

# The BRITISH MOTORSPORT

# MARSHALS CLUB



SAFER MOTOR SPORT

MOTOR SPORTS ASSOCIATION RECOGNISED

FOUNDED 1957

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Circuit of Ireland Memories.

**NORTHERN IRELAND REGION MAGAZINE**

# Newsletter

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## Cover Story.

**Sorting through some old photo's , several taken by my late mate's Don McCurdy and Peter, brought back memories of early adventures on the Circuit. I was aware that prior to 1980 Don and Peter had , in Don's tuned 1000 cc Mini travelled to Killarney as timekeepers , sleeping in the car at night and covering as many daylight stages as possible . Hero's ! Anyone involved in the 1970's/1980's will recall just how tough the 5 day Circuit was. WRC Champion Markku Alen on his first visit to the Circuit complained it was too tough after his Fiat Abarth 131 ran out of tyres by the Sunday run.**

**I well remember the years when convoy's of marshal's and spectators , sometimes as many of 50 cars raced ahead of the rally , I admit , at sometimes ,silly speeds to keep up with the event , sleepless nights , and on one occasion when Peter and myself where doing radio control so far up a mountain we never actually saw the cars.**

**Three Circuits stand out. First 1984 starting and finishing in Belfast. For 1984 the U.A.C. had for the first time in years scrapped the Sunday Killarney run ( had County Kerry got too greedy ?) and introduced new stages round Dublin and Athlone. We worked on the Friday evening stages before a couple of hours sleep and off to the South to view stages at Malahide Dublin and then a very strange stage which would become the Rallycross track at Mondello.**

**Believe me , nearly 40 years ago driving that far south and returning the same day was unlike now a major effort.**

**Monday saw us heading for Sligo and Donegal covering a couple of stages before reaching Dungannon in the early hours to see the last couple of stages before the finish in Belfast.**

**Winner of the event was Cork man Billy Coleman in the Dealer Team Opel Manta 400 , with Ernest Kidney in the exworks Lotus Sunbeam Talbot second and Davy Evans in the Nissen 240 RS third. The best of the rest were a couple of young Belfast men who were unknown outside Ireland Alan Johnstone and Bobby Willis who finished fifth in a Toyota Corolla 1600 GT beating all the Ford Escorts entered including RS 1800 and exworks RS 2000 cars. Later Alan and Bobby were to loan me the Toyota to use in our ever first BMRMC stand at the Hobbies and Holiday's Show at the King's Hall.**



**Billy Coleman Manta.**

**1985 was a different type of Rally , works teams across the world had suddenly realised that the Circuit was a Rally where a win could promote a brand not only here but a rally where the results were reported internationally , so 1985 was the first year of international works entries. These included some of the very top WRC drivers including Michele Mouton and Malcolm Wilson in works Quattro's Per Eklund in the Celica , Beguin Bernard in a works 911 RS , Pentti Airikkala in the Astra GTE , Tony Pond works Rover Vitesse , John Haugland in works Skoda 130LR and Mikeal Sundstrom in the works Peugeot 205 GTI. For the second time the Wicklow mountains were preferred to Kerry and after a long Friday stint visiting Hamilton's Folly , Tyrella and Babalon Hill we headed south.**

**First stange on Saturday was at 4.00AM ( no chance ) but we did get to Sally Gap before lunch and caught another stage in the midlands early evening. By the time we got to Dublin most of the top visitors were missing , a mixture of engine failures and accidents and proof that the 1980's Circuis were every bit as tough as WRC events!**



**Sunday was literally a day of rest so Monday was a run down to afternoon service near Newry and finding a spot on Hamiltons Folly which was held in darkness. We were on high ground and the lights of the cars as they passed below us onto a long downhill twisting section of road meant we could see the cars from a least a mile away.**

**Tuesday morning a trip to a new stage Crooked Bridge at Ballinderry to see the first 20 cars through before a mad dash to the City Hall for the finish.**

**The locals beat all the WRC drivers with Jimmy McRae winning Brooks second and Bertie Fisher third , all in ex works Manta 400's!**

