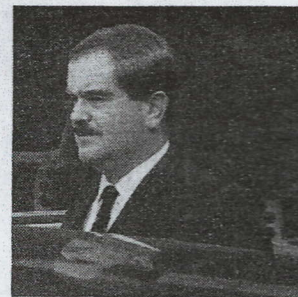


Alan Fraser—THE MAN BEHIND ROOTES RACING



THE distinctive blue-and-white (and very quick) Fraser Imps are already a familiar sight on our circuits, and you're going to see a great deal more of them during a fantastically packed 1966 programme in which they are scheduled to be in action almost every weekend until late October.

It is an ambitious programme, but Alan Fraser has behind him many years of competition experience, and after a highly successful 1965 season during which his Imps had nine overall and three class victories in production car events he now has the official backing of the Rootes engineering and competitions department. So the busy little organisation—and at the moment it's by no means large—at Hildenborough, in Kent, is now the HQ for the Rootes Group's racing activities, under a three-year agreement signed last December.

Though born and bred in Kent, Alan Fraser is very proud of his strong family associations with Scotland. All of the family on his mother's side live North of the Border (where he has extensive business interests, including a four-star hotel) and this explains the blue on his cars, the St Andrews cross on the roofs and the stag on his team motif.

For this season three Imps are being prepared to Group 5, to compete in the British Saloon Car Championship in the 1 litre class. Two will be raced by ex-policeman Ray Calcutt (eight wins last year and lap records at Silverstone, Lydden and Brands in a 998 cc Fraser Imp), and Nick Brittan (eight wins in his first car racing season with 'Green Bear' and Monte Carlo's expert on club racing), while the third will be kept as a practice and reserve car, and to take part in club events.

In addition, two Imps will be running in free-formula club events, one with an 850 cc engine and the other with a 998 cc unit. And a Sunbeam Tiger will also be entered, to be driven by Rootes Development engineer, Bernard Unett, in marque sports car events. Later in the season the team will probably be fielding another Tiger, prepared to Group 3, in certain long-distance races.

Also in the team is attractive 22-years-old Jacqui Smith, who will be setting her sights on the ladies-only competition for the Embassy Trophy.

It all sounds like a lot of hard work. And it is. But Alan Fraser, who combines imperturbability with efficiency, plus the ability to attract fanatical loyalty from his team, has never been dismayed by the prospect of jumping in at the deep end.

This is best demonstrated by the story of how he took part in his first motoring competition. With no previous experience he was rather surprised to find himself in the 1952 Alpine Rally. Both Jack Fairman and George Hartwell had been urging him to 'have a go' and in March of that year George suggested, 'What about a holiday in the South of France, starting at La Ciotat and finishing at Cannes, with a sort of rally in between? I'll sell you a car and supply a co-driver'.

What Jack Fairman said about it when he heard is simply not printable!

Anyway, sharing a Sunbeam Talbot 90 with

Francis Scott, Alan Fraser finished 14th in general classification and 4th in class, and only missed a Coupe des Alpes by 5 minutes. Looking back over a career in rallying and racing, he thinks that this was probably his best performance.

Since he started his motoring business at Mountains Garages, on the busy A21, in 1953, Alan Fraser has always been a Rootes man. (The only time he strayed from the fold was when he bought the fifth Cooper-Bristol that was made.) His mounts have included a Sunbeam Talbot 90, a Mark 3, Rapiers, a Singer Gazelle (in the 1958 Monte), and—in

Thousands of racegoers have been impressed by the tremendous handling qualities of the Fraser Imps, but in fact surprisingly little has been done to the production layout in order to achieve this. At the front, the pivot point has been lowered, there are different springs and Armstrong adjustable dampers, plus a roll bar. At the back, the swinging arms have been strengthened, and modified springs fitted together with Armstrong dampers.

The racing division is still expanding, but currently consists of Norman Winn, number 1 mechanic and foreman, with two more mechanics and an apprentice. Another mechanic



There's no mistaking the gay colour scheme of the Fraser Imps, topped by a giant St Andrews cross on the roof.

more recent years—the later Rapiers and Alpines.

'I have always thoroughly enjoyed both rallying and racing', he says, 'but if I have any preference it's towards racing'. He is determined not to let his team activities prevent him from having the odd go himself during the coming season.

The competition department, stores and test house are at present housed in a couple of farm buildings, but there are plans to move to more convenient premises. This is where they breathe on Imp engines to get more than 95 horsepower from 998 cc; this is achieved by using a modified camshaft and carefully re-working the cylinder head. For the Group 5 cars they are now working on a new head, and the further power increase will call for the use of different materials. The new engines should be ready for Oulton Park on April 2.

is being added to the strength.

John Griffiths (who did some of the work on the 1965 cars) has recently joined as development engineer, and Leslie Sherley-Price is Alan Fraser's personal assistant and team manager.

A new development section, under John Griffiths, is now working on Fraser-treatment Imps which will be offered for sale—not as conversion kits but as fully converted cars. But these will not be available for some time.

Two more mechanics will concentrate on the preparation of the Tigers at other premises just down the road.

'We're not tremendously large', says Alan Fraser, 'but I have some splendid chaps who know what they're doing and are prepared to work like stink. I think we're in for an interesting season'.

He always was one for understatement.