



## MICK WALSH

*Petrol tank repair and tyre dramas with the oldest car on the Peking-Paris; the latest aero-engined special on its VSCC Prescott debut*

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Scott and Taylor in protective gear venturing into Gobi Desert on Mercedes 60hp

## Veteran challenge

My heroes of the month have to be Tim Scott and veteran specialist John Taylor. Driving 8500 miles from Peking to Paris is an achievement in any car but to complete it on a chain-drive 1903 monster was remarkable. "Some people will criticise me for the wear and tear of such an important machine," said Mercedes 60hp owner Scott after his epic, "but I feel we've added to its history. I couldn't think of a better tribute to Prince Borghese."

Scott was determined to compete with an authentic veteran vehicle, albeit the supercar of its era. Other than new springs, extra dampers, more efficient radiator and long-range fuel tank, the Mercedes was pretty much as driven on the London to Brighton. Luggage, fuel, eight spare tyres, tools and crew pushed the car's weight up to 2.3 tons, putting extra stress on the authentic wooden wheels and narrow rubber. To prepare for the challenge Scott also started working out four times a day at the gym.

Their amazing adventures and unplanned challenges could make a book because Scott and Taylor were running solo, days behind the official rally with no back-up for most of the event. Three days into the Gobi wastelands the petrol tank started to leak. Not only did this restrict their range, but it also lost

crucial fuel pressure. An electric tyre pump was rigged to support the system but this ultimately drained the battery. Local Mongolians offered to weld the fracture and, with no means of draining the tank, Scott watched apprehensively as the unit was stood on end, filled with petrol and lit with a blowtorch at the filler while the leak was gas-welded at the other end. "There was a perverse logic to it," he said, "but I wouldn't try it at home."

## Tyre trials

By then a day behind, Scott and Taylor heroically played catch-up, rising at 4:30am and driving until dusk, averaging 450km a day mostly on rough tracks.

"We were going well until Siberia when a cow strayed into our path," Scott explained. "The cow hooved it into the ditch but the impact pushed the radiator back on to the engine." Despite language problems, the locals again proved very supportive with a postman towing the stricken Mercedes 12km to the next village.

The police insisted on storing the car in their compound for security and the next day a local specialist repaired the rad. Then two days behind, the Mercedes burred back and covered 1700km in two days across Siberia. Chassis-jarring potholes played havoc with

the beaded-edge tyres and, with spares all used by Moscow, Scott's only option was to take the night train to St Petersburg, clear new tyres from customs and then fly back to Moscow with them under his arms. "We were determined not to put the car on a lorry and drove the whole distance under our own steam," he said. "The highlight was the week running solo. Camping out with the car on the plains and meeting the local herdspeople was really special."



Welding up petrol tank Mongolian-style

## Fearsome front

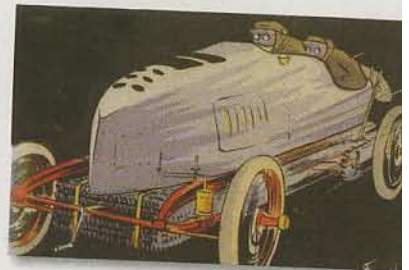
August is a treat for Edwardian car fans with growing ranks for Prescott and the special race at Mallory. Each year a new machine joins the group and talk of the Orchard paddock was Oliver Way's spectacular Curtiss V8-powered Mors.

In recent years the 8-litre V8 has been a star turn at the Beaulieu Autojumble, but with the discovery of a 1907 Mors touring chassis in Sweden, it now has an ideal home. "I've always liked the pointed front of the Paris-Madrid racers," said the 27-year-old ex-Coventry Car Design graduate. "This summer students William and Ben Sud worked night and day to make the radiator. There are 1600 gills that are threaded, bent and soldered on to copper tubes. We had a bath of lead heated with a gas flame on the go for weeks to get it finished."

## Mors code

Way always drives his machines to events and the Mors is no exception, but *en route* from Kent to Prescott the magneto broke. The camaraderie of the aero-engined gang sprang into action. While the Mors was transported the rest of the way, fellow Curtiss-powered car owner John Dennis raced home, took the mag off his engine, and it was fitted to the Mors on Saturday morning. Both generations of the Way family then competed at Prescott with the repaired machine and drove it back to Kent. "We had a great run home," said son Oliver, "with lighter chassis and flywheel, it revs much better than our Austin Hall-Scott. And she really takes off from the line." Way junior's passion for early machines started young. "Dad [Edward] says my first word was Itala and I've been fascinated by these monster racers ever since," enthused Oliver. "I'd love to sort the 'Vieux Charles III' GP Lorraine-Dietrich - provided I get to drive it of course."

The weekend after VSCC Prescott, the Ways raced the Mors at Mallory Park before the chain-drive beast rumbled off to France for a tour with friends, visiting Paris and then the coast. With no wings, stub exhausts, chain drive and cyclops headlight, it must have looked fantastic following in the wheel tracks of Gabriel and Fournier on French back roads.



Postcard art of Mors Paris-Madrid racer

'Scott watched as the unit was stood on end, filled with petrol and lit with a blowtorch while the leak was welded'



Way's Curtiss aero-engined Mors takes Semi-Circle at Prescott. Note rear radiator