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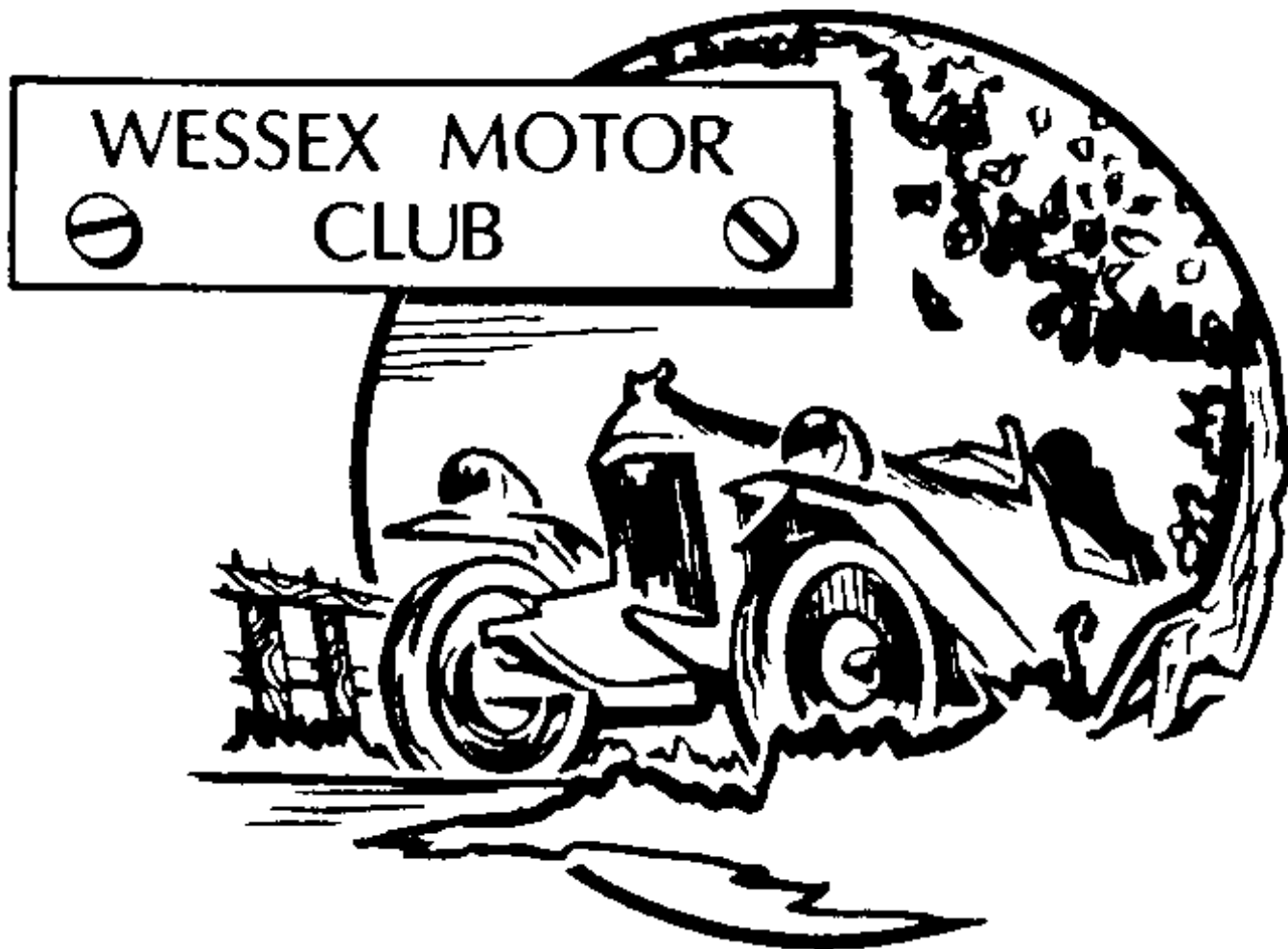
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WMC Magazine

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Preston Road Rally

December 2001

By *Dick & Zip* (in the different fonts)



"Yeah that's right, through the trees"

This year we were gonna plan it all in advance. This year I wasn't gonna be in a tinny 205 that would break half way round. This year, we were gonna have Dolomite power, courtesy of Paul Swindells in the driver's seat. We started preparing well in advance. This was to be no mean feat – preparing for the UK's roughest and toughest road rally would mean both mechanical work, and also refitting the entire interior to the stage prepared car. On the mechanical side, Paul acquired an LSD (useful for the conditions), and the list of parts that needed fixing included propshaft, carbs, brakes, and manufacture of a sump guard. In the weeks before the event, I came down to Southampton a few times to help Paul fix the car, and also to enjoy the delights of sleeping in the 4ft long sofa at Mayfield Road. But, unfortunately, two weeks before the event, Paul had to pull out.

