

# Press Release

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022

## OVERVIEW

Stephen Hughes and Gemma Bullock are entering the Baltic Sea Circle rally, the northernmost adventure rally on the planet. The rally will take them through 11 countries in Europe, covering 6000 miles in 20 days. They are raising money for **Arthur Rank Hospice Charity**, who provide support for those suffering from life limiting illness and provide end-of-life care. Stephen and Gemma hope to raise £50,000 for the charity.

## THE RALLY

The Baltic Sea Circle is an adventure rally organised by the Superlative Adventure Club, an organisation based in Germany. They organise many adventure rallies each year, mostly in different parts of Europe.

This year there are two Baltic Sea Circle summer rallies, since the 2020 and 2021 events were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Wild Spirit are entered in the "Round 2" rally. Currently there are 162 teams entered into this event, with Wild Spirit being the only team entered from the UK.

The rally rules state that teams must use a vehicle older than 20 years, must not use GPS or motorways during the rally, and there is no fixed route; the key is to maximise the adventure.

At the start of the rally each team receives a Roadbook containing a list of challenges and tasks that earn them points. Creativity and cunning are key to earning bonus points and scoring big. The team with the most points at the end of the rally wins!

## Key Details

**When:** 19th June to 4th July 2022

**Distance:** 5000 miles around the Baltic Sea + 1000 miles to get to the start line and home again.

**Start and Finish:** Hamburg, Germany

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**Route:** Any! But we'll be traveling through Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, (plus the Netherlands to get to Germany).

## WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

In September 2019, Stephen's wife Jenny was diagnosed with cancer of the spinal cord. Despite an 8 hour operation to remove the tumour, the prognosis was that the cancer would return quickly and that Jenny would only survive 18 months at most. Sadly, Jenny passed away in March 2020, just 6 months after diagnosis, at the age of 35.

During those 6 months, the Arthur Rank Hospice Charity helped Stephen, Jenny and their children. Arthur Rank's "Life Celebration and Activity" coordinator was able to come to their home and run sessions to make memory books, and run relaxed play sessions. The hospice care team were able to offer massage therapy at home, and taught Stephen ways to help soothe Jenny's symptoms. Jenny was able to spend time at the hospice doing craft sessions with other patients, something that was a particular passion of hers.

When it came to Jenny's final weeks, Arthur Rank Hospice were there around the clock to support and care for her. Stephen was able to stay alongside Jenny throughout.

Arthur Rank Hospice Charity provides this service for free to thousands of people across Cambridgeshire each year, from their bases in Cambridge and Wisbech. They support patients and their families at the most difficult times. Stephen and Gemma wanted to help support the charity in memory of Jenny.

Find out more about the hospice here: [www.arhc.org.uk](http://www.arhc.org.uk)

## THE CAR

### Technical Details

**Model:** Porsche 944

**First registered:** 6 Feb 1987

**Engine:** 2.5L 8v Normally aspirated & 5-speed manual gearbox

**Previous owners:** 18

**Milage:** 201,137 miles

**Service history:** Dealer stamps from new to 177000 miles

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Modifications: aftermarket DME chip (by previous owner), Balance shaft delete (by previous owner), upgraded headlight wiring loom and relays, solid state DME relay, Momo prototipo steering wheel, Powerflex ARB bushes and ARB strengthening braces, Brembo front brake discs, EBC brake pads.

Items restored over last 2 years: New sills (driver and passenger), front seats repaired, rear seats recovered, original rubber spoiler fitted, front and rear shock absorbers replaced, OEM air filter box replaced, AFM replaced, new tailgate struts, new starter motor, new clutch slave cylinder, new odometer gear.

## Background

Stephen bought the car in 2014, not long after Jenny and he were married. It was a project car advertised on eBay that the previous owner had stored for the last 4 years with the hope of turning it into a track car, but other projects had gotten in the way. There was some serious rot in the passenger sill but the car was advertised with all the new sills ready to begin the repairs. The online auction was too tempting to pass by and with a shout up the stairs to Jenny of "I'm gonna bid on this Porsche, it's a bargain!", the car was purchased for £570.

Collection happened about a week later, and the car trailered back to Cambridgeshire from Mansfield. The 944 immediately went to a local garage where the sills were repaired, timing belt replaced and a new temperature sensor fitted, before it passed its MOT and was back on the road.

The car was put into service as a daily driver for the next 2 years, with only a couple of breakdowns over that time. One of the half shafts sheared its bolts on one occasion, and the rear brake shoes disintegrated inside the rotors on another. Overall it was very reliable!

In 2017 the car suffered an overheating issue that was eventually tracked down to a faulty fan relay and loose wiring on the temperature sensor, but other priorities and a change of job meant that the Porsche sat on the driveway dormant for the next 3 years.

## Restoration

Following Jenny's death in March 2020, Stephen took several months away from work. This was an extremely difficult time, the COVID pandemic meant that restrictions were in place and Stephen and his children were isolated from family and friends at the most difficult time.

Stephen was able to take time to focus on getting the engine running again, and found the problem solving a good way to focus on something productive. Taking care of the kids came first, but the project allowed Stephen to keep his own mental wellbeing in check too.

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In December 2020, Stephen formed the idea of doing a charity fundraiser and using the Porsche as a way to do something really challenging. The idea was born! 18 months later and the car is back on the road, ready to take on the adventure of a lifetime and raise some serious cash for charity.

## PREPARATION AND EQUIPMENT

Stephen and Gemma have opted to camp, and have obtained a roof tent for the trip. This should be quick to put up and take down at the end of a long day of driving, and be relatively comfortable with a foam mattress inside! They've got a limited amount of space in the Porsche for equipment, even with the rear seats folded flat. Essentials include sleeping bags, food and water, spare tyre and tools for any repairs they'll need to make, extra fuel, first aid kit, cooking and eating equipment and there might even be room for a change of clothes.

## THE TEAM

### Stephen Hughes

Stephen is 39, a father of three boys and a Software Development team leader by profession. He's never done an adventure rally before, but does have a keen sense of adventure, and loves to go camping. He did go on a long road trip from Melbourne to Alice Springs once.

### Gemma Bullock

Gemma is 34, and works for the NHS as a perinatal mental health nursery nurse. Gemma is a novice when it comes to camping, but is up for the challenge.

## SPONSORS

We have been lucky to get some sponsorship for the event:

**Toyo Tires UK** have provided a set of Toyo Proxes Sport free of charge.

**Expedition Foods** have provided a discount on freeze dried meals that we can carry for emergency food.

**Midway Garage Ltd** in Witchford have provided discounts on their services to check over the car, perform oil services and timing belt change.

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## HOW TO DONATE

The easiest and fastest way to donate is through our team website [wildspiritadventure.co.uk](http://wildspiritadventure.co.uk)

This takes donors through to our GoFundMe page to donate, where 100% of donations go straight to Arthur Rank Hospice Charity.

All donations are welcome, no matter how small. As a gesture of thanks, all donors will get their name on the car, just like a rally or racing team sponsor.