

PERHAPS IT WAS THE HEADY WHIFF from the exhausts of some of the world's most sought-after cars. Perhaps it was the wine "testing" at the end of each arduous day of driving. But whatever it was, there was something definitely in the air at this year's Grand Tour London-Monte Carlo Rally.

Susie Ambrose took part; in real life, she's the CEO of Seventy Thirty, an exclusive introduction service for affluent individuals. Her navigator in this, the only all-female team in the event, was Rachel MacLynn who is head of Seventy Thirty's membership.

Now, as we all know, you can't really rally on an open road – so this rally takes its element of sport in finding clues deposited through the French countryside.

We're sure that both Susie and Rachel can circumnavigate the most daunting of social scenes, and even locate the course of true romance in this difficult and love-deprived world. But they couldn't do without their sat nav. "On the third day Rachel and I ended up in a remote village somewhere in France on our way to solve yet another clue," says Susie. "There you have two blonde, slim girls in a convertible right-hand drive car in a small village. We spotted a group of people on the street so Rachel, who speaks French, asked them to tell us where this particular fountain is – they

replied, 'In a village 30km from here'." Out came the strictly forbidden TomTom sat nav, and the girls became a butt of over-dinner jokes for the next two days. The friendly dinners – the drinks that precede them and the socialising afterwards – are one of the great draws of the Grand Tour, and the girls claim, anyway, they gave as good as they got.

In any case the last laugh was theirs – while they didn't excel at the treasure hunt-style rally, they managed to get their car in front of everyone else's for the final drive up to Casino Square. And at the gala party the winners of the rally weren't able to take up their prize of a day on a Riva boat and lunch at the Eden Rock – so Susie bid for it, with the proceeds going to Action on Addiction.

But the main beneficiary was Bottletop, which funds sexual-health education initiatives in the UK, Africa and Brazil. Susie says, "I believe that fortunate people have a moral obligation to encourage, support and help young people who are less fortunate. I was moved by Bottletop's objectives in educating young people about issues like HIV/AIDS and enabling them to make the right choices in life."

No doubt Susie and Rachel will be taking a Penelope Pitstop approach to next year's rally too.

See www.bottletop.org.uk for more information. ☺



Monte Carlo or bust

They say motorsport is a numbers game.

It's true; take 29 teams, five days of driving, two blondes, innumerable bottles of wine, and what do you get?

A result for the Bottletop charity