**1986 saw the arrival of Group B cars in Ireland. World Champion Hannu Mikkola ( or as one Cork newspaper called him , famous Rally driver Mick O'Lea ) was seeded No1 with both McRae and Llewelin in Metro 6R4 cars Billy Coleman had a Rothman's Porsche SC RS , Sudstrom was back in the 205 T16 and Kalle Grundel and Mark Lovell had new works Ford RS 200 Group B cars. Locals included Austin McHale and Russell Brooks in Manta 400 cars , and for the first time in several years no Bertie Fisher.**



**We visited Stage 1 Purdys Close near Dromore leaving at 11.00AM for the long trip north to Ballymoney and into our post at the finish of the Orra Lodge stage. Saturday , Sunday and Monday were with regret non starters with the first stage starting at 4.00AM with a blast to Wicklow mountains and on to Waterford and**

## **East Cork.**

**Sunday was even worse starting early in Waterford and travelling across Ireland to Galway with most of Monday spent in the Connemara mountains. Back to spectating on Tuesday with an early visit to Glendun and a rush down the Antrim Coast road to the final stage at Glenoe village. Llewelin won in the works 6R4 but Brooks and and McHale chased him all the way in the outdated Manta's.**

**I have fond memories of the 1990's Circuits but first we lost the night stages then it went to 4 days then 3 , all the time with shorter stage miles. It became a joke.**

**Three classic Circuits lasting 5 full days , stages run throughout the night , we will never see the like again , more's the pity.**

## **CAR NEWS.**

**In spite of lockdown on line auctions continue to thrive and although some of the silly prices paid for Porsche 911 cars in the last couple of years seem to have stabilised demand for Porsche 968 Clubsport cars was seen a £10 grand rise in value from 2019. Another group valued at £10 grand more than 2019 is all models of the Lotus Esprit. Turbo and V8 models now sell around £40,000 thats close to a 20% increase in two years.**

**Strange the way trends change demand for early fiat 500 cars has seen prices continue to rise and as a result values of little Citroen 2CV's have jumped , one selling recently for over £12 grand , a price unheard off a year ago.**

**Some interesting auction results in March.**

**Lancia Delta Integrala Evo £60,000 1956 Series 1 Land Rover £33,000**

**Mitsubishi Evo Makinen limied edition £77,500 1975 Ford Granada 3.0 £9900**

**1964 Zephyr 6 £9864 1966 Mk2 Cooper S 337,900 A.M. DB6 mk.2 £331,875 That's £60,000 above estimate.**

**Big news from the April Monaco sale , a rare Citroen DS21 decaportable "Goddess" came up for sale.**

**It sold for over £170,000 a new record for a DS Citroen.**





**The 200,000 Euro Citroen.**

**Austin J40 pedal car.**

**Thanks to Lord Marsh and Goodwood many J40 pedal cars have been brought back into use and their value ( you could have bought one for £100 twenty years ago ) are now changing hands for well into four figures.)**



**It was 1947 and Austin boss Leonard Lord decided to design and built toy cars for 9 to 12 year olds , hoping to boost sales. In fact the J40 pedal cars were produced from plans before the first Austin A 40 reached production.**



**The most interesting , and perhaps controversial part of the story is that thanks to generous grants from the Government for anyone employing disabled people , and there were thousands after W W 2.**

**Lord was able to set up a factory in South Wales employing many miners suffering from cancer and pneumoconiosis from year inhaling coal dust. The cars had a dummy engine with reject Champion spark plugs and a small rechargeable Lucas battery for headlights and horn on the steering wheel built by the same company who produced white bakelite wheels for the A 40.**

**The car was an instant success and production continued from 1949 right up to 1970 when cheaper , lighter models appeared on the market.**

**At the time J40 cars were built only pressed steel could be used but by the sixties Tri ang and others were building Glassfibre bodies.**

**Strange to note that more J40's survive than any of the many 1960's pedal cars produced which were used and then disposed off as worthless.**



# Robert's RallyBuzz

## Dates Announced for NI Rally Championship

Motorsport involving two competitors in a vehicle is still not permitted in Northern Ireland until at least 13th May when the NI Executive will review its current COVID-19 restrictions. Despite this, plans have been made by the Association of Northern Ireland Car Clubs with a view to restarting stage rallying here next month. The first motorsport event to be held in the province this year happened in April. Larne Motor Club ran a championship Autotest under the current restrictions which dictated a maximum of 100 competitors and officials but without any spectators.

