

Championship newsletter: 5/2014 – 5 March 2014

Welcome

Welcome to championship newsletter number 5 for the 2014 **West Wales Rally Spares R.A.C. Rally Championship**.

The **Mid Wales Stages** was another cracking event, with everyone enjoying the stages despite the rain that made the going very slippery. A particular vote of thanks from the championship goes to all the marshals who stood out in the conditions to ensure that the event ran very well.

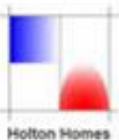
For any championship contenders who won awards on the rally but were unable to stay for the prize-giving, we will have your awards at signing-on for the Tour of Hamsterley.

I am delighted to report that the Mid Wales marked another record for the championship with our biggest field to date. We had 75 registered contenders on the entry list and 73 starters, which is more than a 30% increase over the 2013 rally. We now have 95 registrations and expect to hit our target of 100 crews by round three, the Tour of Hamsterley.

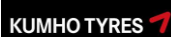
Obviously we were sadly missing David Winstanley at the Mid Wales and the championship was well represented at his funeral. I am happy to confirm that we have now concluded arrangements for TV for the balance of the season and will shortly be announcing more details. We will have the Mid Wales on TV as planned, while we intend to have coverage of the Red Kite Stages as well.

The regs are already out for the next two events, the **Tour of Hamsterley** (26 April) and the **Severn Valley Stages** (31 May), while regs for round five, the **DMACK Carlisle Stages** (21 June) will soon be available.

Finally, I'd like to send out a reminder that all technical queries should always be addressed to John Cooper, the championship eligibility scrutineer. He can be contacted via: trenain2@tiscali.co.uk or on 07702 240970.



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Best regards

Colin Heppenstall

Wednesday 5 March 2014

E-mail: colin@racrallychamp.org

Championship website: www.racrallychamp.org

Round three: Tour of Hamsterley

The organisers of the Tour of Hamsterley Rally 2014 are pleased to announce that the Supplementary Regulations are now available on the website www.tourofhamsterley.co.uk and for 2014 we have introduced an online entry service.

The rally, whose principal sponsor is SG Petch Garages, will for the first time have historic competitors competing for their own awards in the SG Petch Historic Tour of Hamsterley Rally, allowing an overall winner from this category.

Running on Saturday 26 April 2014 and based at the National Railway Museum – Locomotion, in Shildon County Durham, we are offering 45 miles of competition in a compact one-day format which includes two visits to service. The stages in Hamsterley will be visited twice only but with some variations to offer more first usage of roads in the complex.

There is also the opportunity to compete through the historic parkland grounds of Raby Castle close to the Hamsterley Forest complex on a very challenging mixed surface stage of just under three miles run twice, back-to-back. Whist Raby is strictly a non-spectator stage the organisers will be offering dedicated spectator viewing in Hamsterley on the website nearer the event.

There has been extensive grading and drainage works undertaken in Hamsterley and this should improve the surface quality of the sections of road that were affected by the weather last year.

The entry fee is £480 and includes a service pack and full colour maps of route and stages. Should you require any further information about the rally please do not hesitate to get in touch with Clerk of the Course Steve Waggett either on email at steve-wag@hotmail.co.uk or telephone 07725 201705.



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Round four: Severn Valley Stages

The wraps have come off plans for the 2014 Severn Valley Stages (Saturday 31 May), which will be a competitor-focused event offering 44 stage miles for £475.

The team at Midland Manor Motor Club have worked to refresh the event for 2014 and will build on the success of last season's 40th anniversary. The rally has been re-branded and new members have joined the hugely experienced core team of rally organisers.

The route will take in special stages in Cefn, Crychan and Halfway forests, offering crews the chance to compete over some of the finest gravel roads in British rallying. With 44 stage miles and 93 road miles, the compact event will start at 8.30am and have the first car back at the finish before 3pm.

The Royal Welsh Showground at Builth Wells will once more provide an unrivalled venue for rally HQ, scrutineering, attended overnight parking, camping facilities, start, finish, service and refuel area as well as the setting for the end-of-rally awards' ceremony. Scrutineering and documentation will be held primarily on Friday afternoon but, by prior arrangement, there will be the chance to complete scrutineering and signing-on during Saturday morning, so avoiding overnight accommodation costs.

"Our new branding and fresh approach, together with a high-profile new championship, are aimed at revitalising this firm favourite in the rally calendar," said Secretary of the Meeting Steven Tibbetts. "Over the years we have endeavoured to offer some of the best rally stages that Wales has to offer. We aim to provide a value for money rally whilst maintaining the quality of organisation that crews have come to expect from this event. At a cost of £10.80 a stage mile and with payment by instalments, we believe we have achieved just that."

