

P R I V A T E M O T O R C L U B



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TOUR AUTO

BENTLEY IN MONTE CARLO
XJ220 LM ON TRACK
A ROYAL ASTON MARTIN
1970 BOAC 1000
SURTEES AND FERRARI
MILLE MIGLIA
TOYOTA 2000GT IN THE DESERT
LAND ROVER DISCOVERY
AUDI RS6

ISSUE 03 - £15 WHERE SOLD - SUMMER 2017

GT

THE SCUDERIA BEAR
'1 MUF' GT40. DRIVEN TO
VICTORY ON THE 2017
TOUR AUTO BY JAMES
COTTINGHAM AND
ANDREW SMITH

WORDS
TIM HUTTON
PHOTOGRAPHY
RICHARD P WALTON
& TIM HUTTON





In a few emails passed around prior to this year's Tour Auto, a good friend Thomas Brimblecombe suggested some names we should seek out during registration. Notably James Cottingham and Andrew Smith in their popular 'Scuderia Bear' 1 MUF GT40.

This would be their second Tour Auto; in 2016 they'd been well in contention with the leaders and won a few of the stages, but three separate fires had led to them being unable to keep in touch with the frontrunners. One thing was for sure, though: they'd be back!

We caught up with them during scrutineering and said that we'd like to attempt to follow them over the week and catch up with them at the end of each day. In reality, this was easier said than done.

For starters, our plans to lead them out of Paris at dawn with the boot of the Audi RS6 open to allow Richard P Walton to get some great photos went to pieces in seconds. The cars started to leave, but not in exact numbered order. Our Audi was parked 100 yards down from the entrance ready to jump in front. It started to rain and the crowds quickly grew; even at 6am, people were out to see the cars roar off in to Paris.

Then, 1 MUF suddenly rolled out of the Palais earlier than planned. We jumped in the car and grabbed Richard, who'd been catching shots of the cars leaving, but within moments we were three red lights behind – our plan had failed!

Around 25 minutes later, we got lucky. Struggling to read the route, we pulled into a petrol station – and jackpot! James and Andrew were parked up having just refuelled. The car barked into life, we gave them a thumbs-up and followed them, somehow, although after a few miles and some good photos, we managed to take a wrong turn and lose them again. This would happen a lot over the course of the week.

Apart from a few photo opportunities, it wasn't until the end of the day in St Malo that I was able to catch up with Andrew and find out how their event was going so far.

Leading your class and second overall – things are looking good!

"Certainly, last year on the first day we had a major engine fire that put us out on the first stage and ruined our chances of the whole event, so it's a better start than last year!"

Who do you think will be your main rivals over the week?

"Well, the Cobras, the other GT40 and Jean-Pierre Lajournade in the E-Type. He's a very experienced rally driver and has driven a lot of these stages before. We have a good advantage over the other cars on the circuit, then we just have to be careful on the special stages."

Today feels like it has been a long day?

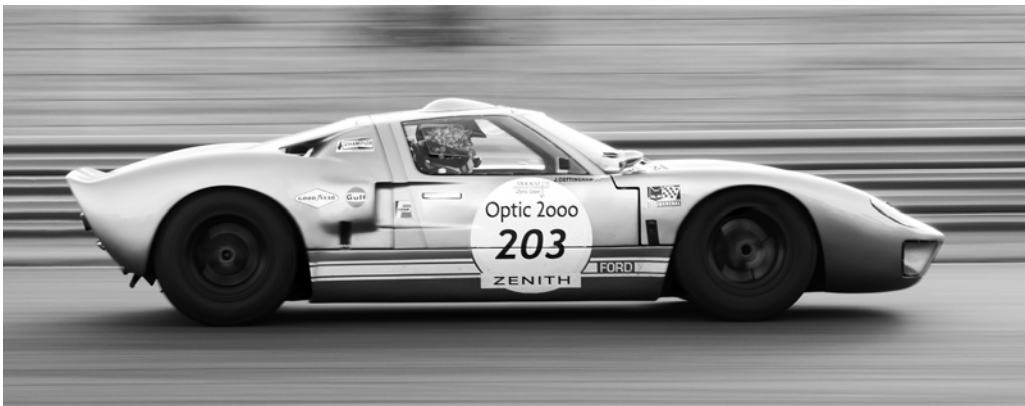
"Yeah, it has. Luckily we made some pretty good time and got here a bit earlier, but by the time it comes to dinner, it'll have been a long day, so it's important to get some good sleep each night."

