

AutoMark Novice Road Rally - 26th/27th May 2012

It was a glorious hot day as we arrived at the excellent start facilities at AutoMark in Ruthin. There was a bit of a queue for scrutineering after which documentation was successfully carried out by the very experienced team at CVMC. Clerk of the Course – Andy Darlington had clearly laid on an excellent route of about 100 miles on Maps 116 and 117.

The entry of 40 crews included 7 semi- experts who were not eligible for overall awards. I must say there were some nicely turned out cars from the novices and beginners for which the event was mainly designed. It was nice to have a full two hours to plot the route, which was by no means a simple novice route and included some tricky navigation.

My daughter Rachael was being given another opportunity to prove that she can drive and myself a chance to navigate again in the old Proton Coupe. It's a big car for a young skinny girl to chuck around but I must say she did a good job.

The first selective was quite a long one and started at Bont-Garreg just off the A525. Within the first kilometre there was a tight HP right which we managed to get around reasonably well. Another very tight HP followed at Carreg-y-gath, where there were lots of spectators. Just after PCE we got confused and missed the slot right. Whilst reversing Rachael managed to drop the car into a big ditch and we became well and truly stuck. I ran back to the control where a gentleman very kindly agreed to pull us out with his newish Peugeot saloon. We must have dropped 10 minutes at this point but decided to carry on.

The next section started off with a complicated diagram but wasn't too bad in reality and then traversed the rough yellow in Sq 1168. Just after PCJ we missed the right slot, which cost us about 2 minutes turning the car around.

Section 3 started with a fun blast through the private woods at Penbedw and then the long yellow over Moel Arthur with a TC situated at the top of the upper car park. Some more interesting yellows followed with the finish just north of Ruthin.

The final section before the fuel halt started at Four Crosses and ran over the white onto map 117 and encompassed the yellows around Nercwys Mountain.

Selective 5 started just south of Leeswood Hall and finished after the rough ford in Sq 2356. The penultimate section ran over the famous World's End from the Minera side (I first used this on The Hairpin Rally in 1975 when driving my first rally car – a Cortina GT). It's a difficult section from a navigator's point of view as there are few markers to help locate the bends.

The final competitive section started on B5431 and ran down the tricky white in Sq 1653 followed by lots of arrows through the farm at Bryn-chwareu. This enjoyable but demanding section finished with a blast over the slate mines road to finish by the Ponderosa Cafe on the Horseshoe Pass road.

After reporting to the Damage Control it was a short run to Plough Inn where an excellent breakfast was included. Results were produced very quickly and most were heading home by 5am. Thanks to the organisers, marshals and sponsors for making it an enjoyable and challenging event.

Keith Cross (Car 23)