

Heroic

The name of Otto Mathé is writ large in Austria's motor racing history. He was a motorcycle racer in the 1930s, until a big accident left him with the use of only one arm. After the war he built his own Porsche-powered single-seater, and this was hugely successful throughout the 1950s in everything from mountain hillclimbs to ice-racing, even beating the works Porsche Spyders on occasion. He made up detachable wings and lights so he could also race it in sports car events, and occasionally he even drove it on the road, with rucksacks strapped to the cockpit sides to carry his belongings.

Otto died, aged 92, a few years ago, but the Mathé-Porsche, perhaps the most successful Austrian-built racing car since the Austro-Daimlers, lives on in the hands of Johann Kofler.

Unlike Archie Scott-Brown, who was able to use his deformed arm to steady the wheel while he changed gear, Otto used to lean on the wheel with his torso, so the Mathé-Porsche had a deliberately tight cockpit. When I saw it in the

Ennstal assembly area, a Halda bolted to its tiny dash, I assumed Johann was bravely going to attempt the event single-handed.

But when the Mathé rocketed into view at the top of the first hillclimb I was amazed to see his wife, Dr Alexandra, squeezed into the cockpit too, with Johann leaning across her to steer the central wheel. And they were still there at the finish, soaked and mud-splattered but happy after three days in what must be the smallest abode for driver and navigator in rallying history. As Alexandra said: "There is just enough room - as long as you are married."

The tiny silver car, with 1600cc of full-race Porsche power, was very impressive through the mountains. On the wonderful six-mile Stoder hillclimb, which rises 4000 feet from the valley floor with sheer unprotected drops, Johann decided to ignore his regularity time and powered through the countless hairpins to the top on full noise, thus earning not only maximum penalties but also, no doubt, the approval from another place of the late Otto, who must be delighted that his little old car is still being used as he used it.



Barchetta, three up (above), and (right) Lucy in her lair

Lucy's role

Characters abound on the Ennstal, and one of the more memorable ones was Lucy. Bernd and Sabina Hahne have a luscious 166M Barchetta, the little Touring-bodied sports-racer and for many the first great Ferrari, which they found in a French collection. They also have Lucy, who is a small mongrel of unknown age and ancestry, and her they found in what seems to be the German equivalent of Battersea Dogs' Home.

Lucy's early life may have been humble and homeless, but now she travels by Ferrari, for the Hahnes want her to enjoy their rallying too. She loves cars and car people, but is well-behaved and obedient around them even when the people, or the cars, aren't behaving as well. Aboard the



Ferrari, at high speed she's happy to sit deep in the passenger footwell, but on the slower sections her nose would appear from time to time at dash level to check the watches, and appreciate the passing mountain scenery.

Welcome

In every town and picturesque village the locals turned out in force. Wherever the route breasted the summit of a lonely mountain pass, welcoming country people materialised to greet the cars with hot coffee, and some serious local cake which did nothing for the power-to-weight ratio.

In that part of the world the weather can change very quickly, and the Thursday night section was completely washed out by torrential thunderstorms which flooded the route. But two things that didn't change were the friendliness of the Austrian people, and the beauty of the place. Next year I'd like to return, with suitable car and navigator, and join in the fun properly.



How two can go rallying in a single-seater. Mr and Dr Kofler, plus road book, watches and Halda, squeeze into famous Mathé-Porsche



ENNSTAL-CLASSIC