OK, now for plan B – get Dick to drive (***Paul, you owe me big time***). No – not in the derelict Crapi that had been sitting covered in mud outside his house, minus exhaust, since the Pheasant Plucker (***cheeky bugger, it's not muddy***). Dick had just acquired a lightweight Land Rover that he had spotted, derelict, on his

daily walk to work (***why do you keep saying derelict when you mention my cars? You'll make everybody think that it's an ongoing theme...***). Even better, the owner didn't want any money for it, and it had a V8 fitted. On the downside, it didn't have an MoT and the engine didn't run, either. And he just had two weeks to get it sorted. But Dick was a veteran of the 96 Preston, navving James Coyne in the Jetta, and I had navved Tak in 99 and James in 2000, so we were the perfect team.

The engine only needed work to the dizzy, and then all the LR needed for the MoT was an exhaust, and a brake line. Oh, and Dick also got the harnesses bolted in properly, as previously the eye bolts were mounted to a bit of rotten wood in the rear of the vehicle! (***Huh, he thinks they were put in properly, actually I just used instant gasket to glue them to the floor***). Dick took it for its first quick drive on the Thursday, two days before the event, and said it felt fine along the whites, apart from it being a little heavy on the shoulders. (It had no power steering and a small sports steering wheel!) And that's about all Dick told me about, apart from he thought it was a mid-70's model.

I got down to Southampton on the day of the event, and I saw the beast that we were about to do the event in. Oh, and it actually turned out to be a 1955 vehicle! We spent a while making sure we had all the bits we needed – tool box, spare fluids, jerry can, and tyre weld (*do you not want me to mention the large stock of Snickers, crisps and porn mags then Zip? (I'm joking about the pornos, honest!)*).

The journey to Norfolk would take about 4 hours. I drove, to save Dick's shoulders for the event. Maybe this was a bad idea, as several things scared me about the LR. First, as you turned the steering wheel through 90 degrees, nothing would happen. Then, turn it a little bit more, and the front wheels would start to wobble, and the whole thing would start to turn. It was, however, much easier to get the LR to change direction by depressing the brake pedal. But this was only good for left hand corners! Also, the whole cabin started shaking and squeaking above about 50mph (not that the speedo worked!), and it felt like the body was going to fly off (*err, it was ... I have since found out that there are only two and a half bolts holding most of it on*). Oh, and the fuel gauge stopped working after about 30 miles, which wasn't that helpful, as we knew that we were going to be marginal on fuel for the event, with a V8 that would probably do about 10mpg, and a single 8 gallon tank. Also, there were no heaters, but the V8 was keeping us from freezing and we were wrapped up well. Apart from all that, we were invincible – we were in a Land Rover, and there was no way we were going to get struck or have a mechanical failure (*want a bet?*).

Scrutineering was no problem – there would be no last minute bodging of the electrics for the

reversing lamps or rear fog lights, as it was too early to have them as standard. And noise was no problem as the exhaust was new (*well, the bake bean can was, anyway*). The only question at scrutineering was as to why we had a Supersoaker gaffa taped to the roll bar. Dick? (*Because glue wouldn't have stuck...*). We did get a few funny comments from the other competitors and officials about the car in general, but most of them agreed that it was the "perfect vehicle" (*No Zip, I think they were actually laughing behind our backs*).

The other crews were generally very well prepared, ranging from the ever popular RWD Scrote, the 205 GTi, and included sorted Imprezas as cars 4+5 that may be more common in future road rallies.

Briefly, the format of the event uses about 15 competitive sections, nearly all on white roads, ranging from rough pot-holed tracks, to muddy slippery whites, and even includes a disused airfield. Non-competitive sections are used to link the competitive bits, and the total mileage is about 200 miles. The navigation is not an issue as you get the route in a road book, so the event is a compromise of driving for a fast time, but being careful enough to avoid damaging the car on the rough whites.

The first section went OK - quite a hard, bumpy section. Dick was learning how to drive the LR fast on the whites. I think by this time, I had probably driven the car more than him! At the "foto" board there was the obligatory spectacular driving though the puddle that covered the windscreen with mud, nearly causing us to miss the slot hairpin, and drive into the trees, at the end of it, we put in a respectable 38th fastest time.





“How to throw a Land Rover into a hairpin left” by Dick

The next section went better. Dick was starting to throw the beast around, and sliding it around the corners impressively ... and the time was good enough for 34th o/a.