The regulations and entry form can be downloaded from www.severnvalleystages.co.uk

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WWRS R.A.C. Rally Championship award winners announced

The special award winners for the second round of the West Wales Rally Spares R.A.C. Rally Championship have been announced following the Mid Wales Stages (2 March).

Robert Cholmondeley and Dave Evans were unfortunate enough to post the first retirement of the rally when their Ford Escort Mk2 developed problems on the way to the opening stage. The last retirement was the Ford Escort Mk1 of Chris Browne/Ali Cornwell-Browne, which went off on the final stage of the rally. Both crews will receive a £100 voucher from West Wales Rally Spares, as will Toyota Starlet crew Layton Waters and Kevin Bowcott after their number came out of the hat in the draw for a third voucher.

Meanwhile, Ford Anglia crew Peter Stimson and Mark Butler will receive a cheque for over £300 from Holton Homes after their number came out in the draw for a refund of 50% of the event entry fee.

The new Kumho Clubmans Challenge was another great success, with 28 crews electing to contest the Challenge for cars using no more than six tyres during the event. Once again, the top overall finishers in the Challenge were Tim Freeman and Paul Wakely (Ford Escort Mk2) who finished just outside the overall top 10.

Category winners in the Kumho Clubmans Challenge were Gwilym Roberts/Don James (Lotus Cortina) in Category 1, Terry Cree/Richard Shores (BMW 2002) from Category 2, Freeman/Wakely in Category 3, Tom Coughtrie/Calvin Cooledge (Ford Escort Mk2) in Category K and Layton Waters/Kevin Bowcott (Toyota Starlet) in Category O. Tim Freeman won two tyres from Kumho for his Ford Escort Mk2 in the draw for Challenge contenders.

The 'Spirit of the Rally' product award from Fuchs Lubricants goes to Darren Moon and Alan Walker for a tremendous sixth overall in their Ford Escort Mk2. It was Walker's first time co-driving for many years and his first time on route notes, so their performance was all the more creditable and they had a lot of laughs with other crews in the process.

Mike Tomkinson and Shaun Whitehurst won the Best Improvement on Seeding, which is a set of axle brake pads from Mintex, after an excellent run in their Ford Escort Mk2. Finally, Owen Murphy won the 'Hard Charger' award of a 20-litre jerry can from Green Valley Industrial Supplies. His pace in the Talbot Sunbeam Lotus was outstanding and he finished fourth overall, right up among the fastest Ford Escorts.



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More backing for Mini and Imp Cup in R.A.C Championship

There is more good news for contenders in the Aldon Automotive Mini and Imp Cup within the West Wales Rally Spares R.A.C. Rally Championship for 2014, with confirmation of a media partnership with love-mini.co.uk and a new arrangement for tyre support.

The website www.love-mini.co.uk will support the Mini and Imp Cup with regular coverage on the website and in its free digital bi-monthly magazine for the Mini community. The on-line magazine is read by around 7000 Mini enthusiasts every issue.

Meanwhile, after many miles of development by renowned Mini driver Clive King, Kingpin's 145 x 10 (ultra grip) tyre is now available to WWRS R.A.C. Rally Championship contenders via motor sport tyre specialists Mr Tyre (Motorsport) Ltd. The dedicated and experienced team at Mr Tyre will provide an on-event tyre service for Mini drivers on all rounds of this year's R.A.C Championship.

Elliott wins WWRS R.A.C. Rally Championship round two

Nick Elliott and David Price took a resounding victory on the Mid Wales Historic Stages (Sunday 2 March), the second round of the West Wales Rally Spares R.A.C. Rally Championship. It was their fourth win in five years on the rally that takes in classic stages in the Myherin and Hafren forest complexes.

Once again, Ray Cunningham and Gary McElhinney (Mini Cooper) were the stars of Category 1 as they saw off a very strong field to take the spoils and maximum points in the Aldon Automotive Mini and Imp Cup. Meanwhile, David Stokes and Guy Weaver (Ford Escort Mk1) made a strong championship debut to win Category 2. Other category winners included Darren Moon/Alan Walker (Ford Escort Mk2) in Category K and Simon Crook/Alister Crook (Opel Manta) in Category O.

With 75 registered contenders starting the rally, the Newtown-based event set a new record for the R.A.C. Rally Championship and fans packed the stages to watch the action despite poor weather.

The classic Welsh forest stages were made slippery and extremely challenging by steady rain, but Elliott and Price took control from the opening stage at Pikes Peak. With a 28s lead going into the final stage, Elliott took a steady approach and that helped Matthew Robinson/Sam Collis to pull back 10s to leave the margin of victory at 17.6s. