

Hands up who loves the Preston Rally. Good, that's all of you, now pay attention because this is important. For the unaware, The One and Only has two very real problems. These are related, the first being bad enough but the second is potentially fatal for the event. Regrettably I am quite serious, in case you'd not realised it, this very special sporting event is truly in jeopardy.

The first problem is that in order to make the Preston the outstandingly good rally that it is today, the leading organisers – the Clerk of the Course and the Deputy CoC – have to give almost too much of their time and to make almost too great an effort. Currently in those roles of course are Brian Jaggs and Bob Blows. Others in the heroic and quite extensive organising team certainly make a great effort too but Brian and Bob do the bulk of the work, the key work, and they make THE difference to the event. Secondly, nobody can continue forever of course. Brian and Bob are going to stand down after the 2018 event, the fortieth Preston Rally. Fair play to them. That they should stand down is quite right, given that it is what they want, as they will then have respectively been Clerk of the Course and either Secretary of the Meeting or Deputy CoC for twelve years, a very fine contribution to local, club level motorsport. (Over much more than twelve years they've both made significant other such contributions as well).

Here's the really big problem part though: so far there is nobody to replace them. I hope the rest of the sterling team is willing and able to continue but without replacements for Brian and Bob, the Preston Rally *without any doubt will cease*.

This is indeed serious. To me an awful prospect, about which I feel very strongly. I hope that you do too. Do you want to see the end of the Preston Rally? Something must be done, and between us all, WE must do it. Please, don't just leave this for everyone else to think about.

When I stood down as CoC after a decade, Brian saw the need to ensure the continuance of the event, immediately involved himself and, quickly as I recall, volunteered himself for the CoC role. That was a fine thing to do and we need someone to do that now.

The very obvious big question now is who might, could or *will* take over; it is no secret that the annual effort required to maintain the extraordinary quality of the Preston is considerable, which of course is potentially off-putting. And *that* may well be our biggest problem here.

Brian has been and still is striving for perfection, as I did (several times he's actually spoken of the 'perfect' Preston). He has yet more ideas for improvement, little tweaks here and there, lots and lots of deep thought, all to make the rally better and yet better still. But making yet more work. Just what I did. But did I in fact make a mistake and is Brian perhaps making the very same mistake? Talk about making a rod for one's own back. And reading between the lines these days, I think, if I may say so, that Brian perhaps now questions whether it is all worth it.

Thus I now find myself asking two big and very interesting questions: does The Preston have to be *that* good? And were it simplified, with somewhat less attention to detail, with somewhat less organising effort, could the event actually be as enjoyable, popular and successful? Without any doubt whatsoever I feel the respective answers are no, it doesn't have to be *that* good, and yes, it would be as enjoyable and popular if it were simplified. The more I think about it, the more I *know* that this is the case. Previous organisers made great efforts indeed but not that which Brian and Bob make today – the rally was much simpler years ago yet still terrific. Surely the Preston doesn't have to be so perfect and to require so much organisational work.

I'm the one who first made the Preston more complex, and Brian and Bob have continued that process. I badly needed to simplify the event by the time I stopped organising it but I didn't achieve that. Brian and Bob, if I may, with the greatest of respect, I urge you most strongly to simplify it – starting now, in 2017. Although that may seem difficult, I believe it can be done and should be, partly for your own sakes and for those working with you on this amazing event but even more so for the sake of future organisers – if there are to be any. I believe that the reduction of the organisational workload is essential to the future of the event and, again, I believe that can be done. Having spoken to Brian over the summer I know you have already had similar thoughts. I myself do indeed have some ideas as to *how* it can be achieved but this is not the place for such detail.

There can be a future for the Preston, I have no doubt of that, but where and *with whom* does it lay? Crucially, who has the gumption take it on knowing it's a tough job? I say again, a critical part of the way forward is in reducing the amount of work involved and that can be achieved. In other words running this event does not have to be such hard work. I sincerely hope that makes a difference to any potential future organisers. I repeat, years ago, before I took over, the event was far simpler yet it was still fantastic.

Now just as an exercise, let's think for a moment about who really could perhaps take the reins, either now (commencing 2019), or further into the future. Here's a few names, just suggestions, truly I mean no pressure upon the following, they are just possibilities:

Could it be you one day David Lobb? You are the son and grandson of leading Chelmsford Motor Club members, born to rallying, you'd be perfect. But for now, for a good few years actually, you are more than entitled to be out there competing on the event, earning your stripes, enjoying it to the maximum, and bloody winning it one day! And yes I know you've recently become a dad – congratulations!

