

CLASSICAL GAS

February 2006

About Classic Trials and Falcon Motor Club Events and Personalities

Tough Exeter for Falcons



Best Falcon performance was by Simon Groves, seen here talking to ACTC Scruitineer John Blakeley.

This years Exeter was a tough one, especially for classes Seven and Eight who had some very difficult restarts.

Before the Start

As usual, there were dramas even before the start, for some.

Simon Robson had replaced the new gearbox that broke on Bamford with one re-built from various bits and pieces that were laying around the garage. He also replaced the CWP and all the brake slave cylinders, finishing all this just hours before he had to leave for the start.

Peter Mountain had lots of trouble with his Dellow Mk1 during the week. The diff was very noisy and ne of the cylinders was running very rich. Fortunately Peter managed to get everything fixed, with lots of help from various experts.

Start

Fred Gregory was the first car in Class 0 to leave the Cirencester start, after drama on the journey from home when he had a puncture. With three spare wheels, it shouldn't have been a problem, but his Rickman Ranger has locking wheel nuts and the key broke during the change. So Fred couldn't afford any punctures in the other three wheels!

Simon Robson had found oil leaking from his newly replaced gearbox and had to borrow Simon Groves diff oil.

Haynes

Most competitors arrived early and many had taken the direct route permitted in the road book. Scruitineering was very efficient, but it was very dark in the car park and John Parsons had the misfortune to fall over a kerb, breaking a tooth amongst other things in the process.

Colin Sumner was having electrical problems with his Beetle. Despite

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Mike and Michael marshalling on the Cleve Hills. The event report starts on page 3.

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changing almost everything it wouldn't run properly. Colin limped around the first few sections, but running at the back of the field, he was in constant danger of being overtaken by the back marker and he retired.

Meerhay

It was nice to see Meerhay re-introduced as the first hill after being rested since 1992. It's a long climb, prone to developing a queue, necessitating a holding control on the approach. Ross Nuten and some of the other Falcons were delayed here as a Reliant Scimitar was stuck on the hill. No, it wasn't Dave Nash's new car, but the standard V6 machine driven by Reliant restoration expert David Womack who retired soon afterwards. Ross has replaced the notoriously smoky engine in his Mk2 Dellow with a super new lump he sourced on Ebay. Bill Rosten stormed up but had to stop at the top to change a fan belt. The Imp was soon fixed and Bill went on to a gold.

Gatcombe Lane

Used even by Class 0, there were no problems.

Normans Hump

Into Bovey Woods for the usual two well known sections. Normans Hump was first. Classes 1, 2 and 5 only did the first bit, diverting left in the restart area where classes 7 and 8 had to stop, just before the steep bit starts. The others had to do the full hill but without a stop.

Pete Barr struggled in his class 4 Beetle but went on to clean the hill for gold. The upper reaches were a problem for many of the class 7's, who couldn't build enough speed after their re-start. None of the Liege's had enough power here, even the supercharged version of John Sawle. Simon Robson was one of many who came so close to the top but couldn't quite reach it. Neil Bray was penalised for a run-back which didn't please him and fellow Falcon Ian Davis broke a driveshaft, which he managed to change, while observing a number of Marlins fail the hill through not building enough momentum after their re-start.

Clinton Bottom

Tim Whellock had chosen the shorter version of Clinton this year, with a restart for the higher classes, positioned on a steepish slope. MCC secretary Peter Lawley was delighted to clean the section in the ex-Ron Butcher Beetle as was Simon Robson in his Liege. Neil Bray failed and while Ross Nuten got away from the restart OK he lost grip a few yards up the hill.

Martin Allen had the misfortune to break the diff on the ex Mike Young Racecorp and wasn't carrying a spare. Unbelievably a friendly local farmer not only towed him to his house but also leant him a diff and helped him change it.

Most of the non re-starters got up without too many problems although Tristan White failed when his engine cut out. Clinton also saw the end of Dennis Greenslades Exeter when he retired the NSU 1000.

Waterloo

After last years problems when the class 0's used the escape road as their section they were diverted elsewhere. For the main trial the bottom corner was there as ever to trap the un-wary and multiple National PCT champion Barrie Parker lost his clean sheet in the big Audi 80.

Neil Bray cleaned the section at the expense of a puncture and blocked the exit road as he didn't have a club hammer for knock off wheels and had to adjust the brakes before he could get Primrose going.

Plyford and Higher Rill

These were both smooth easy climbs, even class 0. They saw the end of Greg Warren's Exeter when he retired his Ford Anglia Estate with mechanical problems.

Bulverton Steep

The only restart for the lower classes was in this wooded complex near Sidmouth. Adrian Dommett failed when he didn't stop. Hopefully he didn't blame a very cold looking Michael Collins making his debut as a trials passenger in the Wolesley Hornet. Ian Moss was reported as not getting off the start line in 3 attempts but was shown cleaning the hill for gold in the results.