The five-round sealed-surface 2021 Northern Ireland Stage Rally Championship is now scheduled to start on 19th June with the first of three single-venue rallies. Round one will be at Bishopscourt in Co.Down, sponsored by McGrady Insurance and organised by Ballynahinch and District MC. Then round two is the Maiden City MC's Dogleap Rally at Shackleton Airfield, Ballykelly Co.Derry. North Armagh Motor Club intend to run the third round at Kirkistown Race Circuit in Co.Down. As I indicated last month, the final two Championship rounds will be closed-road stage rallies in counties Tyrone and Derry organised by Magherafelt and Cookstown MC's respectively. Hopefully all these events can take place and we marshals will be able to assist the various motor clubs in running safe and competitive rallies.

### 2021 Motorsport UK Northern Ireland Stage Rally Championship

Bishopscourt Stages.....Sat.19 June  
Dogleap Rally.....Sat. 7 August  
Kirkistown Stages.....Sat. 21 August  
Tour of the Sperrins.....Sat.16 October  
Tyrone Stages Rally.....Sat. 6 November

By the way; I hope you all have had the chance to complete the Rally Northern Ireland 2022 survey? If not, please log on to [rallynothernireland.com](http://rallynothernireland.com). Open to everyone including marshals and officials, the survey only takes five minutes to complete and there are fabulous prizes to be won! Let's all try to get the WRC's finest on to the best tarmac stages in the World next year in their new for 2022 Hybrid World Rally Cars! There is hope Rally NI will indeed happen as soon as that! M-Sport Ford are rumoured to be using a Puma and Hyundai a Kona next year! Watch this space!

Did you catch Rally Croatia? I watched most of the stages live on WRC+. What an event, but why were there so many spectators? They were supposed to be banned and indeed overcrowding almost caused a stage cancellation. The marshalling on the 20-stage tarmac event left a lot to be desired, people were standing in silly places. Mind you all twenty stages ran, and the weather was brilliant for the three days of competition. Apparently the rally was very well received as a new WRC event and seems certain to have secured a place for itself in future calendars.

Sebastien Ogier won in Croatia despite being involved in a collision with a civilian's BMW on a road section at the start of the final day. Elfyn Evans was leading Ogier by 3.9 seconds going into the event-closing powerstage but the Welshman made the slightest of mistakes, running wide and up a bank on the last corner. It was enough to let Toyota team-mate Ogier pounce. In his battered, accident damaged Yaris, the current World Champion was fastest on the stage and beat Elfyn to the rally win by just 0.6 seconds. Hyundai's Thierry Neuville was



third but only 8.1 seconds down on Ogier. The Belgian was leading the rally after Friday's eight stages but lost time on Saturday morning due to a wrong tyre choice.

Northern Ireland's Jon Armstrong had a fantastic maiden victory in the Junior WRC section of Rally Croatia. The 2019 Down Rally winner was eighth and last after the first stage but fought back over the three days to take a hard earned win. Meanwhile another NI driver young William Creighton finished fifth. All competitors were in identical Ford Fiesta R4's.

If you missed Croatia try to catch the highlights on ITV4. Promises to be a classic year ahead in the WRC with Ogier, Neuville and Evans so close and competitive not to mention former champ Tanak. Next up is Rally Portugal 20-23 of this month. Good to see the Acropolis back in September. Check out full 2021 calendar on [WRC.com](http://WRC.com).

