**Ross Traders Historic Tour**

As is traditional the weather dawned very fair on the start of the 1999 Ross Traders at the cattle market, Ross-on-Wye on 24th July.  Weather experts anticipated that this would be the hottest day of the year to date and by the time the first cars were tackling the noise test at 7 am the beautiful cloudless sky and already warm sun indicated that the pundits were right.

The problems had already started for some though - Chris Hunt-Cooke and Dave Kirkham scrutineered on Friday night and then set off to calibrate the trip meter against a measured three mile route during which the clutch slave cylinder expired.  Due to start at 9:09 am they didn't have much time avaialble on Saturday to get it fixed and, in fact, they missed the start by just 15 minutes.  They sportingly stayed for the day, preceeding the event to various watering holes along the route and occasionally joining marshals in some of the more out of the way places.

From the start the rally went straight into test 1 at the cattle market.  Fastest here were Geoff Twigg's Mini Cooper 'S' and Andy Gibson's MGB GT, both one second ahead of Jack Curran's 970 'S' which was one second clear of the Cooper 'S' Minis of Peter Horsburgh and David Foster, their time also being matched by Peter Noad's Audi 80GT.  From the end of the test the cars went virtually straight into regularity 1.  Defined by tulip road book the naviagtion was reasonably simple but the navigators were kept on their toes as there were no less than ten controls in little more than 30 miles - as many controls as most daylight events manage to accomodate all day!  Best performance here was Wiseberg/Blackett who dropped 19 seconds then  Meakin/Evans on 20, Appleton/Appleton 23 and Horsburgh/Preston 24.  Positions after this section were 1st Horsburgh, 2nd Appleton, 3rd Meakin in the 2 stroke Saab then Green/Briggs and Wiseberg with only 8 seconds covering these five cars.

On now to 5 tests at Whitfield Estate, with Peter Horsburgh' s Cooper 'S' quickest by 1 second from Adam Wiseberg's Mini and Paul Pesticcio's Cortina with Peter Noad in the Post-Historic Audi 80GT a further 2 seconds behind.  These four were the only cars to total under 5 minutes for the 5 tests.  A good performance here by John Pascoe brought his Amazon into 11th place.  Horsburgh still led overall by 6 seconds from Appleton then Wiseberg, Twigg and Meakin.

Regularity 2 was slightly shorter than the first but rather more tricky starting with a herringbone then number clues which represented the road number then grid lines.  The final section was defined by in order Tulip diagrams.  Speed changes were indicated by total distance covered from the start of the regularity with all speed changes occurring between controls.  Meakin/Evans dropped out of contention with a wrong slot losing them almost 8 minutes at ITC2.  Most of the leading contenders were more than a little surprised to arrive at ITC5 and find that they had missed ITC4.  Unfortunately, the organisers intended the competitors to use an additional loop but this turned out not to be the shortest route complying with the route instructions and the penalties at ITC's 4, 5 and 6 had to be scrubbed.  The poor marshal at ITC4 had a very lonely morning indeed!  A little sting in the tail of this final section before lunch was an ITC right at the lunch halt.  This caught several competitors out as they had relaxed thinking that there were no more competitive controls before lunch.  Leading navigator over this section was Mark Appleton on 10 seconds followed by Andy Berry, Dave Wilson Peter Blackett and Tony Pettie all on 25 seconds or less.

**Leaderboard at Lunch**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Dick Appleton | Mark Appleton | Mini Cooper S | 6:51 |
| 2 | Adam Wiseberg | Peter Blackett | Mini Cooper | 7:06 |
| 3 | Peter Horsburgh | Anthony Preston | Mini Cooper S | 7:28 |
| 3 | Dave Keen | Andy Berry | Mini Clubman GT | 7:28 |
| 5 | Geoff Twigg | Graham Carter | Mini Cooper S | 7:30 |
| 6 | Jim Deacon | Dave Wilson | Lotus Cortina | 7:59 |
| 7 | Ali Green | Mick Briggs | Mini Cooper | 8:17 |
| 8 | Andy Gibson | Ann Locks | MGB GT | 8:19 |
| 9 | John Pascoe | Proctor | Volvo 122S | 8:40 |
| 10 | Derek Skinner | Tony Pettie | Austin A35 | 8:41 |

From lunch it was straight into regularity again.  Here the route was defined by every spot height, land feature, figure or letter that was on or printed over the road to be used.  There were 6 controls and 3 code boards and the route definition produced no significant problems for the leaders apart from Wiseberg/ Blackett who got stuck behind a tractor just before ITC 4 and lost 1m 15secs dropping them from 2nd to 6th and out of contention for the lead.  Between ITC4 and 5 the route went the long way round a triangle which had a pub in the middle of it with a code board on the far side.  Eagle-eyed crews of cars following the correct route would also have spotted Chris Hunt-Cooke and Dave Kirkham having a swift pint in the pub car park whilst observing whether anyone missed the PC.  Unfortunately a number of the novice crews  struggled with this one and a total of ten cars missed the board.  The Appletons led Horsburgh/Preston by 30 seconds with Twigg/Carter 5 seconds further behind and then Keen/Berry who were 48 seconds behind the leaders.

