking points, but even the simplest of tasks was a strain at 38°C in the shade. Poor running was eventually traced to out-of-balance carbs, and we set them up using Redline racing fuel donated by rally chairman Barry Gale. All was well until the night before scrutineering, when the Riley decided it's horn and headlamps would no longer work. After a pretty harrowing encounter with a Wolf spider, more midnight oil was burned rewiring the cockpit.

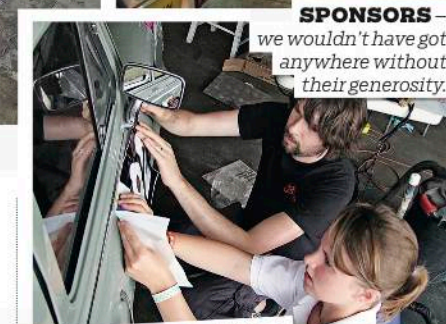
You might think the sunny Barbados climate would be kind to cars but at barely



JUST GRILLIN' – they kept the team very well fed and watered.



ULLYETTS – the scene of last-minute rally preparations.



SPONSORS – we wouldn't have got anywhere without their generosity.



SILENT BUT DEADLY – spiders don't usually feature in differential changes.



IT'S A BRIT! The Bajans love their British Leyland tin.



DIRECTIONS – despite clear signposts, Neil did manage to get lost.

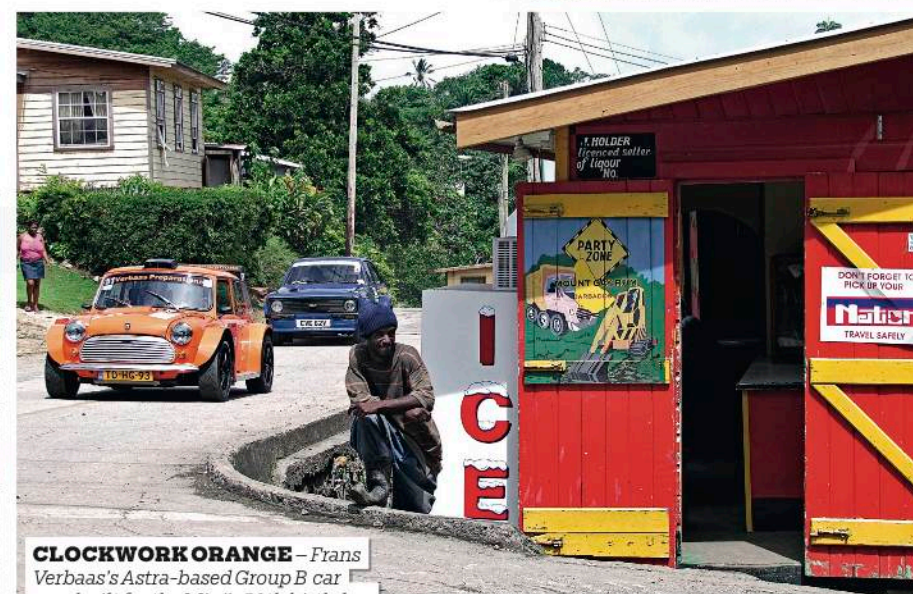


SO'S THIS! Our Neil was delighted to find a Cambridge rustier than his.



RECOGNISE THE RS? Doug Armstrong's gold Escort has been on the cover of PC.

14 miles wide, salty sea winds reach even the most inland areas. Rust. This doesn't stop Bajans enjoying classics, though. Several of the local rally competitors owned and restored classics, and I bumped into PC subscriber Ronnie Burton who took me out in his Triumph Spitfire to meet some fellow enthusiasts. An impromptu car meet at



CLOCKWORK ORANGE – Frans Verbaas's Astra-based Group B car was built for the Mini's 50th birthday.



CLASSICS ROUND EVERY CORNER
— you can't drive far without finding something special.



PC SUBSCRIBER Ronnie Burton with his Spitfire and Vitesse project.



HISTORIC — is a loose term in Barbados rallying.



GIVE UP? It's the Ulyetts' bonkers Datsun 120Y Turbo.

Doug Armstrong's plantation started well and got better thanks to a big bottle of Mount Gay Extra Old. In another bizarre twist I discovered that Doug's immaculate Ford Escort RS1600 had featured on the cover of **PC** in November 1989.

The Bajans love their cars, especially ones that go sideways, and the OUMF rally Riley has become a bit of a celebrity. Even Sir Cliff Richard walking past didn't distract the crowd gathered around our little grey classic. We got similar attention at the King of the Hill competition despite coming third from last, mainly due to sticking brakes, the

wrong diff and not having a modern engine and sequential gearbox.

Service crews spend most of their time standing around but it's made interesting by short bursts of intense activity when the car arrives back from the stage. Visual and spanner checks are made, the drivers are attended to and any problems or damage rectified, all within a strict allotted service time. Fortunately, brakes and diff aside, the Riley performed faultlessly allowing us to watch the final few stages.

