



**A GREAT BRITISH EVENT**  
**LAND'S END TO**  
**JOHN O'GROATS**

# LE JOG: BRITAIN'S LAST GREAT MOTORING ADVENTURE?

**From Land's End to John o'Groats in three days. Nothing special, you might think, but hang on...**

...THIS IS IN OLD CARS – AS MUCH AS 75 YEARS OLD. Some of them with no heaters, and little protection from the weather. In December. Over Dartmoor, the Welsh mountains, the Pennines, the Peak District and right through Scotland. Think rain, hail, fog, snow and sheet ice. And there's hardly time to stop: you drive through half of the first night in Wales, and all of the third night through Scotland, to finish early in the morning at John o'Groats. So why do more than 100 people queue up every year to put themselves and their cars through such purgatory?

"It's an adventure," explains Richard Jeffcoate, who will tackle the event for the first time this year. "You hear about it, and if you mention it to anyone who's done it they go, 'Oooh, wow!' It's legendary. The name – LE JOG – sounds like a jolly stroll, but the reality is very different: it's billed as a Reliability Trial and it really gets the adrenaline flowing. I see people riding bicycles from Land's End to John o'Groats, which must be awful, but the thought of doing it in an old car on the most difficult roads, in the middle of the night, in winter, is thoroughly exciting!

"I've entered with my friend Jim: we're both adventurers, 63-year old kids really. Our car is a 1937 Riley Special, which sounds old and fragile, but the previous owner had >

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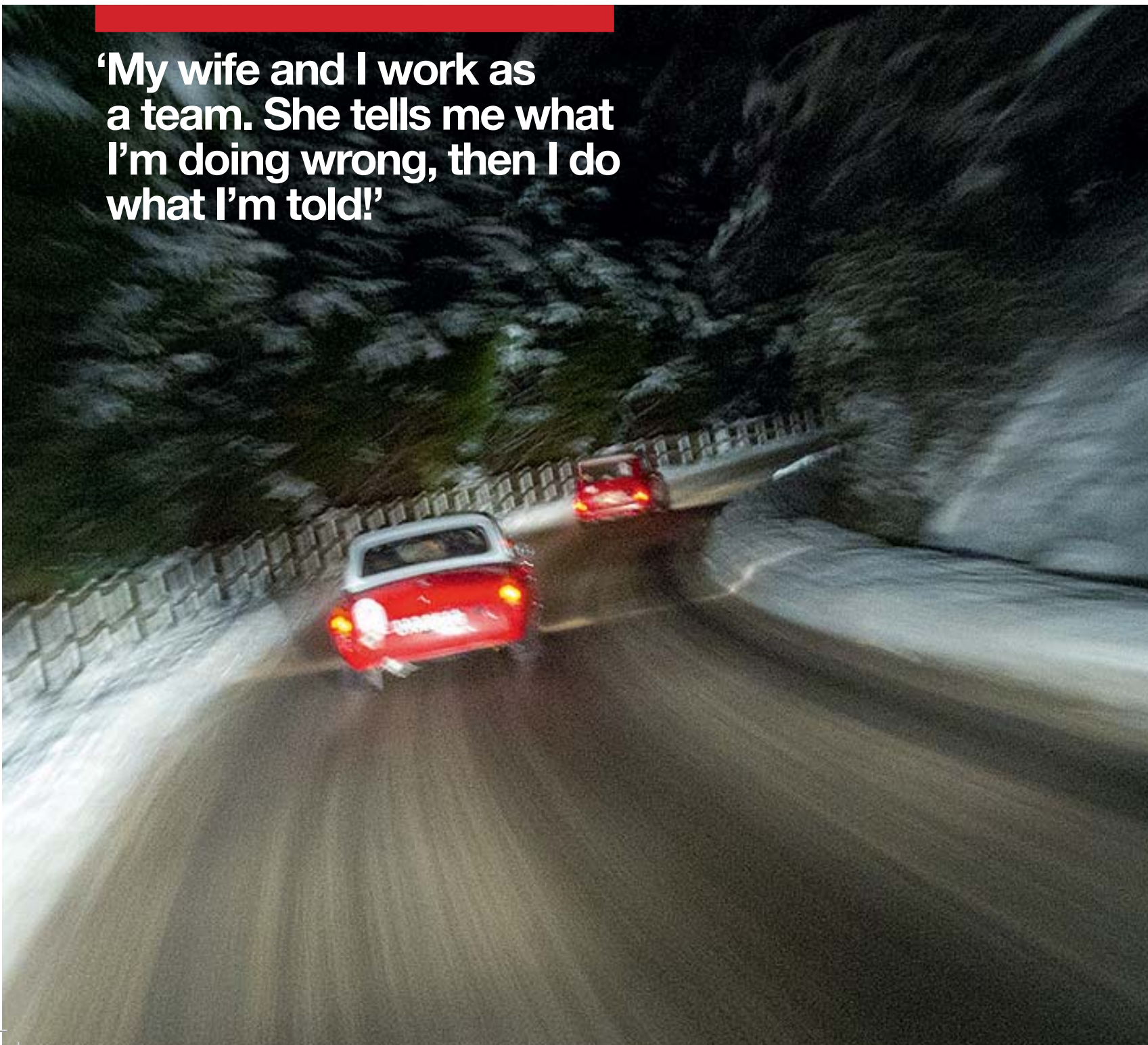
**Ford every stream:**  
 even in a relatively  
 waterproof Escort,  
 LE JOG is a real test



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**'My wife and I work as a team. She tells me what I'm doing wrong, then I do what I'm told!'**



**Let it snow: last year's weather was unusually severe, but while many modern cars were getting stuck on the way to the shops, the classics on LE JOG pressed on regardless over some of Britain's toughest terrain. Driving a 1962 Rover P4 (pictured top left), Bob and Sue McClean have finished the event 10 times**



< it built for a rally from Peking to Paris, so it's immensely tough. It only has a fabric hood, and no doors, so getting in and out is a struggle. But we can't wait to get started!