## Looking Back

Marshalling Memories

### 30 Years Ago.....1991

The Conecrusher Rally organised by North Ulster Car Club was round two of the NI Rally Championship. Starting from Ballymena at 10pm on Friday 3rd May and finishing at the Brown Trout in Aghadowey at 8am on Saturday. There were 22 gravel stages in counties Antrim and Derry. We as a club set up and ran the 20-junction Springwell stage which was one of the final tests in the very early hours of Saturday morning. Very few of the large entry of competitors made it to the finish of what was undoubtedly the longest and toughest round in the Championship. The winners were Andy Magee and Michael Johnston in a Ford Escort Mk.2.

We were running a short concrete lane stage called Snowy Glen on the Carryduff Forklift Rally. Based in Carrickfergus for the first time, the event was the third round of the Adair-Singleton Northern Ireland Rally Championship. Mervyn Hill won in his Mazda RX7 from George Robinson's Toyota Starlet. Philip Young was third in a Ford Escort Mk.2.

### 20 Years Ago.....2001

Maurice Gass won the Bishopscourt Stages in his Subaru Impreza WRC. Due to the foot-and-mouth outbreak the event had moved from early March to early May. Held in glorious sunshine, we were covering all starts and finishes on the six-stage sealed surface rally. No less than 130 cars started at 30 second intervals so we were very busy from 10am until the last car crossed the finish line at 6.30pm.

### 10 Years Ago.....2011

Kenny McKinstry came from behind to win the fourth round of the MSA Hankook NI Championship, the tarmac closed-road Tour of the Sperrins. The Banbridge driver had previously won the first three rounds of the series. We were on the finish controls of the 15-mile Slieve Gallion stage which would be run three times during the day. Despite the organisers (Magherafelt and District Motor Club) having set up the time controls in a very poor location we were eventually able to get into a safe position to record the competitors times. I made the point after the event that ALL organising clubs should take note and make the safe sightings of time controls, especially at stage finishes, their priority. Another timekeeper on that Sperrins event was very lucky not to have his car damaged when a competitor almost crashed into it on a stop control. The safety of officials must be a priority when running a stage rally. 90 cars started the Tour of the Sperrins and 65 made it to finish in Maghera.

## 5 Years Ago.....2016

Marty McCormack and his niece Caron won the extremely tough Tour of the Sperrins Rally in a Skoda Fabia S2000. Magherafelt and District MC had put together 9 gravel stages some of which hadn't been used for years. The rally was a counting round of both the Northern Ireland and the Irish Forest Championships. An entry of 72 started from Rally HQ in Maghera. We were on radio duty at the start of SS3/7 Wolf's Hill in the Davagh Forest complex which is in Co.Tyrone near Draperstown. Our test was 4 miles long. Persistent rain for most of the day didn't cause any problems. Derek McGeehan/Arthur Kierans were second in a Mini WRC. Top of the Valvoline Irish Forest Championship runners were Michael Carbin and Darragh Kelly who finished third in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evo.9. 72 competitors started and 47 finished. BMMC/BRMC members covered timekeeping, stage marshalling, radio and rescue crew on the event.

Damian Toner and Denver Rafferty won the Loughgall Country Park Rally. Last year's winners in their Ford Escort Mk.2 finished 22 seconds ahead of second placed crew Keith White/Damian McCann in a Mk.1 Escort. Of the 57 starters 33 were Mk.2 Escorts. 50 crews finished the six-stage tarmac event which was largely dry but a few hefty showers made for slippery conditions at times. We were covering radio points as well as stage marshalling duties on this North Armagh MC non-championship single venue rally.

Also in May 2016 we were in action timekeeping and marshalling on the Police Motor Club's Woodside Group Targa Rally. 62 cars started the Co.Antrim event and 32 of them were Mazda MX5's. There were 20 tests, most of them in farmyards or lanes. The day went well and the weather was excellent. Winners were David Carothers and Barbara Kane in one of the MX5's. They finished just 4 seconds ahead of the Toyota Starlet of Eamonn Byrne and Robert Dickson. 57 cars made it to the Ballinderry Inn finish.

