

## From the Pickwick Bicycle Club Obituaries

<http://www.pickwickbc.org.uk/Obituaries.html#gb>

### Gerry (Gerald) Nutland Burgess “Red-nosed Mr Stiggins”

1920-1999

#### Racing driver who beat the snow to win the RAC Rally in 1959

Gerry Burgess, who has died aged 78, overcame a Scottish snowstorm to win the RAC motor rally of 1959. By the night of November 17, snow drifts had made impassable the Nairn to Braemar section of the 1,900 mile race. With his co-driver Sam Croft-Pearson, Burgess was one of the first drivers to spot an alternative route around the mountains. Their Ford Zephyr was one of the few cars even to reach the time-control post in Braemar. This tough and enterprising drive was characteristic of a man who enjoyed his motor sport in all weathers and in all countries. The RAC rally that year ended in chaos. Fewer than half of the 131 competitors who had set off from Blackpool on the Tuesday arrived at the finish at Crystal Palace on Friday night, having been tested to breaking point by conditions in the Highlands and Wales. Protests about the course were lodged by three well-known foreign drivers, and it was almost a week before official confirmation of the number and order of the finishers could be given by the RAC. There was no doubt, however, that Burgess had won, although good fortune smiled on him to the end. As he drove into the final control point at Brands Hatch, his Ford collided with another car, but luckily no serious damage was caused to his own vehicle. It was Burgess's first rally victory but the end of an era for British motor sport, as no home-grown driver would win the RAC rally again until 1972.

Gerald Nutland Burgess, always known as Gerry, was born in Brownstown, Co Kildare, on December 22 1920. He was educated at Christ's College, Finchley, and soon developed an interest in bicycle racing. As a member of the Polytechnic Cycling Club, he won the British Amateur Tandem Championship in 1939, his riding partner being Lew Pond. Later, at the height of his rallying career, although bulky and prematurely balding, Burgess was always as fit as his rivals. For this he credited his cycle training.

Like all rally drivers of the period, Burgess was not paid a fee – only expenses. He had to build up his own business to be able to afford to drive. In 1943 he founded an engineering business which soon became a leading supplier of components to the motor and air industries. He also established a company making lightweight bicycle components, and later another that made banqueting chairs. In the 1950s, after a series of sterling performances in his own cars in the Monte Carlo and Liege-Rome-Liege rallies, Burgess was invited to join the BMC works team, for whom he drove a variety of Austin and Austin-Healey cars. He transferred to the Ford factory team in 1959. During the 1950s and early 1960s, Burgess took part in rallies all over the world. In 1955 he took fourth place in the Monte Carlo Rally, and in 1962, in the East African Safari, he won his class for the Ford works team in a Zephyr Mark 3. The 3,600 mile route was enlivened by encounters with lions, hyenas and zebras. Jomo Kenyatta was delighted by the event and fixed a Safari badge to his ministerial Mercedes. In 1964, Burgess took part in the first Monte Carlo Rally to have a Russian starting point; competitors set off from Minsk in sub-zero temperatures in cars sporting steel-spiked tyres. By now, however, the sport was becoming the domain of professionals rather than of those who drove for fun. Burgess retired from competition and spent the next 30 years in business.

He was president of the overseas section of the Ancien Pilotes of the Monte Carlo Rally, and after retiring to Monaco in 1988 was a regular attender of the reunions which took place during the Monte Carlo Rally and the Monaco Grand Prix.

He married in 1941, Joan Clark; they had a son and two daughters.

*Obituary in The Daily Telegraph*

**From the Pickwick Bicycle Club Obituaries**

<http://www.pickwickbc.org.uk/Obituaries.html#gb>

*"Joe the Fat Boy" (Stan Rose) remembers Gerry well and was at the old Slough track when Gerry crashed and broke his back. That was his last race. Gerry owned a factory in Feltham where he made many items in aluminium including handlebars and brakes, etc.*