The GT40 is a pure race car. What's it like keeping your concentration up on the road?

"That last leg was over 200km. You have to keep your eye on the ball, eat well and stay hydrated. It's only going to get harder; today was just one special stage and a race."

How does the driving work between you and James?

"We alternate on the special stages and circuits. I raced at Le Mans and James drove the road stages today. Tomorrow I'll do the road driving."



“THOSE SPECIAL STAGES ARE SOMETHING ELSE, 10-12KM OF ROAD LIKE NOTHING YOU’VE DRIVEN BEFORE”

Day two and we struggled to catch up with the GT40 at any point. There were a few brief waves and some photos during the special stages, but Parc Ferme was away from our hotel, so we chose to catch them the next morning instead. Day three would see James and Andrew tackle two special stages and Val de Vienne circuit. We caught up with James at the end of the day for an update.

How does your plan change now you are heading into the final stages?

“From this morning onwards, we’ve been aiming to be really careful, but still go fast. Just not push it too much and create unnecessary problems. Today we won both special stages and the race, which has been fantastic, but we’ve been really careful on the road and haven’t been caught speeding. Looking ahead, once tomorrow is out of the way, we really are on the home stretch. There are a few things on the car we’re a little apprehensive about, but the car is good and we’re looking after it.”

There seems to have been a larger police presence on the public sections today?

“We’re seriously careful on the road, there’s ample time and you can lose the event during the road stages with stupid mistakes. A lot of people take the road section for more than it is, there’s plenty of time to do the sections even if you hit traffic. I think those guys that drive too fast on the road should maybe go do a different event.”

You won both stages today, what were they like to drive?

“Those special stages are something else, 10-12km like nothing you’ve driven before. They’re flat-out and pretty much blind. It doesn’t get any better than that.”

These few days have had a real mixture of weather. Has encountering four seasons in one day been an issue?

“Today was fine, yesterday in the wet and the cold it was a struggle. Once you’re wet, you’re wet all day. At the end of yesterday in Haute-Goulaine I was pretty miserable, but luckily I’ve a second suit with me. We also took the seats back to the hotel and dried them with hairdryers! The weather today was perfect; if it’s too hot, it can be super-tiring being in the car all day.”

The last day looks like it will feature some great roads...

“To be honest I haven’t a clue! Because we only get the road books each day, we just take each day as it comes. I know we end in Biarritz and will drive Pau-Arnos, but that’s all I know!”

How was it on track at Val de Vienne?

“On the track I really stroked it around, I didn’t want to go in the gravel. You have to be so careful. There were a few sections where once you know the circuit you could take some curb and I think you could carry so much speed onto that back straight. The car is great on track, though, everyone must have a GT40 in their life!”





"WE HAD BEEN UP SINCE 6AM,
DRIVEN 600KM AND IT WAS NOW
ALMOST 1AM, EVERYONE WAS
JUST KNACKERED"



Special stage	Distance	Time	Pos.	km/h
SS1 – La Sarthe	9.07 km	5:03.0	1.	107.8
SS2 – Circuit du Mans (8 laps)	33.48 km	15:23.0	1.	130.6
SS3 – Saint-Gouéno - Le Mené	11.28 km	8:02.0	1.	84.2
SS4 – Les Roches du Diable	12.15 km	7:59.0	2.	91.3
SS5 – Rochefort-en-Terre - Pluherlin	7.95 km	4:47.0	1.	99.7
SS6 – Val de Sèvre	7.90 km	4:07.0	1.	115.1
SS7 – Circuit du Val de Vienne (8 laps)	30.14 km	15:02.0	1.	120.3
SS8 – Saint-Martin-de-Jussac	7.75 km	4:53.0	1.	95.2
SS9 – Beyssac	9.45 km	6:03.0	1.	93.7
SS10 – Saint-Céré	14.00 km	9:41.0	3.	86.7
SS11 – Circuit d'Albi (8 laps)	28.52 km	13:09.0	1.	130.1
SS12 – Col de Ares	9.39 km	5:43.0	2.	98.6
SS13 – Circuit Pau-Arnos (8 laps)	24.24 km	12:10.0	1.	119.5
SS14 – Hasparren	4.21 km	3:51.0	6.	65.6
SS15 – Orègue	13.50 km	9:38.0	1.	84.1