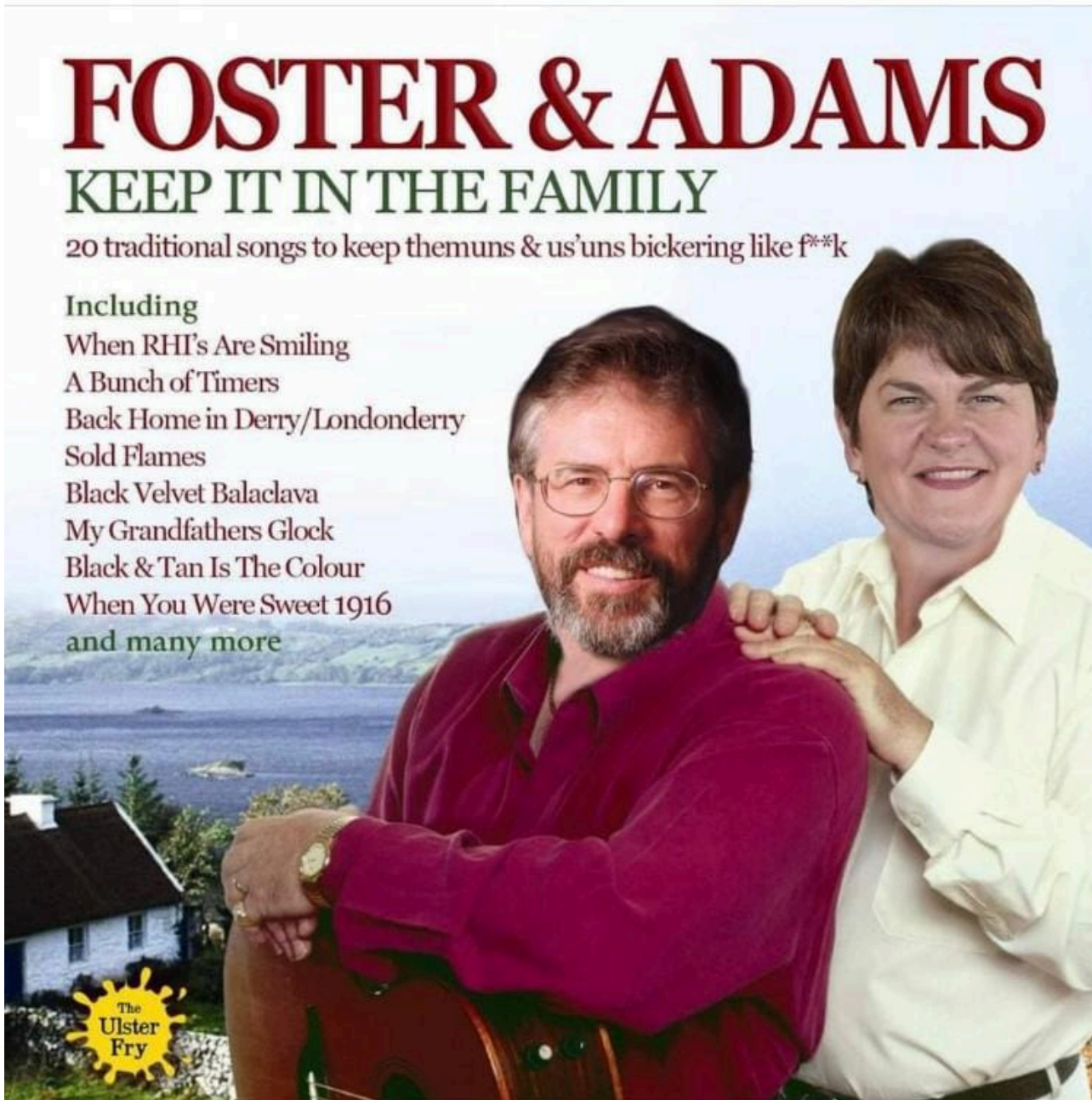


A young Robert Dickson winning the 1982 Ken Wharton trophy.