Stefan Taylor, the same goes for you more or less, your dad was a CMC leading light for years, no less than a former Preston CoC and a three-time Preston winner (so far!). You yourself have won it once (so far!), you too are born to this and sooner or later may be the one for the job – but that which applies to David applies to you too... See above!

David Earthy, the very same goes for you too – in your case the rally was instigated by none other than your grandfather and bears his family name! I well remember you marshalling the first control when you were, what, thirteen years old?! Again, born to it (most of all perhaps!).

Matt and Suze, could/would you perhaps do it? You'd be just right for it, more than capable. You've not entered the Preston for some time (but of course you could, and I think you *should* by the way!), and although I know you're doing other events, might you take this on? But should you wish it, you too have much Preston competing left in you, to which you also have every right!

Perhaps former organisers should make a comeback for the sake of the event. Paul Barrett, Dave Taylor, myself? However, please believe me, that would be a great deal to ask of us, frankly perhaps *too much*. So how about some of the other members of the current organising team? Now, this is perhaps more like it, this is where the answer could well be. So please current team, please, think upon this very deeply indeed. I'm making these suggestions purely to get the ball rolling by the way, simply to start the thought process on all of this. I mean it, no pressure is intended upon the above, I just want to start things moving, I think it's very important. So, can anyone suggest any others? Will anybody suggest *him or herself*?

We must ALL consider this issue seriously if we want this tremendous event to continue, not just the current or former organisers, not just Chelmsford Motor Club itself but all those involved, including – very much so – competitors. We may well have to think outside the box. We mustn't stop thinking about it either, we must keep it high on the agenda until we find a solution. And please, nobody say *'well, its had a great run, perhaps its time to draw a line under it'*, that's no way to talk, other than for a lack of organisers there is no reason that The Preston Rally cannot carry on after 2018. But if it is to continue we have to start making it happen *now*. We have to find somebody *soon* so that he, she or they, if not already part of the organising team, can become part of it pretty quickly in order to learn the ropes.

Finally please consider this if you would: anyone who organises any event *gives up* the chance to take part in it. Twenty years ago I gave up competing on my beloved Preston Rally in order to ensure that it continued; I loved competing on this event, really, really loved it, I'd done it ten times by then, which was not enough. However I took on the organiser's role, as Brian and Bob later would, because it had to be done, although I didn't truly want to (however I did sort of want to give something back). In order to help me, Dave Taylor did the same thing, gave up contesting the event. We were both front running competitors and potential winners but we sacrificed eleven years of Preston Rally competing. Dave had sacrificed several more back in the 1980's.

But organising is deeply satisfying actually and it was well, well worth it.

Please also consider the 'Preston sacrifice' made by Tony Michael, Jim Bowie, Geoff Lobb (competitors all three), and numerous others too, I can't name them all. Quite extraordinary. The 2018 Preston will be the twelfth time that Brian and Bob, both competitors, forsake the opportunity to compete. They and the current team are making that same sacrifice – and it is worth it. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

I was not a Chelmsford MC member when I became CoC and I lived nowhere near Chelmsford nor the area in which the rally actually runs. So a Preston organiser, even the CoC, does not necessarily have to be a CMC member nor to live in or near Chelmsford or in the rally area; neither Paul, Brian nor Bob live in that area, and although he does now, nor did Dave when he was CoC in the 80's. They've all run the Preston, I did, and so can you. I'm trying to illustrate that there are more or less no excuses. In all of British rallying there really is nothing like the Preston, with almost cult status it is a *truly* unique event, a one-off, *it really is The One and Only*. I cannot express how much I hope that someone will take this on. You, the Preston Rally enthusiast reading this, really could do it. Even if you're a regular competitor, you *could* step into this breach. That is if you feel strongly enough about the Preston. Yet again, it really does not have to be such hard work, and both current and former organisers, any or all of them, could be relied upon for unlimited good advice and support.

I trust that the Preston Rally, Chelmsford MC's longest running and best known event, can count upon the full and vigorous support of the Club Committee, the entire membership and *all* those one way or another involved in this great rally as it now approaches another somewhat tricky point in its history, the time when another change of principal organiser becomes necessary. I trust that all of the above will be proactive in the matter.

So can we all stand by and allow The Preston to go to its death? Because that is what will happen. Surely, surely not. The Preston must go on. So come on everyone, let's ensure that it does. (Or, just to make it easier, will the next Clerk of the Course please stand up?).

Adrian Gladwin, October 2017

Whoever you are, please feel free to comment on this – and don't hold back, say what you feel. May I ask that it be done on The One and Only Preston Rally Facebook page, so that all thoughts and suggestions can be shared, and all in one place. However, may I also ask that any such comments or suggestions are solely concerned with the matter of future organisers of the event, and nothing else, e.g. not the format of the event or any specific aspects of it, thank you.