The third section was going great as it was a bit more slippery. Dick was again sliding around the corners, and using the 4x4 traction and mega-torque V8 to pull on the straights (*yep, those Essex ladies were easy... [WATCH IT!!!! Ed.]*). Suddenly, the LR felt squiffy at the rear (*it felt squiffy all night, but now it just felt ... um ... squiffier*). We stopped mid-section to check, and found that we had blown the air out of a rear tyre. We didn't have enough time before the event to source a spare (*liar, we could actually, I think we just couldn't be arsed*), but we were carrying loads of Tyre Weld with us. However, the valve had been dragged through the rim, so we couldn't use the Tyre Weld. Arse. And at the same time, we noticed loads of steam coming from the engine bay – we had a massive coolant leak coming from the thermostat housing to inlet manifold. And then we knew that the rally was over (*but you still decided to nav us to a main road via about 15*

miles of off route whites though, didn't you Zip!).

We got the recovery back to Southampton, which was at least warm after the 4 hour freezing wait for it. And it also saved us a large amount of petrol money. When we got back, the recovery driver asked where to put the broken muddy LR. “Over there, in front of the broken muddy Crapi” was Dick's reply (*Zip, next time I see you I'm going to hit you, I NEVER would have said that the Crapi was muddy*).

The event was won by Steve Webster and Roger Hage – car 4, the Impreza. 35 of the original 50 starters finished, which is quite a high finish rate for recent Prestons (21 in '99 and 28 in 2000). Our event was documented in the retirement list as “*retired – burst unburstable spare*”. Thanks to all the marshals and officials involved. We'll be back, probably with a spare tyre....(*uh, I think I'm washing my hair that weekend - well, it is almost Christmas time you know - ...oh, OK, if you insist. Let's try and make it five DNFs out of five then*).

INTRODUCTION

Greetings once again. I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. Since the last magazine, our championships have ended, with Jon & Calum and Dave & Elly emerging as RUC & PC victors respectively. Many congratulations! Thank you to everyone who has set, marshalled or competed in events this year. Your support makes the championship possible & we're all very grateful. Personally, PC9 was a lot of fun, despite the hassles, as was PC10 ... just a pity that the 106's driveshaft didn't hold together for a wee bit longer!

The Barum Road Rally has also run recently and, yet again, Wessex was well represented. A number of us have competed in more 12-Cars arranged by Southsea MC, which were muddy & sticky (COSH!!!!) but very enjoyable. Dave & Olly also organised the Old Farts' 12-Car on Maundy Thursday which was a great success, and thanks to everyone for making the effort to support it even though it was the holidays.

I'm looking for memorable photographs of the year, so if anyone's got photos of crashed, broken, muddy, stuck (you get the picture!) cars, & they don't mind them being put in the magazine, please send them my way.

Until then, enjoy the Funky Elephant. See you soon!

Lizzie Pope

PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Welcome back after the Easter break, and to my first column as President. I must begin by offering my congratulations to Dave & Elly for winning the PC championship, and also to Jon and Calum for their victory in the RUC championship. For Jon and Calum to get both a perfect RUC score, and come 3rd and 4th in the PC Championship is a brilliant achievement, and I am sure Calum's skills will be in great demand next season.

Although our own championships are over for this season, there is still plenty of to do within the club. There's the eagerly anticipated Funky Elephant on April 27th/28th, and in addition, there is the trip to Goodwood for the skid pan course to look forward to. Then we have two major social events, the Summer Scatter on May 5th, and the End of Season Meal & Awards Evening on May 9th. And of course, we can't forget our weekly pub trips.

Finally, I would like to thank Elly and the rest of the outgoing committee for all of the work they have done for the club over the last year. I think that everyone will agree with me when I say it has been a great, well organised year, and lots of fun. Let's hope the new committee can do the same! Here's to a long, hot, motorsport-filled summer!

Chris Gage

EVENTS

Now that our season has drawn to a close, some of you might find yourselves in desperate need of a motorsport fix. I hope these antidotes help!

Southsea MC are looking for marshals for their annual **sprint** at **Goodwood** on **25th May**. There are a full 110 cars running, including some ex-F1 cars. A Wessex trip? Contact Gavin Cross (Chief Marshal) on 01329 513733 if you're interested.

The **Miglia Quadrato** is on **25th/26th May**. This is a **scatter** in the centre of **London**, starting at midnight & running to about 5/6am. The Comp. Sec's got some regs, if you're interested. The entry fee is £10, and crews of up to 4 are recommended, but up to 6 are allowed.

