

Press release
24 January 2014

A big victory for the small car: 50 years ago the classic Mini won the Monte Carlo Rally for the first time.

Paddy Hopkirk made the one-off British small car a motor sport legend in January 1964 – Timo Mäkinen and Rauno Aaltonen repeated the triumph in 1965 and 1967.

Munich/Monte Carlo. Small car, huge win: it is now 50 years since one of the most spectacular victories in the history of international motor sport. On 21 January 1964, the Mini Cooper S won the Monte Carlo Rally for the first time. It was the pairing of Northern Ireland's Patrick ("Paddy") Hopkirk and his co-driver Henry Liddon that pulled off the big surprise, resisting the supposed superiority of significantly more powerful rivals in their small British car. Its faultless run over country roads and mountain passes, ice and snow, tight corners and steep gradients laid the foundations for the underdog-turned-giant-slayer to cement itself in both the hearts of the public and the annals of motor sport legend. Indeed, the classic Mini's dominance of the Monte Carlo Rally continued over the years that followed, Hopkirk's Finnish team-mates Timo Mäkinen and Rauno Aaltonen adding two further overall victories – in 1965 and 1967 – to the British manufacturer's collection.

Now 80 years old, Paddy Hopkirk's eyes still light up when he recalls the driving qualities of his winning car: "Although the Mini was only a little family saloon, technically it had a lot of advantages. Its front-wheel drive and front-mounted transverse engine were a great advantage, and the fact the car was smaller and the roads were ploughed, they were quite narrow, so I suppose that was an advantage. We were very lucky – the car was right, everything happened at the right time and came together at the right moment."

It was the legendary "Night of the Long Knives", the penultimate stage of the Monte, which put the Mini Cooper S with car number 37 and the now famous licence plate 33 EJB on course for victory that winter of 1964. Hopkirk crossed the finish line just 17 seconds off the pace set by his chief adversary Bo Ljungfeldt in the far more powerful V8-powered Ford Falcon. The handicap formula at the time – designed to even out the weight and power differences between the various cars – meant the classic Mini actually led the way in the overall standings. And Hopkirk defended his advantage in the sprint through the streets of Monte Carlo that rounded off the rally. At the winner's ceremony he shared the cheers of the crowd with his team-mates. Timo Mäkinen's fourth-place

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finish and Rauno Aaltonen's seventh overall set the seal on the success of the Mini Cooper S and ushered in the era of the "Three Musketeers" in the Monte Carlo Rally.

The classic Mini's victory was celebrated with particular excitement in its native Britain. Hopkirk received a congratulatory telegram from the British government and the Beatles were also among those leading the applause. "I got a telegram from the Beatles," remembers Hopkirk. "That was followed by a photograph of the four of them autographed to me saying: 'You're one of us now, Paddy.' And it's very nice to have that nowadays."

The triumph of the classic Mini in the Monte was lauded as a sensation by motor sport fans around the world. But this wasn't a success that came entirely out of the blue: the small car developed by Alec Issigonis, then Deputy Technical Director at the British Motor Corporation, possessed an inherent sporting talent from birth. The first person to spot this potential was John Cooper. The sports car designer was the driving force behind construction of a more powerful version of the car. The Mini produced only 34 hp at launch, but its front-wheel drive, low weight, wide track and comparatively long wheelbase made it an extremely agile four-seater and paved the way for its forays onto race circuits and rally courses.

As early as 1960, big-name racing drivers like Graham Hill, Jack Brabham and Jim Clark were spotted testing the cornering flair of the John Cooper-tuned small car on the Silverstone Formula One track. However, the classic Mini was most at home in rally racing. Patt Moss, sister of grand prix driver Stirling Moss, piloted it to wins in the Tulip Rally and Baden-Baden Rally in 1962. And by the following year, the diminutive British car was ready to burst into the public consciousness at the Monte Carlo Rally. Preceding years had been a tough learning experience for the works team, but now they would make people sit up and take notice. Rauno Aaltonen and Paddy Hopkirk drove the 55 hp Mini Cooper to a 1-2 finish in their class, which was good enough for third and sixth places overall.

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It was clear that the classic Mini was better equipped than any other car to pull off the classic David vs Goliath act. John Cooper had long suspected that the car had what it took. Back in 1959 he instructed Roy Salvadori to drive a prototype to the Italian Grand Prix in Monza. The journey itself turned into a race between Salvadori and fellow racing driver Reg Parnell at the wheel of an Aston Martin DB4. The result confirmed what Cooper had foreseen in his mind's eye: the Cooper-prepared classic Mini arrived around an hour earlier than the much more powerful Aston.

Identifiable from a distance with their tartan red bodywork and white roofs, the six small racers dispatched by the BMC works team for the Monte Carlo Rally in 1964 were – at least on paper – fighting against the tide once more. The Mini Cooper S lined up at the start for the first time. Its new four-cylinder engine now had an increased 1071cc capacity and output had also been boosted to around 90 hp. This was a lot more than in previous years but still modest in the face of competition from the likes of the Mercedes-Benz 300 SE and Ford Falcon, whose six-cylinder and V8 units had three or four times more power at their disposal.

