**Kerridge National Rally 1997**

**Rogers Ramblings**

**Kerridge Kibitzer.**

The Mintex National Rally Series descended on Wales for Round 4 the Kerridge National Rally. As usual the Kerridge organising team, willing to try anything new, had organised the first stage that being Radnor 14 miles at **NIGHT**! There were a few reasons for this experiment, some of our competitors compete on the Network Q at the end of the year and have not even put a set of lights on the car let alone driven in the forest at night. It also gave many marshals who would be tied up the following day the opportunity to see the spectacle of top line British rallying, finally it kept the majority of service crews out of the pub!

The weather had been wet during the week prior to the event so fortunately there would be no repeat of the previous year's dust in the stages. The Kerridge National Rally based at the Royal Welsh Showground at Builth Wells was to be joined this year by the Peugeot Sport Hella Rally Sprint which was to take place at the showground on the Saturday whilst the main event was away playing in the forests. A mini Schools Initiative was held on the Friday morning in Builth Wells High School, where Innes & Allison Marlow, yours truly and Paula Langford-Smith of Ordnance Survey entertained a party of some 30 children for an hour or so. These initiatives are important, as these youngsters are the next generation of competitors, organisers and marshals. We are grateful to Mintex, Kerridge, OS, Peugeot, Ford and Innes & Allison for supporting this venture. Next one at Swansea on July 16th if you can help give me a ring.

Scrutiny and documentation took place without undue drama, with 64 Mintex crews signed on for the event it seemed a good day of competition was in store, the talk was of the weather and darkness (not the Edgar Alan Poe type!) Vince Wetton was asked what he thought of the night stage and replied "what else is there to do on a Friday in Builth?" Sadly he retired on the first stage having an indiscretion in Radnor so perhaps he found out. Maybe the faithful Gallant had spied the replacement EVO 4 in the workshop and decided to bite back. The older drivers were seen eating bunches of carrots in Builth moaning about not being able to see in the dark!

The event started at the showground for a run out to Radnor. The organisers had asked for a pace note check to be carried out at the start of the first stage. This was carried out after the stage arrival control in dead time. I am pleased to report that many competitors thanked everyone concerned for conducting this check which was not time wasted.

Andy Burton, as expected, blitzed everyone, fastest by a full 11 seconds and the only man to break the 14min barrier. Next up was Brian Lyall in the Impreza, local man Richard Gough in his new Mitsubishi held 3rd with a fast-starting Geoff Smith, Sandy Dalgarno, Marcus Dodd the only others to break the 15 min barrier. Murray Grierson and Steve Hill were next on the time sheets, Murray commenting that it had been some time since he had been caught and passed in a stage, such was the ferocious pace of Burton in his favourite forest.

Off to bed said Zebedee we fell into bed at about 2am looking forward to a nice early breakfast and a good day of competition.

First on the agenda was a 10am blast through Hafren to check if competitors were awake, such is the pace of the Series this year it is not possible to play catch up during the day. This time it was Brian Lyall who blitzed everyone the only man to break 14 min, a full 30 sec clear of Andy Burton, he in turn tying with Geoff Smith (who is obviously benefiting from the recent advice on sorting out the previously errant Escort by Gwyndaf Evans). Sadly the leaderboard of the Mintex Series was to change here, Steve Hill the Series leader at this point departed the furious battle with a broken gearbox, also joined here by the unlucky Marcus Dodd, who at the time of his retirement, rumour has it, was a few seconds up on Lyall before his gearbox input shaft wouldn't play any more. Marcus is considering banning his enthusiastic parents from spectating in the future, as disaster has befallen him right in front of them each time this year.

In Group N first blood was to Nick Foster, (a case of deja vu, the same car, different driver, Nick having purchased the championship winning car of last year's Group N winner Jeremy Easson) ahead of Malloch Nichol in the Escort by 2 sec from Steve Petch by a further 3 sec, Roger Davies being a further 3 back.

Into Hafren and Roger Davies stepped up his pace, however Foster responded and the finishing order being Foster, Davies, Petch and Nicoll, Davies needing another good finish to get one hand on the trophy this year.

The Ford Ka Championship contenders under the watchful eye of Ford's Terry Bradley, were joined for the first time by Mark Perrott in the second Brooklyn DOME prepared example, and fireworks were expected. Mark being an incredible 1min 3sec quicker than Lars Andersson and the rest of the field in Radnor. Young Perrott extolling the virtues of the incredible handling little Ka, and was set to lead the 4 other examples all day, it is hoped that this will not be his only appearance this year in the car.

Formula 2 was the domain of Dave Weston who had made the long trip down from Aberdeen, he had been leading F2 in the little 1600cc Nova and also putting the Group N4 class to shame, however as is with these matters it all ended in tears in Pantperthog, a sad end to a promising start. So in F2 it was back to normal with Guy Anderson heading the time sheets from Phil Morgan in the newer Peugeot 306. Also getting on the pace of the F2 brigade is Jersey contender Miles Jude who continues to improve with each round, the little N2 Derek Warwick Honda being now the only one to threaten the Network Q prize drive for Andersson. Miles having to win F2 on the Enterprise Print Rally without Anderson scoring, however it seems that Guy cannot enter the rally as he has to attend a wedding, so it's not beyond the realms of possibility.

Impressing everyone with an extraordinary turn of speed was the Greenergy Citroen ZX turbodiesel of Nigel Griffiths finishing in the top 6 of F2 and beating some notable 4WD machinery to boot on his way to 27th O/A.

Back to the front Brian Lyall continued to pull a few seconds a stage from Andy Burton in the 306R4 the only thing left was the final showdown at the Showground but with 45 sec separating these two anything could happen as the stage was used twice. The spectators were not to be disappointed, Lyall stopping the clocks with a 1/2 spin over the finish line, first blood to Burton by 4 sec. However, it was the Lancia of Steve Smith taking the honours, fastest of all on the first run. The second lap Lyall threw the Subaru around with abandon to claim FT to seal a domination of the fourth round of the series. Murray Grierson followed the 306R4 home in 3rd place 50 sec ahead of Sandy Dalgarno in his Escort.

Murray now leads the Mintex National Series by 3 points from Lyall. Murray being the winner of last years Port Talbot Rally an interesting 2nd half of the season is in prospect.

The prize giving was source of one classic, little Josh Burton stole the show with a memorable quote, if you weren't there ask Andy Burton he, I am sure, will be only too happy to tell you what his little boy said. (Head and Shoulders used to sponsor a Rally Car I recall!)