Abingdon Motorsport CAR-nival, 8th/9th June: on the 8th, there are the CAR-nival stages, followed by a Sprint on the Sunday. They're also running a **clubsport autotest** on the Saturday. You won't need a comp. licence, just £10 for entry. As it's a clubsport event, each car must carry a passenger, so it's time to scare your mates! See WindsorCarClub.co.uk

David Coles & Lizzie Pope

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ★ **PC9 & PC10 reports**
- ★ **Final championship tables**
- ★ **Rally reports**
- ★ **WMC & road rally calendars ... & MORE!**

WMC Events Still To Come:

MAY '02

5th: Summer Scatter

9th: WMC Awards Evening

Road Rally Calendar:

Date	Rally	Organising Club
11/12 May	Swan	Windsor
www.windsorcarclub.co.uk		
15/16 June	Wessex	Dolphin
www.dolphinmotorclub.co.uk		
7/8 Sep	Bullnose	Oxford
28/29 Sep	Powerush	Borough 18
19/20 Oct	Pheasant Plucker	Guildford
30Nov/1 Dec	Nightwatchman	Central Sussex
7/8 Dec	Ilfracombe	North Devon

PC10

PC10 was the first event I had ever set for more than about four cars, and that ran for longer than one hour. Therefore, I was quite surprised at how easy it seemed to start off. We drove around and found some route checks, at one point having to home and swap into my car instead of Andy's, as he nearly got it stuck down a white road, and now things were rattling a bit, but overall, not too bad. But now came the difficult bit ... the clues. We got the first five or six out of the way, and then ran out of ideas. As a result, we kept putting off writing the rest for "another day". "Another day" ended up being two days before the event, and I ended up taking over a corner of the bar at work, and hogging two tables to lay out maps etc. But we finally got it done.

Next came the start of the event. All was going well, until I found that I had somehow mislaid about 10 copies of the question sheet. This resulted in myself and Carl (thank you...) handwriting five copies, and the start being delayed 10 mins. Oops, sorry guys!

The event was (as far as I know) fairly un-eventful, except for Rupert's car trying to put on a smokescreen (broken something-or-other, apparently [driveshaft going in spectacular style ... I know, it was under my feet!! Ed.]), and Ben & John in the Polo visiting a white road.

Oh, and Cosh mentioned that one of my herringbones wasn't quite right (which I must admit, on later inspection, was true...), but nobody else seemed to have a problem with it. The less experienced plotters missed the same things I did :-b. But I hope that everyone enjoyed the night all the same.

Dan Moss

PC10 Results:

Points	Overall	PC	RUC	Crew	Car
76	1 =	-	-	Dave & Cosh	Volvo
76	1 =			Jonah & Steve	205 GTi
75	3	1	-	Dave & Olly	Fiesta (bent)
63	4 =	2 =	1 =	Jon & Calum	205 XS
63	4 =	2 =	1 =	Toby & Chris	Mini
62	6	4	-	James & Darren	Fiesta
61	7			D. Griffiths & Steve Porter	Picasso
60	8	5	3	Chris & Richard	Saxo
50	OTL	-	-	James & Chris	Fiesta (shiny)
58	DNF (broken driveshaft)	-	-	Rupert & Lizzie	106
?	DNF (white road victims)	-	-	Ben & John	Polo

PC9

Congratulations to Jon & Calum for the PC win, and commiserations to Dave & Elly who'd have taken it from them if an angry local hadn't forced the abandonment of the sections after TC9. Ben & John also did well on a challenging event, and Chris & Toby were going well before they were stopped after TC9. Andy & Gareth, and Carl & Lizzie were also stopped by the same people, who seemed to think the police should have told them about the event - can't imagine how they thought that would happen, the police HQ can't even tell their own patrol car drivers about events, as Olly will testify. The three crews stopped did well to defuse the situation & placate the resident, who ended up apologising for spoiling the competitors' evening. To put things in context, it was just before 10pm when he stopped Lizzie & Carl, and up to that time only 5 rally cars had been past that point anyway. Of the other eligible crews, Olly & Ben seemed to have a bit of poor night but kept battling away, and made sure they got all the TCs. It looks like Olly enjoyed many of the LWR deltas - we could see his tyre marks (we'll blame him, anyway) when we were collecting the codeboards. Phil Davidson (on only his second event, I think) and Ali Macmillan had all sorts of problems with the nav, but kept plugging away regardless.

Of the non-eligibles a slightly greenish-grey Phil Kendall did an excellent job navving Tom round the whole route in good time, and their result would've looked even better if Tom put a bit more effort into stopping at give-ways. Susan did very well navving Andy with the more challenging NE nav, to the extent that they exactly equalled Jon & Calum's performance. Jonah & Dick tell me they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, but that "under time pressure we just ended up guessing solutions and made lots of mistakes". Sorry that two crews (one in each class) found the nav too challenging and decided to retire - although it wasn't meant to be an easy event, perhaps it came out rather harder than we intended.