Exeter

The compulsory rest halt gave the

opportunity for competitors to catch up with each other and compare results. Derek Reynolds was still going after fixing a broken throttle cable, two punctures and a broken exhaust. Stuart Harrold and Chris Phillips were finding their Trolls engine down on power. They got off both Clinton and Normans Hump restarts but couldn't come out the top of either. Pete Barr reported charging problems but went on to gold

Tillerton Steep

The lower classes had their first run at Clinton for a couple of years. They found the hill pretty much as before with some big rocky bumps that needed a lot of care to avoid damaging the car. There was no tyre pressure check here which was a shame as it was to be a crucial hill for the higher classes.

John Parsons and Keith Oakes had been going well but both lost their clean sheets on the restart, which is all about positioning. Neil Bray and Dave Nash stopped as well. Peter Mountain struggled, got going but was given a runback and David Foresheew retired with transmission problems

The problem for the lower classes was that not having to stop they could attack the fearsome rocks in the restart area as fast as they wanted or their cars would stand. It was too much for Colin Perryman's lovely BMW when the rear suspension turrets collapsed and it looks as if the shell is a write-off. Simon Groves took things uncharacteristically easy but still incurred some damage when he scrapped the Escorts wings against the rocks.

Fingle

Peter Manning and Keith Pettit had lucky escapes after failing to go into the car park to let the tyres down, but still stormed up on 20 psi. Although the hill itself wasn't too difficult the spectacular setting meant there were many photographers in evidence, to inspire the competitors who got to the top. When they got there they found snow in the hedgerows.

Wooston Steep

Stuart Tucker and Classical Gas Contributor John Salter were the first car, in the Billy Goat Gruff and couldn't get off the restart as it was

very slippery with loose stuff. The restart was to cause problems and Simon Robson was one of many not to get away. Mike Pearson had been clean until Wooston. They restarted OK, but with low revs, and failed on the steep slope. David Bache was just behind in his similar car on the same pressures. He gave it more revs and cleaned the hill.

The lower classes didn't have too many problems with their route apart from a very overgrown exit track.

Simms

There was some snow on the route from Wooston to Simms but it had changed to rain by the time the mid runners arrived at the famous old hill.

As usual the section was thronged with spectators who saw a fair selection of the non-restarting lower classes get to the top. A spectating Mark Rosten-Edwards said the Cornish Escorts just flew up like it was the A30 but in class 7 the Liege's didn't have enough puff to cope with the restart, although John Sawle's blown one clearly had more grunt than the rest. John Parsons route up the right made the crowd step back but Mark thought the class 8's should have their own restart higher up. Certainly Simms wasn't class 7 friendly this year and both Andrew Brown and Keith Oakes failed above the A boards.

Neil and Jade Bray were delighted to go clean in Primrose but Simms was to be unkind to Falcons Dellow and Mike Pearson, Ross Nuten and Peter Mountain all stopped just short of section ends. In class Five Peter Manning choose the right hand of Simms and believed this strategy paid off even though he failed a cars length from the top. Keith Pettit did exactly the same thing but Mike Warnes showed it was possible for a sports car and went on to gold in his TR7.

Wheelspin Champion Ian Davis compounded his Bovey Woods problems when a petrol pipe failed on Simms and he had his first retirement since 1991.

Tiple

There was no rest for competitors as Tiple waited just across the road with a very tough restart for the higher classes. This proved a tough proposition and a queue soon developed as car after car couldn't get away. Simon Robson proved it was possible when he succeeded in getting his Liege off the restart, crediting his success to bouncer Matt. Fellow Class 7 driver Keith Oakes also went clean but at the expense of a puncture on the following road section. Barrie Parker got the big Audi well stuck on a section he considered to be very rough and choose to back out rather than try to go to the top.

Slippery Sam

There was a restart for Class 8 only on the final hill. Other than that class 7 had the same sections as the reds. Ross failed the restart and fellow Dellow driver Mark Worsfeld had the ex-Potter super-charged car seized its 1172 motor and he retired. Interestingly Mark had his cars set up by David Thomas who races a Capri in the same championship as Neil Bray. It's a very small world.

Afterwards

Most competitors enjoyed the evening manifestation at the Trecarn, although President Ron Butcher lost his battle with the PA and some thought the new owners had taken portion control to far. The trial wasn't over for Ross Nuten. Leaving the Trecarn on the Sunday Ross discovered a major weld on the rear A frame had broken. He and Maureen managed to bodge a repair for the drive home to Hertfordshire ☺

Cloudy Clee

Adrian Marfell won the Clee Hills in his familiar VW Rail, dropping seven marks, all lost on Harley Bank Two. Adrian won on special test times from Carl Talbot who also dropped seven, two on Harley Bank 2 and five on Easthope 2.

Clerk of the Course Jonathan Toulmin retained the twin loop format for the MAC's Clee Hills Trial. Jonathan and his team have a justified reputation for running an excellent event, in a highly professional way, and were rewarded by an excellent entry including no less than 15 cars in class two. There was no snow this year but the mist didn't lift in some places throughout the day.