Changing the diff for a higher ratio one improved things no end although getting

the halfshafts back in caused much hilarity. Driving at normal speeds on Bajan roads can be quite scary, so we were careful to scope the Sol route for pace notes.

There are two types of road surface on the island — horribly rutted and horribly smooth. Coral is used as aggregate and this results in road surfaces polishing up like glass or simply crumbling away.

The rally was staged over two days and we were car 92 out of 93 contenders. It wasn't looking good. The first day's Canefield and Malvern stages took place near the service area at a sugar cane



STAGE SERVICES
— quite a picturesque place to stop.



BRRM! BRRM!
This was the closest Neil got to driving a stage.



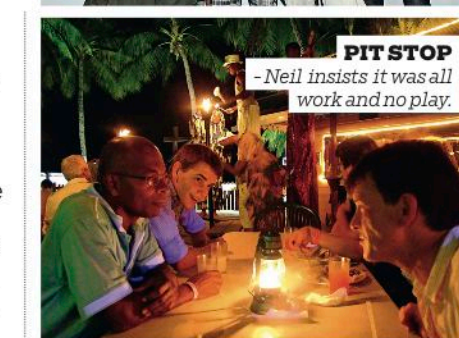
GO! GO! GO! Ding Boston and co-driver Hannah Byrd in full flight.



SPECTATOR SPORT
— thousands watched the V-Power King of the Hill competition.



WE WON! — well, the OUMF team got 42nd overall and second in class.



PIT STOP
— Neil insists it was all work and no play.

factory. As service crew, we had to race along the lanes to meet the Riley at the end of each stage in case repairs were required.

Fortunately the Riley proved to be quite reliable with only a leaky halfshaft oil seal and questionable brakes to report.

With drum brakes all round we needed them to work efficiently so the halfshaft leak that was filling the rear offside drum with oil was a bit of a worry. We had no choice but to leave the axle strip-down and rebuild for when we got back to the workshop, as we didn't want to pick up any time penalties.

Several cars crashed out, including British driver Martin Stockdale. He'd spent a week rebuilding his BMW after a roll at King of The Hill, only to cement his 'Mad-dale' nickname by doing it again. One stage was cancelled after a spectator stole a marshal's 4x4 and crashed it.

We had an exciting time too. I got lost and took all our gear on a tour of the wrong side of the island. When we made it back to Canefield a monkey threw mangoes at us from a tree.

Greg Cozier's Escort went out early with mechanical problems

and MGB-owning local Ryan 'Woody' Wood, took the rear axle off his Starlet. We went back to the workshop at the end of the day knowing that, axle rebuild aside, we had a chance of a class win.

Sunday's service area was at Bushey Park, Barbados's motor sport venue, but the Stewarts Hill and Kendal stages were notoriously tricky and we were nervous. We were now dicing for first spot in our class with another Mk II Escort, this one powered by a Vauxhall 2.0-litre twin-cam.

As 25,000 spectators were expected at the final super-special stages, we were desperate to make it through the day without incident.

The retirements came thick and fast including Geoffrey Ulyett and Jason King in their 400bhp Group B turbo Datsun. The Riley, however, kept plodding through the stages. Running last was a scary experience for Ding, as the marshals had started packing up the course. He had one hand on the horn to remind spectators, animals and vehicles on the track that there was still one car left to come through.

Meeting up with the Riley at the Superspecial stage revealed that a shock absorber had let go, as was evident from the light mist of oil up the side of the car. Replacing it out of a service area would have landed us with a hefty time penalty, so the last

stages were driven with fingers crossed.

The results were to be announced the next day, so we cracked open some Banks beers and enjoyed the atmosphere.

TRIP STATISTICS

4-4-2

MEAL DEAL AT JUST GRILLIN'

125

KM — SOL RALLY STAGE DISTANCE

38

DEGREES C IN THE SHADE

2005

WHEN OUMF WAS FORMED



Animals — OUMF's Alex Champion shows Neil how to party, student style.

'I got lost and took all our gear on a tour of the wrong side of the island'

Early next morning we got a tip-off from a fellow competitor that we were about to get a Did Not Finish, as one of our time cards had been lost. We had one hour to appeal.

A mercy dash across Bridgetown to rally HQ ensued but by the time we arrived, the card had been found and we were reinstated. Out of 93 competitors we finished 42nd and second in class — a great result, especially as our 1965 Riley was virtually standard.

Classic rallying is great fun, whether it is in the Caribbean or Corby. But what struck me most about the experience was the students' level of ability and Ding's commitment to encouraging young people to take part. Without people like him and organisations like OUMF, the future of the classic and historic car movements would surely be in jeopardy. ■

The 2011 Sol Rally Barbados is on June 4-5. Check out www.rallybarbados.bb for details. Then there's the Barbados Historic Rally Carnival July 14-24 — for further details visit www.barbadosrallycarnival.com.

THANKS TO Oxford Universities Motorsport Foundation: www.oumf.org
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