

Ian (Humph) Humphrey

1943 – 2020



I have the sad responsibility to inform Spotlight readers that SCCoN member Ian Humphrey has died at the age of 77. Ian and his wife Christine moved to North Norfolk seventeen years ago and they immediately felt at home in our part of the country. A few years later they joined SCCoN, where their friendliness and enthusiasm quickly made them a firm part of the fabric of our club. They started marshalling on SCCoN events, but Ian soon hankered to get back into competitive motor sport, so he formed a partnership with our current chairman Mark Annison, to go stage rallying in Ford Pumas.

Ian's love of rallying had of course started much earlier. He was born in Cambridge but moved to Sheffield in 1967 where he and Christine joined the One-Eleven Motor Club. Martin Phaff, who was guest speaker at SCCoN's 2019 Dinner Dance describes Ian as a "lynch pin" of the 111 Club. Ian started road rallying as a driver in his own Mini Cooper, but after three 'straight-on-at-tee' incidents, Christine felt that the cost of repairs was getting out of hand for a man with a young family and in Ian's words he "realised he'd do better in the other seat". He then became a successful navigator for several people in a wide variety of cars. Ian partnered Graham Denton, one of his favourite drivers, in a Mazda RX2, a compact four-door saloon with a Wankel rotary engine. This was a fast rally car in the lanes and they used it to win the Jackson Trophy Rally in 1973, '75 and '77, also winning the Rally of the Dams. In 1975, Graham and Ian drove the Mazda to Ireland for the Donegal International Rally. From being seeded at 92, they finished 29th overall, which was a terrific result when you consider that the event had Cathal Curley's Lancia Stratos, Adrian Boyd's works-spec Renault Alpine, more than half a dozen works-spec Escorts, a works BMW 2002 with 260bhp for Achim Warmbold / John Davenport (who won the event by a minute), a young Ari Vatanen with Dave Richards co-driving his Opel Ascona, and no less than fourteen (!!!) Porsche Carrera 2.7 RS.

Ian teamed up with Graham Beardmore for the 1974 Dukeries Forestry Stages Rally in Graham's Escort Twin Cam. But he was back with Graham D. for the '75 Dukeries in the little Mazda and they finished a creditable 18th overall, then it was back to Graham B. for two more visits to the Circuit of Donegal in his Vauxhall Firenza. Ian also navigated Graham Calton's various Escort Twin Cams to no less than six second places on northern road rallies.

Not one for a regular nine-to-five job, Ian (and Christine) had opened Humphrey's General Store in Glossop Road, Sheffield instead. And it's still there! One of their top lines was bargain-priced out-of-date beer that was very popular with Sheffield's student community.



Graham Denton on the left with 'Humph' on the right, and their rally winning Mazda

And a young chap, who was just starting a drinks company of his own, stored his initial stocks in the cellar of Ian and Christine's shop. His name? - a certain Steve Perez, who you may have heard of! In 2014, Mr. Perez drove his Ford Focus WRC to win the last Dukeries Rally to be held in the forests of Nottinghamshire.

As the '70s progressed, Ian's main focus turned to stage rallying, and he co-drove a few times for Phil Hale in his Cologne-works-spec Ford Capri RS2600.



Graham Denton and 'Humph' tackle the 1975 Donegal International

Ian was back for another attempt at the Dukeries Rally in 1989 with Pete Wells getting their G3 Escort into a splendid 5th overall. From 1988 to 1992, Ian also rallied on stage events (including two attempts at the Manx National Rally) with Andy Johnson, mainly in a Nova SR, but they had rather too many non-finishes for Ian's liking. Loyal to Vauxhall, Andy later gained success in Chevette HSRs.

This period of Ian's rally history ended in 1996 when he co-drove David Bell's Sierra Cosworth 4x4 to 17th overall on the International Rallye Charlemagne in France and 16th overall, much closer to home, on the Trackrod Stages.

Always very keen on jazz music, Ian and Christine once went to a talk by Michael Parkinson at Ronnie Scott's Club in London. Michael said that he and his wife Mary had been married for 53 years and "we still get on each other's nerves just the same". Well, said Ian and Christine, that's just like us!



After moving to Norfolk, Ian teamed up with Mark Annison and, starting in 2016, they competed on several stage rallies in Mark's Ford Fiesta and his yellow Ford Puma. Then Ian bought his ex-works Boreham-built Ford Puma 1400cc kit car for Mark to prepare and drive. This brought back memories of my time working at Boreham from 1979 to 1986, though that was quite a bit earlier than when they built Ian's beautiful Puma.

During 2016 and 2017, Mark and Ian were regular competitors on the Motorsport News Circuit Championship. As well as our local Snetterton Stages Rally, they travelled as far afield as Oulton Park, Cadwell Park and Knockhill in Scotland, scoring some very creditable class results. From 2018 to 2020, they chose events mainly for their enjoyment value, including the Corbeau Seats Tendring and Clacton Rally, the first rally to be held on closed roads in England, and the 2019 Hall Trophy Rally held at Blyton Park in Lincolnshire where they won the 1400cc class.

Mark relates that Ian's short cuts on their way to and from events were legendary, often adding an hour or more to their journey times! He said that Ian was such fun and, after rallying together for over four years, he'll feel a huge gap on future events because Ian was such good company; one of life's great characters.

I only knew Ian during the later years of his life but he always had a story to tell and what a super chap he was to spend time with. SCCoN sends heartfelt condolences to Christine, to Ian's daughter Rebecca, son Nick, and to all of Ian's wider family.

Peter Riddle