There were quite a few route changes because of bad ruts caused by over enthusiastic 4wd's and Round Oak had to be cancelled at the last minute because of a sick horse.

Classes six, seven and eight set out from the start at The Craven Arms to embark on the western loop to battle for overall honours. First on the agenda was the Rattlinghope special test. I wonder if Carl Talbot realised that this would cost him overall victory at the end of the day when he was 1.5 seconds slower than Adrian Marfell. The leading runners went round the western loop clean, with only the new Priors Holt 1 section causing any real problems, with fails for both Peter Mountain and Keith Oakes.

The first observed Hills on the Eastern loop were on National Trust land with the two Easthope sections and Majors Leap. Adrian Marfell was the only car to reach the summit of the previously un-cleaned Easthope 2 that was first used in 2005. Most of the other Class Eights dropped either 4 or 5. The class 7's didn't fare so well and Andrew Brown was best with 5.

Majors Leap was a toughie for the higher classes and a fair few dropped a full 12, including Falcons Keith and Claire Oakes in their Dutton Phaeton,

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Peter Thompson pictured by Mike Hayward avoiding the jungle on Fingle

Michael's Musings

I had a great Exeter passengering Simon Groves. Unlike classes seven and eight we only had one re-start and that was a very easy one. Simms was quite dry. Simon got it just right and we flew up. The only thing is it all happened so quickly that I don't remember it!

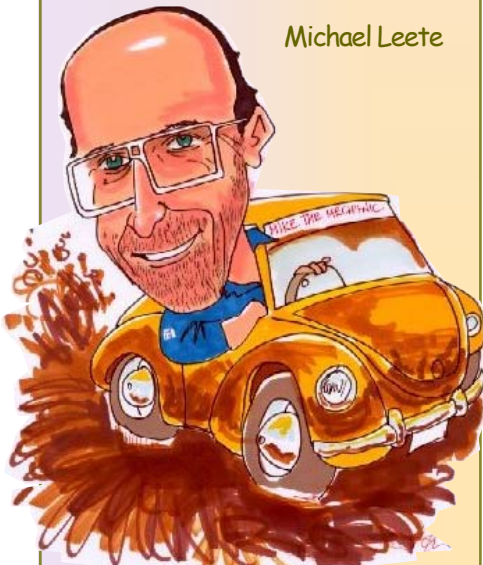
It was a much tougher event for the sevens and eights with the Tiplely restart being a real thorn in the side, costing golds and triples to many.

As ever the convivial atmosphere at the finish hotel made a very nice end to the trial and JP secured us the usual Falcon table and regular waitress despite the place having a new owner.

MCC President Ron Butcher made a valiant attempt at a prize giving but as usual few could hear him which is a real shame as this could be a nice occasion. Shame the MCC can't organise a proper PA.

As usual news, pictures etc, always welcome - mleete24@hotmail.com

Michael Leete



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putting them out of contention early in the proceedings.

After these three sections on National Trust Land it was back on the road to the Harley Bank - Jenny Wind complex. The slippery Harley Bank 2 section was one of the new ones used for the first time last year and Simon Woodall piloted the only car to get to the summit. Carl Talbot was best of the rest with a two, five better than Adrian Marfell, putting them equal on seven. This was to remain the score at the end, as both cleaned The Jenny Wind and Meadowley where Simon Woodall came out the top with a rough sounding engine. It promptly seized, and the VW Buggy needed a tow from Ross Norman to get back to the finish.

So overall victory went to Adrian Marfell by virtue of his special test times. Ian Davis came 5th overall, stopping mid way on both the Easthope sections and Harley Bank 2 and also stopping just short of the summit of The Jenny Wind.

The lower classes embarked on the Eastern Loop first. It started with a bang for classes three, four and five

as none of them got away from their restart. Ippikins Rock was the decider for the lower classes. The section is all about that very sharp right-handed hairpin. In class three Nick Farmer couldn't get the big BMW round, dropping 8 which was to give the class to Simon Groves. Class four was decided here as well.

Terry Ball had been battling with the ex-Matthew Sharratt March Hare winning Beetle of Nicola Wainwright. Unfortunately, neither got around the famous hairpin but Pete Barr did in his 1303 handing him the class.

On the Western Loop the steep new Priors Holt 1 was

"...the steep new Priors Holt 1 was prove a problem to many cars, including Simon Groves who dropped four but still maintained his class lead."

prove a problem to many cars, including Simon Groves who dropped four but still maintained his class lead. Adrian Dommett won Class 2 in his familiar Wolesley Hornet but all eyes were on James Diffeys magnificent Bresica Bugatti, which he drove into 2nd place in class with great gusto.

An excellent Clee, run under difficult circumstances this year. There is a rumour that this could be Jonathan Toulmins last event in the leading organising role. Lets all hope he changes his mind.



Peter Mountain climbing through the gloom on one of the new Priors Holt section's