## ***Crap Corner.***

### **Real Irish Hospitality.**

**Two teenagers walk into a pub in Temple Bar and order two pints. The barman cleaning the tables and piling up empty glasses says “ Sorry lads , we don’t open until 11.00 AM” One of the lads asks “ Do you mind if we wait?” “ not at all” says the barman “ would youse like a pint while you are waiting?”**

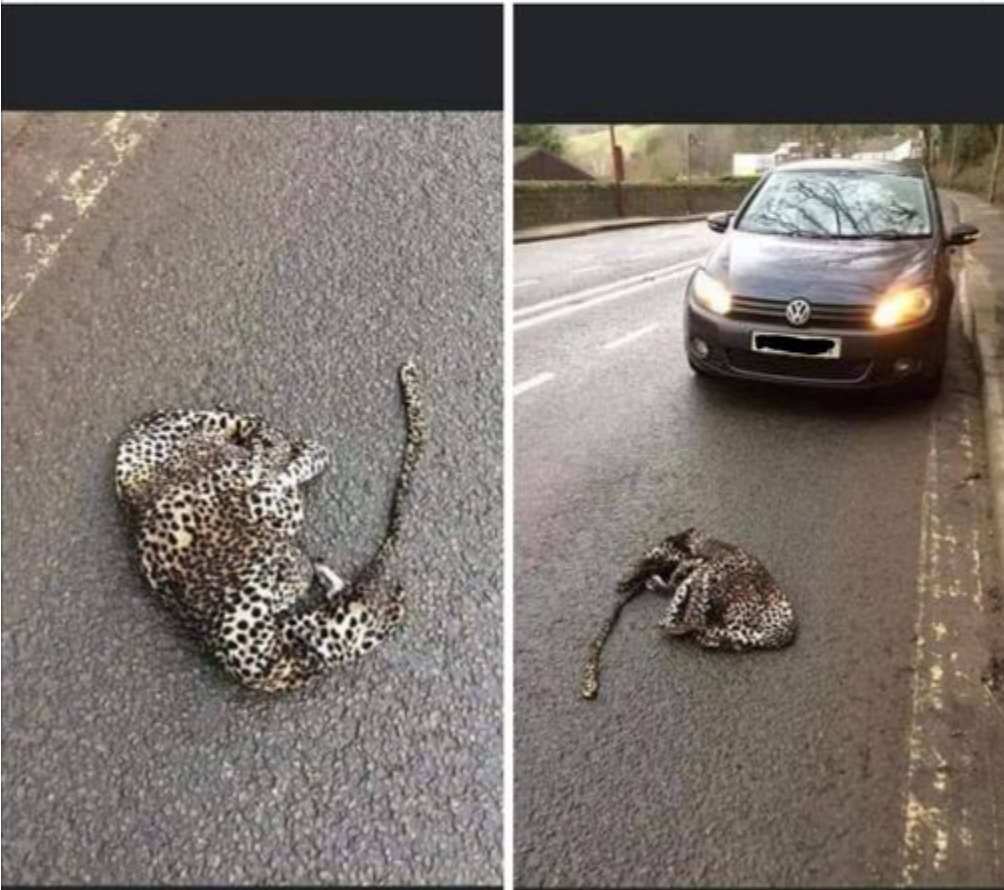


**Outside a Galway pub a local is trying to break up a drunken brawl. I think his name was LIAM MALONE.**



**In the Kerry mountains a man was rescued from the bottom of a 12 foot hole that he had spent hours digging. He was unaware that his metal detector was picking up the steel toecaps of his safety boots.**

The mass panic outside a Dublin city primary school this afternoon over the escaped leopard 🐆 that was hit & killed by a car, turned out to be Mary's dressing gown that she dropped while doing the 2pm school run in her pyjamas !!!



**In 1930 Dublin Corporation started a massive improvement of installing bathrooms in its older housing stock , to replace outside and often communal toilets. One old dear rang to complain that the water kept running out of her new bath. "Sorry " said the clerk " You must need a plug" "Oh dear" was the reply " I didn't know it was electric".**