Richard and Jim hail from Kent, so getting to the start and back from the finish will add 1,000-plus miles to the 1,550 covered on the event itself – but they don't have the longest journey. This year will see crews from Germany, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands thrashing lovely old machines along our icy, muddy, wet and windswept lanes.

"We do hit things occasionally," admits LE JOG veteran Bob McClean. "On ice, our Rover P4 turns into a two-ton sled; we hit a bridge one year in Wales. We've had a couple of breakdowns too, but we've only once used the event's breakdown service, for a wiring fault; I can usually fix things myself. We've now finished 10 LE JOGs.

"I sometimes wonder why we do it, but my wife Sue and I have a passion for rallying; we've been doing it together since the 1970s. I'd restored the Rover to usable condition in the 1990s when Sue saw a *Daily Telegraph* article about LE JOG – night navigation, long distance, through the night: it sounded great. I finished preparing the car only two weeks beforehand, but we finished and we got the bug.

"My wife and I work as a team – I do the serious driving and she does the serious navigation, but she also drives the 'link' sections on main roads, so I can shut my eyes for an hour or two. Do we argue? Definitely! She tells me what I'm doing wrong, then I do what I'm told!

"One big attraction of LE JOG is the camaraderie. If you see someone stopped, you try to help them; we've made some real friends among competitors and marshals alike. And the organisation is outstanding. Nothing fazes them.

"The Rover is comfortable and carries all the spares we might need. It's not quick or manoeuvrable, but reliability is the key. This is an endurance event from the start – you must stay on your toes to reach all the checkpoints on schedule, keep your energy levels up, concentrate hard and pace yourself: the timing can be very tight but it's not a sprint. Backing off is often the best policy."

As if the driving weren't enough of a challenge, the route is fiendish, and kept secret until the last moment. The organisers seek out the most obscure, forgotten, steep and twisting country lanes, with hidden junctions to find in the dark, combined on some stretches with 'regularity' tests that require you to average an exact set speed for mile after mile – no more, no less, always below 30mph, >



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< but very difficult on unknown, unlit roads. And then there are Special Tests: complex courses on private land, army proving grounds or car parks, driven as fast as you can. To win a Gold Medal, you must reach a set standard everywhere, whatever the state of the weather, your car and your emotions. It's an incredible buzz.

Your correspondent attempted the event himself in a Rochdale Olympic – a tiny glass-fibre sports car based on a Morris Minor. We battled through ice and snow until we reached the north-west coast of Scotland in the middle of the final night. The dynamo brushes had worn out and the lights were getting dimmer and dimmer; in the end, if my co-driver Richard turned on his map light, the engine would die. We finally coasted to a halt. I removed the dynamo, dismantled it, packed rolled-up tape between the brushes and springs to bring them back into use, taped a powerful torch onto the bonnet so we could see where we were going and asked Richard to push. Incredibly, the car started and we managed another five miles before the tape melted and the engine died. Almost freezing to death

**'I taped a torch onto the bonnet and asked Richard to push. We managed five miles before the engine died again'**

in our sleeping bags, we had to wait until dawn to get going again, this time using wood whittled from a roadside fencepost to pack out the dynamo springs. We were the last to arrive at John o'Groats but the thrill of reaching the finish was worth every hardship along the way.

For those who want to get the feel of the event without the challenges of regularity, time penalties and Special Tests, there is a Touring Trial that follows the same route; one couple entering for the first time this year are Stuart and Louise Wagg from the Carlton and District Motor Club.

"Our friends did it last year and we went out to see them, in two feet of snow," recalls Stuart. "We've done several classic car runs for charity in our Ford Anglia, but one day Louise suggested it would be nice to have a rally car. That was it: I bought the Mini on eBay and built it up to look like a works car. But we've never done anything like this before. We're doing it as a 50th birthday present to ourselves!

"It took me about eight months to build the car. I'm not worried about taking it out in tough conditions – Minis have always done well on winter rallies, and they're easy to work on. Our aim is simply to get to the finish: if we do that, maybe we'll have a go at the full Reliability Trial next time!"

**Winter woollies: it's just 874 miles as the crow flies, but LE JOG takes a scenic route. After 1,550 miles, the thrill of reaching the finish is worth every hardship along the way**

**LOOK OUT FOR  
LE JOGGERS**

LE JOG starts from Land's End at 8am, Saturday December 10, and finishes at John o'Groats at 9.30am, Tuesday 13th. Look out for the cars at the M4 Cardiff Gate Services around 5pm Saturday, leaving the White House Hotel by Telford racecourse 9am Sunday, arriving at Gosforth Marriott Hotel around 8pm Sunday and leaving there at 8am Monday. Other spectator points will be listed in due course on the organiser's website: [heroevents.eu](http://heroevents.eu)