Many thanks to all the marshals who turned out - driving from as far afield as Warwickshire to lend a hand. All the TCs bar one were manned. Unfortunately Matt Hall found navving the course closer to be more of a challenge than he'd expected, but the boards they weren't able to get were picked up later anyway. Thanks also to Paul Lettington for all his input setting the event, including a number of return trips to Reading at odd hours, and for sorting out the clever electronic stuff like timecards and the very high-quality map fragment, courtesy of the Streetmap website (www.streetmap.co.uk). Finally, many thanks to Len at the Milbury's for stretching the rules a bit to ensure that all finishers and marshals were able to get a drink, whatever time they rolled in.

Steve Barnard

PC9 Results:

Car No.	Driver	Navigator	Car	Fails	Mins	PC	RUC
2	Jon Taylor	Calum Maciver	205 XS	0	18	1	1
1	Dave Coles	Elly Pryce	Fiesta	0	20	2	-
8	Ben Paddick	John Thompson	Polo	9	21	3	-
7	Chris Wilkins	Toby Jeffries	Mini	9	27	4	2
9	Andy Garrett	Gareth Lewis	106	10	31	5	-
6	Olly Smith	Ben Smith	Mini	16	31	6	-
10	Carl Gibbs	Lizzie Pope	205 Turbo Diesel	25	18	7	-
11	Phil Davidson	Alasdair Macmillan	MkII Escort	31	32	8	3
5	Darren Tomes	James Read	Metro	DNF (brake failure)	-	-	-
12	J. Garrett-Sinclair	Elaine Freer	Fiesta	DNF (retired)	-	-	-

NE Crews:

Car No.	Driver	Navigator	Car	Fails	Mins
13	Tom Jenkins	Phil Kendall	Fiesta	0	15
3	Andy Coshan	Susan Broughall	Sunbeam	0	18
O	Jonah Nuttgens	Dick Howatt	205 Gti	1	25
4	Steve Porter	Simon Smith	Sierra	DNF (retired)	-

The (Miserable) Old Farts' 12-Car (aka the Brown Slipper)

At the start of the Easter holidays myself and Olly ran an "Old Farts' 12 Car" where all of the old farts that usually marshalled for us and took up any spare entries got a run at a 12 car where they got priority.

The event used four maps, 185, 186, 196 and 197 and the route was about 100 - 110 miles long, so a bit longer than a normal 12 car. It started at 19:30 and was all finished before midnight at the Burger Van on top of Portsdown Hill. There was a good turn out of 9 cars including 2 from Southsea Motor Club. Lots of students turned up to marshal for the event, returning the goodwill of the night's competitors over the past year, and a good time seemed to be had by everyone.

The expert nav was set to challenge the very best crews by making them think (we thought they might just still be able to!) they set off into the night. Everyone seemed to enjoy the route and there was evidence of a few holiday hangovers for some competitors, having only got back from Spain watching the rally Catalunya the day before. By the end of the night the top two crews both had 0 fails and were only separated by minutes. The win went to Paul Swindells and Andy Coshan, only dropping 3 minutes all night, despite losing the rear of the car round a bend and nosing the front of the car into a bank. Second place went to Steve Barnard and Jonah Nuttgens, who were 8 minutes further back.

With more and more graduating members sticking around in the area and continuing to participate in rallies, both in the club and in local road rallies, then it is hoped to turn the Old Farts into an annual event. I certainly want a go when I leave!!! Thanks again to all the marshals; it wouldn't have been so successful without you.

David Coles

Pos.	No.	Novice/ Expert	Driver	Navigator	Car	Fails	Mins	Club
1	4	E	Paul Swindells	Andy Coshan	Pug 309 Gti	0	3	WMC
2	9	E	Steve Barnard	Jonah Nuttgens	Dolomite Sprint	0	11	WMC
3	3	E	Phil Kendall	Steve Azzo	Pug 309 Gti	1	26	WMC
4	2	E	Phil Collings	Mark Collings	Pug 205 1.6 Gti	4	21	SMC
5	8	N	Dan Moss	Susan Broughall	Pug 205 1.9 Gti	8	37	WMC
6	7	N	Steve Porter	Simon Smith	Sierra	23	46	WMC
7	5	E	Tom Jenkins	Chris Moore	Mk1 Fiesta	24	40	WMC
8	10	N	Graham Yates	Richard Arnold	Renault	37	54	SMC
9	12	E	Bob W	Paul Lettington	Nova	DNF	DNF	WMC

Rali Gogledd Cymru 2002

23th / 24th February

By Paul & Zip (in the different fonts)

Wow, we were off up to North Wales to compete in the Welsh Road Rally, believed by some to be the pinnacle of Road Rallying in the UK, and what's more, we were seeded car 27 out of 75, we were 'Experts'...!!