IN OUR CLASS WE WERE VERY COMFORTABLY IN THE LEAD BY THE THIRD DAY, THAT'S WHEN WE STARTED THINKING WE ACTUALLY HAVE A CHANCE OF WINNING

Friday morning was another frosty affair, but the sun soon broke through and we followed the cars down to the first special stage. Andrew and James looked relaxed and with only an hour's driving under their belt since we last spoke, there seemed no point in an a update. We stuck around to see and hear them tear off the start line down to the first corner – one thing that's easy is picking out the GT40 as it nears you on the road. You can clearly hear it through the glass of the Audi RS6.

We pressed on to get ahead of the cars as they started to arrive at Abbaye de Loc-Dieu. Sadly we weren't invited for lunch, and so headed off to sort ourselves out before making for the Circuit d'Albi. Once again the GT40 wins its race and it's on to the final day.

To say this final day was brutal is an understatement. It covered 500 kilometres, night stages and a race track. High up on the Col d'Aspin, we could hear the distinctive sound of the GT40 from what felt like a good mile away. After 1 MUF whizzed past, we needed to stay put to capture the other cars for the article. We eventually caught up with them at Pau-Arnos; there was no time for an interview, but the feeling was they'd done enough and a final win on track put them in a commanding overall lead.

Rolling into Biarritz at sunset really felt like the finish, but perversely, they needed to get back in the zone for the final night stages. We caught up with Andrew a few days later to discuss the final hours.

The last time I saw you, you and James were sat in the GT40 waiting to tackle the final stage. It felt very tense...

"We were concerned, there had been an accident on the previous stage involving a Cobra and we got to the end of the stage and were trying to work out what had gone on. Then we arrived at the checkpoint at the start of the final stage and the marshals didn't appear to clock us in, so we had to get out and go find them. By the time we'd clocked in we'd missed our cut-off time, and there were a few of us with the same issue, so there was a bit of a heated discussion going on. I think that when there's been an accident on a stage they forget about the timing. We'd been up since 6am, driven 600km and it was almost 1am; everyone was just knackered and wanted to get that last stage over and done with."

Was it disappointing to lose close rivals along the way?

"In our class we were very comfortably in the lead by the third day. That's when we started thinking we actually had a chance of winning and beating the the more modern cars like the Michelottos and the Ligier. That became our focus, to stay ahead of the Ligier. You never like to lose rivals, you want as much competition as possible all the way to the end."

Was there a favourite point of the tour?

"All the special stages were very enjoyable, they're just such an adrenaline rush. For us, because we do so much circuit racing, the stages are a highlight. We never do that kind of thing, so it's the most exciting bit for us."

What was the hardest moment?

"Definitely the end of the last day. As I said before, it was the longest day, we had special stages, a race and it was the middle of the night – we were just exhausted. Even after crossing the finish line, we were still with the car until almost 3am, as they ran capacity checks on the engines. It was still really special to roll through the finish line, though."

How did the car fair?

"Well, we didn't change the brake pads or discs. The car was very reliable; we changed a caliper because of a leaking seal and we just used two sets of tyres. We tried to be very kind to the car on the road stages, as that's when something silly can happen. We just wanted to stay away from any hazards and potholes."

So will you be back next year?

"Oh yes, without a doubt. We're actually in the middle of restoring a Cobra, so we're thinking we might have a go in that next year!"

Thanks to James Cottingham and Andrew Smith for their time during and after Tour Auto. It was a real pleasure to be able to share in the excitement of their 2017 journey.

