

Clee Hills and a depleted Team Inappropriate

As I write this, having made some quick notes after the event I realise I cannot recall the rushed preparation that went before. I know I was in the garage for days repairing whatever had broken/needed adjusting from the previous escapade.

I vaguely remember brakes being apart and rear hubs removed over lubrication concerns, a real pain on these old semi floating Ford axles, where the hub is retained on a taper on the half shaft.

Alan Wibberley can make the event, so we arrange to leave at midday on the Saturday, we are staying at the Travelodge and intend to meet up with team members/friends/all and sundry.

Alan has let me know that he may be a bit late as an older guy who wants to get into off roading/trail riding is coming to look at a bike he has for sale, after numerous phone calls, photos, explanations re condition he cries off, this does seem to happen a lot. I sometimes think it's easier to chuck stuff on E-Bay and take the hit on the fees rather than get messed about, but on reflection you still have to deal with all those inane questions from those who never put in a bid.

Our journey from Kent is ok, we get the room, again ok but the bed for Alan is a bit naff, we clean up and go to see who is in the Squirrel, lots of old faces and we engage in numerous conversations about all sorts of car/bike related topics.

Someone has booked a table and we end up with Lee Peck, Brian Partridge, Lee Sample and his daughter Lily, great to see younger people involved, not sure how she endures an evening of "anorakism" but she copes.

There is no team class so Team Inappropriate is reduced to a team social, this is greatly enjoyed by all, we are represented by Lee in the Ranger, myself and Pete and Carlie Hart who are officiating at Harley Bank 1, so the team is at the event in spirit if not running in a class.

All of a sudden it is event time Sunday; we have a glorious breakfast; Lily is making numerous notes and colour coding's to the route card and all of a sudden, we are off.

Hatton Wood, roots on a camber at start with a slight turn, I remember this from previously, Alan and I discuss the line to go for, a bit academic really as the Coates quite often goes where it wants to, exactly what happens and we go over the roots at the start sideways, we have a worrying moment where we lose grip, but the old 1172 engine just digs in and off we go.

Heywood Common, we get a preferential start, there is a sharp right turn fairly slippery immediately after the start, at the start we get to car over as far to the left as we can. With some trepidation we pull away trying to get both grip and acceleration for the steep hill that follows, it all goes to plan, and we are off up the hill, and the little car just chugs on.

At Coates Farm we first have the special test, as usual I am confused by the test and Alan patiently takes me through it, we are still going for accuracy not speed, we successfully complete the test but when I look at the results, I have taken some 6 seconds longer than others, note to self "go quicker"!

We sit in a queue for Coates Wood and watch as any number of cars can only get a few feet beyond the start boards, although a class 8 seems to get away and make it into the woods out of sight. Simon Woodhall makes the sensible decision to cancel the section and we head off to the next one. It appears that some of the class 8s that make it into the woods are then getting stuck in the woods, the Land Rover despatched to pull them out trashes the start so that no one can get going, well the area had had excessive rain just before the event, shame I reckon we could have got into the woods but not sure what would then have happened.

Then to Longville, a stony track with a sharp bend, it causes no problem, and we enjoy the big bump at the end

Easthope is described as graded mud, deep ruts, I remember it from a previous Clee, when I got nowhere, to succeed we have to find grip at the start but build up speed quickly, amazingly this happens, and we romp through the section.

Ippikins Rock, I cannot remember the section but think it was a steep path with rocks, we seem not to have had a problem.

We get to Jenny Wind. I know this has caused problems for me in the past. There is a very narrow entrance gate followed by sharp left turn then a steep climb on mud with roots. We watch a number of fellow competitors who come to grief at the start and stop whilst we can still see them. Brian Hampson in the supercharged X90 is in front, he gets off the line with the engine screaming, which it continues to as we can hear him but cannot see, looking at

the results he scores 4, very impressive in this vehicle, his persistent development is paying off. Its our turn we make as much advantage as we can of positioning at the start, we go for it, we make the turn and as they say "give it the beans", we find grip, we accelerate and we are climbing reasonably still trying to accelerate whilst maintain traction, we spin out at 3, the marshal is enthusiastic and tells us how well we have done evidently very few cars are getting this far.

Now running in class 2 we do not attempt Harley Bank 1 but go straight to Harley Bank 2. We are both amused by the instructions in the route card: - "quite steep, low powered cars need to be driven with "enthusiasm"". Yea right, lets go for it, we are off the line OK and the little engine is buzzing, I have often wondered what rpm the engine is doing when we are really going for it. Bearing in mind this is a 60 plus year old engine from a very humble bottom of the range vehicle (Ford 100E Prefect/Anglia), on sections I have never had the opportunity to check this as I am too busy trying to point in the right direction, towards the end of this section I check the electronic rev counter and it is steady at 5500 rpm and feels like it has more to give. Back home I check out the books "Cassell book of the Ford New Prefect" and the Phillip Smith "Ford 10 Competition Engine", they both quote 36 BHP at 4500 rpm and the latter suggests a very hot camshaft to get near 6000 rpm. I must have got this engine about right when I put it together!

Then to Hungerford Steps, I love the description from the route card, "deep ruts after "continues" board which require commitment". We queue in the road, we happily chat to the marshal who as all the marshals at these events are the cheerful backbone of our sport, I always try to thank them all but just in case I missed anybody, many thanks for all you do.

The Steps is an awesome section, I have been successful before, but I am not complacent, we give "commitment" and we get through it, we are laughing as we go over the crest at the end's boards, I am sure there were more large rocks the last time I did it, maybe I am mistaken. Off and up the lane we meet three lads on huge adventure trail bikes they move to the side for us, but these bikes are big and difficult to move easily, we advise them of the section and hope they get through ok.

At Abdon Liberty there is small queue, we watch as a few cars struggle to get grip just after the start, we then realise there is a drone above, if it's supportive what a good idea. At this point we have only lost 3 marks, the pressure is on, we get the "Go" and we find grip, this is a clever, hard section, we bounce all over the place we maintain grip and speed as far as the 6 markers when we come to a stop, obviously disappointed but we did what we could. Its not till I study the results I realise how many marks this section took.

We make it to Flounders Folly, the last section, again I do remember it and last time it was a disaster, there is a tight left after the start and I am sure many of us have watched to YouTube of the 2CV driver and empathised, he just cannot make the turn! We watch the start and there are mixed results, it's our turn we make the short climb come to the left turn and go for it, we maintain traction quite well but cannot accelerate very much, we score 6 and on reflection we are pleased.

It was a wonderful trial, slickly run by marshals who knew what they were doing, the sections were clever and in the main not damaging.

I for one will definitely be competing next year all things being equal.

Roger Ashby

Kent not Marlow