The final regularity was timed to the minute whick meant that any one of these cars could win by staying clean if the others dropped a minute.  The section was defined by out of order 8 figure grid references and Clerk of the Course, Paul Loveridge, had pointed out at the drivers briefing that these **were**accurate.  Previous Ross competitors knew that this meant he would be using not as map junctions and tracks and sure enough, pretty soon the drivers found themselves turning off to the right into a sort of gravel lay-by, well hidden by vegetation and fencing.  The resourceful passage check officials had commandeered an old abandoned three piece suite and were relaxing in the sun with their visitors, Hunt-Cooke and Kirkham!  All the leaders picked up this PC without incident but  thirteen of the later runners obviously need to re-calibrate their romers as they all missed this one.  ITC 3 was situated immediately after a quarter-mile gravel loop off to the right which included a code board and a give-way junction just before the control.  The due time was around 50 seconds into the minute but as this was regularity to the minute, anyone who was 10 seconds or more late would lose a whole minute.  The slightest hesitation in tackling this short gravel loop could be disastrous, particularly with the give-way junction just before the control.  This caught out several crews including Keen, Wiseberg and Green whilst Horsburgh got stuck behind a mobile hedgetrimmer shortly before the control leaving Appleton and Twigg clear of the chasing pack.  Jim Deacon was the only other leading driver to clean this section and he jumped up to third place only 28 seconds behind Geoff & Graham.  However, fourteen of the later crews missed the code board altogether - maybe their romers were accurate but the pencil lines too thick!  Disaster then struck the Appletons as Mark made an (extremely rare and) uncharacteristic mistake and miscalculated the time due at ITC 5 and dropped a minute.  As the cars finished the section and returned to Ross for the final 4 tests Twigg/Carter had charged into a 25 second lead.  Horsburgh and Appleton tried their all to pull back the deficit on the remaining tests but Geoff's neat style meant that he was actually 5 seconds faster than Peter over the 4 tests and 17 quicker than Dick thus further increasing his winning margin.

Twigg/ Carter came home worthy winners by 42 seconds from the Appletons consolidating their lead in the championship table.  Jim Deacon had a distatrous two wrong tests on 7 and 10 and dropped from his briefly held 3rd place back to 7th.  Minis occupied the top 6 places with Deacon/Wilson the first non-Mini home followed by Andy Gibson/Ann Locks bringing their post-Historic MGB GT into a well deserved 8th.  John Pascoe was 9th and David Martin rounded off the top 10 finishers, a fantastic result from a start number of 52.

The results service was excellent and I would strongly recommend that other organisers speak to R & DMC about how to run a washing line system.  As competitors arrived at the finish venue the first three cards were on display, in order, and the fourth card was added, seemingly within 10 minutes of a car completing the event.  In fact the last car finished at 18:01 and the line was full at 18:20.  Once mid test check sheets had been added the results went provisional at 19:00 and final at 19:30.   Congratulations to the club and the organising committee for an excellent event, superbly run in fabulous weather!  
  
AHW

**Top Ten Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Geoff Twigg | Graham Carter | Mini Cooper S | 12:04 |
| 2 | Dick Appleton | Mark Appleton | Mini Cooper S | 12:46 |
| 3 | Peter Horsburgh | Anthony Preston | Mini Cooper S | 13:04 |
| 4 | Dave Keen | Andy Berry | Mini Clubman GT | 13:32 |
| 5 | Adam Wiseberg | Peter Blackett | Mini Cooper | 14:01 |
| 6 | Ali Green | Mick Briggs | Mini Cooper | 14:45 |
| 7 | Jim Deacon | Dave Wilson | Lotus Cortina | 16:44 |
| 8 | Andy Gibson | Ann Locks | MGB GT | 18:08 |
| 9 | John Pascoe | Rob Proctor | Volvo 122S | 18:57 |
| 10 | David Martin | John Broughall | MGB | 21:33 |

**Best on Tests**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Peter Horsburgh | Anthony Preston | Austin Mini Cooper S | 634 |
| 2 | Geoff Twigg | Graham Carter | Morris Mini Cooper S | 636 |
| 3 | Dick Appleton | Mark Appleton | Morris Mini Cooper S | 654 |
| 4 | Adam Wiseberg | Peter Blackett | Morris Mini Cooper | 657 |
| 5 | Dave Keen | Andy Berry | Mini Clubman GT | 663 |
| 6 | Martin Neal | Lesley Neal | MG Midget | 668 |
| 7 | Dave Hughes | Phil Hughes | Volvo 122S | 675 |
| 8 | Andy Gibson | Ann Locks | MGB GT | 676 |
| 9 | Steven Powell | Lee Vincent | A-H Sprite | 676 |
| 10 | Peter Noad | Peter Cox | Audi 80 GT | 690 |