A few weeks of preparation saw us arrive at my parents house in Cheshire with plenty still to do (as always) - minor details such as fitting the sump guard etc... Dave and Elly kindly joined us up there, as we had to take along a marshal, and they foolishly (were) volunteered. Saturday night was soon upon us. Sadly most of the forecast rain had cleared up and gone away, just leaving a cold and windy night (guess who forgot their coat).

Through scrutineering we went, not too much hassle, in spite of the scrutineer looking like a prime candidate for a heart attack, and various comments about the number of tools I was carrying... Eventually came the drivers briefing, where we were told that the first section was from one end of the car park to the other, time allowed 2 hours... For those who don't know, most Welsh events are 'Pre-plot', i.e. you get the navigation before the start. Easy? You try sitting there plotting six A4 sheets worth of 6 figure grid references... zzzzzzzz *No, maybe you should try plotting them, Paul.*

Anyway, thankfully along came our 'start' time at the end of those two hours. The first section was a transport, then into the first competitive section, great fun! Lots of hairpins, 90s, very '3-dimensional' roads. Then we fetch up behind two spectators cars, who decide they want to drive too... They successfully

block an uphill hairpin slot left for about 2 mins by complete incompetence (*well at least I was relieved that Paul had stopped driving*), then move out of the way, only to pull out between me and the competitor behind... That stupid spectator then nearly ran into the back of me as I stopped for a TC, thankfully I soon shook them off (*you have to remember that Paul is now an international rally driver*)... Soon it was the end of the that section, and we came in 2 minutes early. Zip then politely requested that I backed off a bit. *I think I actually said "If you don't slow down we're both going to die."*... After that the event was a bit less interesting, most of the time there would be a competitive section followed by a transport, and the timings weren't at all challenging. We finally dropped time with a screwed clock on a rough straight white (pointless), combined with a local marshal who appeared to have trouble with a language barrier (i.e. we weren't Welsh)... We were one of ten crews clean at that point ... it wasn't all it had been cracked up to be...

After that it went downhill a bit with more screwed marshals (no, I don't mean screwed clocks, although some were). Finally, two sections before halfway there was a passage check just before a very tight hairpin slot right onto white (between two gateposts). Due to the proximity of the marshal, we didn't have the speed to handbrake, so following the marshal's advice on what everyone else had done, I turned round in a car park just up the road, and lined the car up to go between the two gateposts on the white, 15/20mph, a few feet from the gateposts and we hit

deeper mud and the road sloped left a little, sh*t!! I just had time to come off the throttle and ... BANG! ... we hit the gatepost. Sounds of smashing glass and the bonnet is about 4inches above the wing - hmmm, that's not good. Anyway, reverse off the gatepost, BANG! The back of the car slides off to the left and stoves in both n/s doors on a gate that was lurking in the dark. Oh well, full chat and off we go down the white (I may as well enjoy it methinks). Sadly it is the most pointless white I have ever seen in an event, rocky as hell, BIG gullies/ditches/potholes, going down at walking pace we were hammering the hell out of the car, we bottomed and stopped several times, and had to use a lot of grunt to drag the car of it's belly. We caught up the car in front (*which was probably a good job, really, as they slowed us down a lot*), and then limped through the next road section with not a lot of lights (we came into one PC, and the kid who was there said "Wow, look at the front of that car, it's all smashed up") to petrol. Pulling up in petrol, a swarm of spectators descended on the front of the car (hmmm, thinks me, this doesn't look good). We jump out and have a look and whilst we could have continued, we decided it was safest not to, and retired (with another discussion with Mr Arsey Scrutineer, about whether the gatepost was damaged). Drove home, got stopped by Plod, *for driving around a roundabout with "your engine screaming"* (Well, he must've been very bored ... or not used to certain WMC drivers' love of roundabouts...!!! Ed.).

The End

"Turn left! No, the *other* left!"

The RUC Championship from the navigator's seat of a blue Saxo

It's fair to say I left the "How to do a Scatter" talk in a fair amount of confusion – I knew how some of the clues worked, and which way up the map went, but that was about it. Hopefully all would become clear on the event itself, otherwise Richard and I were going to spend the evening driving aimlessly around the Hampshire lanes (like the rest of us *never* do that!! ☺ Ed.).

Arriving to sign on at the start of PC1 didn't help to calm any nerves. Everyone seemed to be walking round with map boards, romers and pencils on bits of string, torches around their heads, and generally looking a lot more organised than we were. The quick briefing before the start ("If you do nothing else, make sure you get to CMA, CMB and the Finish, and if you get any of the clues, that's a bonus"), cleared a few things up, and having plotted the CMs, quiet zones and black spots, the event even appeared to make a bit of sense.

