



The Leaky Tap Run

Martin Philippo reports on a Dutch event with an intriguing history

Photography by Robbert Moree and Martin Philippo

Not too long before everything came to a standstill for obvious reasons, 11 cars competed for the Maus Gatsonides Trophy in the Leaky Tap Revival – a drive through the typical Dutch landscapes of the North Holland province. But first, let me set the scene. The Leaky Tap – Kraantje Lek in Dutch – is a very old establishment in the dunes bordering the little (and wealthy) town of Bloemendaal. Legend says the wives of the Zandvoort fishermen stopped there for a pint on their way back from selling their fish in Haarlem. The hollow elm beside the premises is said to be helpful for the mother-to-be: a short stay inside the tree is a guarantee for many, many children.

In more recent history, the place was frequented by Formula One drivers when competing in the Dutch Grand Prix at the legendary Zandvoort racetrack nearby. After racing, the Dutch jenever (which is a bit like gin) was a nice treat. Nowadays, Dutch Pannenkoeken (pancakes) are on the menu and the place is visited mainly by those who are out for a brisk walk in the dunes and find themselves in need of good sustenance.



- Top and above: now a regularity run rather than a road race, the Leaky Tap is based around the coastal town of Bloemendaal, near Zandvoort

The Leaky Tap Run



• Left: entrants weren't put off by the cold, damp conditions. The field was limited to 15 cars, which (below) included Healey, Morgan and other Jaguars



There is another story attached to the place. Way back when, in the 1950s, a group of Dutch maverick racers used the premises as a starting point for their road races. They were given an easy-to-read route map and whoever arrived back at the Leaky Tap first was the winner. That was all it was.

One of the competitors was the young Maus Gatsonides. If that name rings a bell for you: yes indeed, later he invented the horrid 'Gatso' that cost us so many speeding fines. Maus was very competitive – he really wanted to win, by hook or by crook. He also knew the area quite well – he ran a garage and workshop in Heemstede, not far away. He used the quiet and bendy roads to practice his racing and to test his cars, especially on Sunday mornings when the wealthy people of Bloemendaal were still asleep.

Gatsonides used this knowledge to his advantage. He could figure out where the Leaky Tap Run would bring him and where the shortcuts were. For a while, his fellow competitors

simply couldn't figure out how this young Maus Gatsonides could win all the time, but when the cat came out of the bag they told Maus it would be better if he organised the next street races. A tradition was born.

Maus Gatsonides was a bit of a cheeky chappy, but he was a fast driver, too. He won the 1953 Monte Carlo Rally, albeit with a little help from the spectators. Some of them 'spontaneously' threw water at the brakes of his car so they cooled down. We already said he was a bit cheeky, didn't we? The famous Tulip Rally was another of his victories.

The tradition of the Leaky Tap Run eventually came to an end when local police put a stop to it. Street races were illegal and dangerous. For many years nothing happened around the Leaky Tap until a group of four men decided it was time for a revival. Obviously that revival was not to be a race but a rally. It once again started at the restaurant, with a route book that took drivers through North Holland and back again. Regularity

The Leaky Tap Run



- Left: the event went through typical Dutch countryside, complete with canals, windmills and pollard willows
- Below: Ron and Yvonne were well wrapped up against the chill, and took overall victory



was key. Experienced rally navigator André Schoonenwolf (who'd co-driven with Per Eklund, Stig Andervang and many more) set out the route, making sure there were enough pitfalls and cheeky tricks to well and truly entertain the participants.

This year was the third edition of the revival. The organisers like to keep things compact and intimate so the number of participants is limited to 15. After all, Maus' original runs were small-scale too. Officially the participating cars should be contemporary to the original runs but the organisers turn a blind eye if a car is younger but extraordinary enough. Maus himself would have agreed, probably. Behind the wheel of one of the cars we recognise club member Ron Schoonderbeek with his jet black XK 120 OTS.

From the start, the route takes the cars through the typical Dutch landscapes with windmills, tow-bridges, canals, pollard willows and wide-open fields as flat as the pancakes sold at the starting point. Typical Dutch weather too. The odd drop of rain, dark skies and a lot of wind. It didn't bother those people in the open car. Wrapped in lambskin and woollen shawls they braved the elements, helped of course by the frequent coffee

stops and the excellent lunch. All competitors were well taken care of.

Obviously we wouldn't be writing about this odd Dutch rally in the *XK Gazette* if the winners weren't the aforementioned Ron Schoonderbeek with Yvonne Philippo Hennessy as his navigator. They didn't get lost, noted most letter signs en route and answered the most photo questions. Not a mean feat considering the route book was set in kilometres and the clocks in the Jag were in miles. Quick arithmetic was necessary. And of course the reliability, driveability and speed of the Jaguar helped, it has to be said.

The challenge cup is now proudly displayed on the mantelpiece, waiting for next year to be defended again. Ron, Yvonne and the Jaguar can't wait! 🏆