

## *Clee Hills Trial 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025 by Roger Ashby*

The date is my daughter's birthday! Quick check with Ruth and it's confirmed that the London based offspring has made arrangements with friends so I can enter the Trial.

There is no Trial in the ACTC calendar that I do not like, fairly sure that over the years I have done all of them with the exception of the Yorkshire centred events (note to self must venture up there) and I have enjoyed them all. But some just give me a particular "buzz", not sure why but The Allen, any Launceston and Minehead events and the Clee Hills really excite me. Entry is sent off as soon as they open and I get in, the Coates is to be the chariot, surprisingly not much to do after the Exeter!

Alan Wibberley has agreed to Passenger/Navigate, and we are set to meet up at the Squirrel Saturday evening. The journey takes me some time as there is no real main road route to the start. Alan has the normal Dartford Crossing drama on his way from Kent, on arrival we go straight to the bar/restaurant order a meal and possibly a bottle of Rioja and the Trial for us starts! During the meal we have time to have entertaining chats with various people, including a marshal and his wife, sorry have forgotten their names but thanks for observing, we chat with Stuart and Jack Highwood and some other competitors, I really enjoy this aspect of our mad sport.

We are up early in the morning, we have to move the truck and trailer to the park and ride car park, obviously I take the wrong turning and end up having to make a three point turn on a main road! We park next to an interesting contraption, I have to ask, "what is it?" crewed by David Golightly and Carla Smith it turns out to be a former Model T Ford race car with a 3.3 Model A lump, I enthuse over the beast, "I presume it's got plenty of grunt" I ask, David says "plenty, often too much", more of them later.

Coates unloaded and back to the Squirrel, park up go and sign on Pat is in control of her domain despite newbie competitors rifling through her paperwork to find their numbers etc, messing up her system, come on guys give the lady a break. We are out in the car park and find we are blocked in, then Ian Facey appears with a pair of fuel pumps I am purchasing from him, quickly back to the Sign On and get Pat to look after them for me.

All of a sudden, we are off, clever organisation has us (class 2) starting at section 13, Goggin, I don't remember this and looking at the route book 2025 is the first time it has been used. The surface is very slippery and seems to be some kind of clay, cars are already having a problem through the wooded area to the section start, this obviously as a result of the amount of rain we have endured prior to the event.

The marshals are brilliant, they control the cars so that only one at a time is on the hill too the sections, a car is stuck in front of us, I think it's a Bull Nose Morris but I cannot find one in either the programme or the results, the marshals and some of the competitors all work together to get it on the move. Seeing other struggle makes me wonder if we are going to suffer the same, Alan lowers the tyre pressures more than normal and we go for it, shouldn't have worried the Coates has no problem.

A short wait in a queue and we can now see the section, some cars in front we see the Model T/A shooting up the hill appearing to climb easily, then there is a selection of cars that who can get no further than the 7 marker. Looking good and going very well is the recently purchased Dellow of Pete Ashford, his passenger is Tom Jones who coincidentally has been sorting the car out for Pete, of particular interest to me is the cars performance, it's a 1172 Ford with a supercharger and is currently running on Blockley tyres. It's our turn, we blast away and like most of the others we get no further than 7! Checking the results David and Carla stormed the section losing no marks, Pete and Tom climb to 4, this supercharger thing is the way to go, must get on with sorting out my next engine with the Aisin supercharger!

Next section in the group is High Cullis, a spirited attempt (yes really) and the best we can do is 11! David and Carla go clean again, Pete and Tom make it to 7, checking the results the majority of class 2 do no better than us. We then drive to Harton Wood which is the first section for the rest of the entry, we clean this one and the next three, Heywood Common, Longville and Easthope all apparently easily.

After Harton Wood we have the special test, we record 16.0 seconds which I am happy about as we have been somewhat struggling in these tests lately, quickest are Dave and Carla on 13.4 with Rob Atkinson at 14.0 in the Austin 7, sadly they retire later on.

Next is Ippikins Rock, I remember the section, I have cleared it before, the route book quite clearly states "very sharp hairpin", not sure what planet I was on, but I cannot make the turn, ridiculous in the Coates I should have made it easily, this costs a loss of 6 marks.

Harley Bank 2 comes up quickly, the route book suggests "low powered cars need to be driven with enthusiasm", we follow the instructions with glee and have no problems. At Hillside 1 we stop at 2, I am quite happy with this, Hillside 2 we clean, these are two really enjoyable sections. Then on to the last section, Oak Dingle, best we can do is 3. Then back to the finish, I am 5<sup>th</sup> in class 2, this being my worst class placing for some time; however the trial has been one of my most enjoyable events, the result will certainly spur me on to sort out the next engine.

Congratulations to David and Carla who completely smashed the rest of us losing just 1 mark and coming 4<sup>th</sup> overall, another who should be pleased with their result is Pete and Tom who only lost 11 overall, brilliant as I think this is only the first or second time Pete has been out in the recently acquired car. A huge thanks to all the organisers and marshals who endured the cold and short daylight hours, working so hard to make this the super successful event it was.

Looking forward to seeing you all next year.