Come 7pm, the clues were distributed, and we surprised ourselves at being able to solve most of them. Now all I had to do was get us to them. We had already decided to aim to get to CMA early on and plot more points, rather than risk missing it altogether. However, on arriving at CMA a few minutes before it opened, it was clear we were covering ground much more quickly than I had expected. A few less clues were solved at CMA (they were getting harder), and off we went again. We soon came across our only real "incident" of the evening when we met a woman reversing down the road towards us, to say that the road was closed ahead. This turned out to be

because Darren and James had rolled their car into a ditch, although fortunately they were unharmed.

We made it to CMB soon after it opened (we were definitely learning!), solved some more clues, and off we went again. Again, I misjudged the amount of ground we could cover in the time remaining, and we ended up being the first arrival finish pub, about 15 minutes earlier than we needed to be. Gradually more and more crews arrived, all with their own incidents and stories to tell, and everyone agreeing it was a great opening event.

The results were announced, and somehow we ended up 3rd RUC, only a few points behind the winners. That clinched it – we were definitely doing the next event!

Two weeks later, and we were signing on for PC2. I was now one of those with a romer around the neck, and we had come armed with calculators, sheets of roman numerals, and a clipboard for the answer sheets. The event itself was fairly uneventful, although I was getting better at judging distances, so our timing was a lot better. We didn't solve as many clues (a bit more practice required), but we got to more of the points that we had plotted, and ended up with a higher score than we got on the first event. That gave us 2nd RUC, a position that was going to become quite familiar over the season.

Next up was the "How to do a 12 Car" talk, followed by PC3 a week later. What can I say – the event was fantastic! More pressure than the scatters; the adrenaline was really flowing. We were able to solve the nav quickly,

and started worrying not about going OTL, but about dropping any time at all. We got to the finish on a complete high – I don't think the smile left my face for the next 24 hours! Another 2nd RUC position scored, and we moved up to second in the RUC championship.

For PC4, we tried having a third person in the back of the car, the idea being that he could solve some of the more involved clues as we went along, rather than having to sit at the marshal points. With one of my housemates duly commandeered, we aimed to get something other than 2nd. Unfortunately, that plan failed when it turned out that our passenger suffered from car sickness! With the extra weight in the car, Richard really felt the handling change, and we had a couple of near misses. One particularly memorable moment was on a 90° right hander. We completely overshot the corner, and ended up 20 metres down a conveniently placed farmer's track. Although we were again able to plot most of the clues, several overshoots, and an interesting smell from the brakes by the end of the evening meant we ended up (you've guessed it) 2nd RUC. Our luck had to change some time ... didn't it?

PC5 was another 12 car, and after the fun we had on the first one, I was really looking forward to it. Even better was the fact the Jon and Calum, who had won every round so far, weren't taking part in this one. Unfortunately, PC5 was also my worst performance of the season as navigator. I wasn't able to solve the clues quickly at all, and then when we finally got going, I was

making mistake left, right and centre. We even ended up at the Winchester M3 junction at one point (and I'm still not sure how we got there!). By the end of the evening we were getting very close to going OTL, although we had managed to avoid having to cut route. However, as there were very few RUC competitors out that evening, there was still a chance we might salvage something. When the results were announced at the pub, we were 1st RUC! The satisfaction was short lived, though, as when the results were rechecked, we had exceeded max make-up on one section, and were

moved down to 2nd RUC, behind Toby and Chris. This was especially annoying, as they had just followed us on the last two sections, rather than solving the clues themselves!

On to PC6 then, which can be summed up with one word: FOG! This was a real shame, as the few bits that were clear were really good roads, and we were solving the nav quickly and accurately. The poor visibility meant we couldn't push and had to cut out large sections of route, especially towards the end. We weren't going fast enough for there to be any incidents, and we got to

the finish to find that out of the two RUC entries, we were 2nd.

PC7 took place on Valentine's Day, and with Richard trying his luck elsewhere, we didn't enter. The next event was the scatter of PC8, and when we got to the start, it dawned on us that we hadn't done a scatter since before the Christmas break! With the event being set by Jon and Calum, and no other RUC crews entering, we decided to just gather a few points, and make sure we got to the finish on time, without performing any heroics. 10 points secured, and on to the next event.

Richard & Chris tackle their first 12-car



The final 12 car of the year was PC9, and having entered all of the previous 12 cars, we decided to marshal this event to "let someone else have a go!" The events of that night have been discussed at length on the list, so I won't repeat them here, but we weren't too disappointed not to have been competing. The results, however, made for a very interesting situation in the RUC championship. With Jon and Calum now assured of victory with a perfect score, Richard and I lay in joint 3rd. Toby and Chris could beat us, but only if they won PC10. Second place for them would lead to a draw in the championship, with all four of us in third place!