The 33rd edition of the Monte Carlo Rally began – as was traditional at the time – with a nod to the origins of the event, the cars starting from nine European cities before converging on the French city of Reims. The Hopkirk/Liddon partnership got their journey with the Mini Cooper S under way in Minsk, while for Rauno Aaltonen and Tony Ambrose the Monte adventure started in Oslo, and Timo Mäkinen and Patrick Vanson set off from Paris. The classic Mini successfully negotiated all these journeys and all six works cars were able to take their place in the 277-strong field in Reims. The first stage of the rally to Saint-Claude brought together the two cars which were to define the 1964 Monte from start to finish. Bo Ljungfeldt roared to the top of the time sheets in his Ford Falcon, but Paddy Hopkirk remained hot on his heels in his Mini Cooper S.

The next leg of the rally was made up largely of mile-long flat-out sections, but Hopkirk refused to let his big-engined rivals build up a decisive advantage. The “Night of the Long Knives” would become the day of reckoning; this was the classic Mini’s chance to demonstrate its talents to the full. “It was quite snowy that year, so we had done a lot of

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practising and preparing,” explains Hopkirk. “The Mini was particularly good downhill, and all the tests were up and downhill, so what we lost going up, I think we made up for going downhill.”

Irresistible handling, correct tyre choice, Hopkirk's gifts at the wheel and the snow – which slowed the bigger cars down – all came together and ensured that Hopkirk was able to take over the lead on the 1,607-metre (5,270 ft) Col de Turini. However, it remained a tight contest all the way to the finish, with Bo Ljungfeldt, as expected, again posting the fastest time on the final stage through Monte Carlo. However, Hopkirk was also squeezing everything from his Mini Cooper S once again and hung onto his advantage to wrap up the win. “It's not like rallying today when you know where you are. I had to do the final circuit, then the journalists told me I had won and I couldn't believe it. It surprised the world and us, so it was very nice,” recalls Hopkirk.

The following year Timo Mäkinen and co-driver Paul Easter ensured the classic Mini would retain its title. They were helped by a new engine with capacity increased to 1275cc, but it was the Scandinavian's driving skill that landed the decisive blow. Mäkinen was the only driver to remain penalty-point-free throughout the rally distance, despite the fact that the 1965 Monte Carlo Rally was providing one of the most exacting tests in the history of the event. Epic levels of snow and ice made the going seriously tough, but that didn't stop the organisers including a second night stage through the Maritime Alps in the programme. Mäkinen and his Mini Cooper S appeared impervious to the deteriorating conditions. The Finn won five of the six special stages on the final leg of the rally and finished the event with a handsome margin over the second-placed car.

The most impressive and also most dramatic Monte Carlo Rally for the “Three Musketeers” was to follow in 1966. Mäkinen, Aaltonen and Hopkirk dominated the event from the start, and it was in this order that they completed a clean sweep of the top three positions overall at the finish. Public enthusiasm for the quicksilver classic Minis appeared to be boundless – as was the disappointment when the French race commissioners revealed their decision to disqualify the trio on account of lights that allegedly did not conform with official regulations. This was also the reason given for removing the fourth-

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placed Lotus Cortina from the classification, which meant that the Finnish Citroën driver Pauli Toivonen was crowned the winner.

The dream of a Monte hat-trick lay in tatters, but the “Three Musketeers” resolved to return at the earliest opportunity. In the winter of 1967 Hopkirk, Mäkinen and Aaltonen lined up alongside two other BMC works teams for the Monte Carlo Rally. And this time neither the rules nor the other cars could stand between the Mini Cooper S and victory. Rauno Aaltonen was joined by Henry Liddon – Paddy Hopkirk’s co-driver from the successful 1964 Monte – for his latest assault on the rally. The Finnish-British team clicked straight into gear. Aaltonen guided the classic Mini to what was this time an undisputed victory with 12 seconds to spare. And nobody was more pleased for the duo than Hopkirk: “Henry Liddon was really an outstanding co-driver. But the co-drivers never got enough credit, you know. They did a fantastic job in reading the notes and they were the office manager of the car.”

Hopkirk finished the 1967 Monte Carlo Rally in sixth place and also drove the classic Mini to fifth overall the following year. Aaltonen was third in 1968. However, the era of the small car that stormed to the summit of rally racing was clearly approaching an end. Its rivals had grown just too powerful and the sporting zenith of the classic Mini was now behind it. Memories of that famous triumph in the winter of 1964 will forever burn bright and the “Three Musketeers” have written an indelible chapter into the history of motor sport. As for distinctive headlight solutions, such as incurred the wrath of the powers-that-be back in 1966, they also live on as some of the most popular Original MINI Accessories – from black headlight housing and the evocative spotlights fronting the radiator grille to retrofit xenon headlights.

BMW Group Classic

BMW Group Classic is responsible for all activities within the BMW Group associated with the history of the company and its three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce. This ranges from the Group Archives, which are available to anyone as a centre of expertise for all the facts and figures surrounding the history of the company, the brands and the products, through the BMW Museum, which receives more than 400,000 visitors each year, to the BMW Classic Centre where all the facilities are provided that drivers require to satisfy their passion for classic BMW vehicles from spare parts to full restoration. Another aspect is planning and implementation of participation in all the classic events attended, and administration and expansion of the vehicle collection with more than 1,000 exhibits.

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The BMW Group

The BMW Group is the leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles in the world with its BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce brands. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 28 production and assembly facilities in 13 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2012, the BMW Group sold about 1.85 million cars and more than 117,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2012 was euro 7.82 billion on revenues amounting to euro 76.85 billion. At 31 December 2012, the BMW Group had a workforce of 105,876 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been built on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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