



Paddy Hopkirk , a motor racing legend, died last year at the age of 89. One of his outstanding achievements was in January 1964 winning the Monte Carlo rally in a Mini Cooper S starting from Minsk with fellow driver Henry Lidden. He received telegrams from the PM and the Beatles, Suddenly, a host of minis were seen with the sign “Monte Carlo or bust”.

He was born in Belfast and educated at the Jesuit-run Clongowes Wood college. He started his driving skills at the age of 9 in an inherited old two-seater bath chair. Paddy said that with the motorcycle engine and rear wheel brakes it “taught you a lot about skid control”.

At university he went to Trinity College, Dublin. He studied engineering, but his love was fast cars and he joined Volkswagen and then the Rootes group, which made the mini designed by Alex Issigonis.

In the 1968 London to Sydney Marathon, via Kabul and Mumbai, he and Tony Nash were leading in their Austin 1800 but on the final day they stopped to pull a rival competitor out of a blazing Citroën. He came second. Maybe he could have come first. He went on to win many other races.

Once his professional driving career ended, Paddy Hopkirk started several automotive businesses, where his Irish charm and enthusiasm proved successful. He took on an ambassadorial role with the BMW Group’s reborn MINI brand and expanded his work with the British Racing Drivers’ Club. BMW have made a special edition of Paddy Hopkirk’ s no 37 .

In 2016 he was appointed MBE for services to motoring charities.

“Paddy Hopkirk was a motorsport legend with amazing cheeky charm. He is survived by his wife Jenny, their three children Katie, Patrick and William, and their six grandchildren. He will be sadly missed by them and his many friends.