The only way Richard and I could improve our score would be to win the RUC event. With Jon and Calum's total dominance all year, this seemed unlikely, but if we could get second place, blocking Chris and Toby, we would assure ourselves of 3rd in the championship. Off we went, and the evening started well as we solved all of the clues at the start and at CMA. This was followed by solving most of the clues at CMB, and getting all five bonus points. We got to lots of points, many of which were 3 pointers, and didn't go OTL. Surely we had done enough?

The results were announced at the pub, and we were 1st RUC. We had got our 3rd place in the championship, and finished

the year on a high. Or so we thought...

On remarking, it appeared three points we got on the night shouldn't have been awarded, and with the close scores that had been a characteristic of the RUC championship all year, we were moved down to 3rd. Worse than that (from our point of view) was the fact that Toby and Chris were now joint winners, and had leapfrogged us in the championship.

We finished the year 5th RUC, just one point behind Chris and Toby, and 11th PC. Next up is the Funky Elephant, our first road rally. Considering that seven months ago neither of us knew what a road rally was, that should be a real test.

FAST CARS AND SUNSHINE

Standing in the cold and rain of a wet November in Wales watching the Network Q, someone said, “Why don’t we do this somewhere sunny”, so we did.

Leaving the chill of the March weather, 10 of us, Zip, Tom, Phil, Dick, Helen, Paul, Elly, Chris, Ceri and myself, headed to Northern Spain to watch the Rallye de Catalunya. Prior organization wasn’t all it could have been, but we did manage to book flights and accommodation before leaving the UK, with the help of Zip’s hidden linguistic talents and Jeremy’s computer.

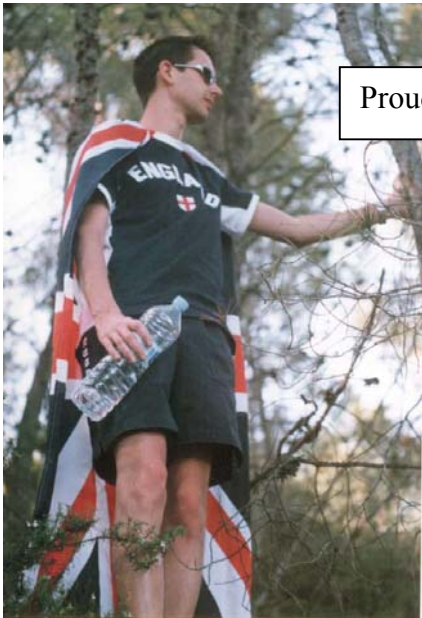
We spent an intense couple of days sampling the artistic and alcoholic delights of Barcelona, with a bit too much Gaudi for some and a lot too much sangria for most. On Friday we hired cars and headed south from Barcelona to watch the stages near Tarragona before moving north to accommodation in Lloret de Mar. Our apartments were in prime position with the start /finish straight going straight past our front door and Parc Ferme about 100 yards up the road. From there we then drove inland on Saturday and Sunday to see the stages.

As you’ve probably heard, motor sport is very popular in Spain and there were lots of supporters out (too many in places). We were fortunate enough not to go to any of the stages that were cancelled and managed to see a good mix of corners, an afternoon in servicing, the start of each day, the overall finish and the podium, while enjoying the Spanish sunshine. (Did I mention it was warm and sunny?!) There was an amazing atmosphere, possibly a result of the number of spectators, very unlike anything in Wales. We soon discovered that the Spanish spectators had a different mentality to the British. Instead of walking on the stage in between the cars they found themselves a decent spot and sat there all day watching the stages run twice, often with a bottle of wine or numerous bottles of beer. This kept the atmosphere alive all day and led to cheers and airhorns from the crowds when we walked on the stage (particularly Tom and Zip with the Union Jack). The officials didn’t like it much, but to be honest I’m not sure most of the officials understood what was going on, with some standing in the most stupid places. It was nice to be out to support the Brits with numerous Union Jacks and English flags, to wish McRae good luck and congratulate/hassle Richard Burns at the finish.

The cultural side of Lloret de Mar left a lot to be desired, but we did find time to explore the shops and bars of the town. On the Monday night before we left there was a private party with an interesting dress code. (Warning: people of sensitive disposition might find the images disturbing)

It was a fantastic week. We walked miles and although we didn’t manage to tip the A-classes over, we had fun trying on the twisty mountain roads. We left with fond memories, a bit of a tan, several sombreros and in Dick’s case Marcus Gronholm’s cap. So, where shall we go next year? Does anyone want to join us?

Susan Broughall



Proudly flying the flag!

**For more photos see
www.rally.ing.co.uk**

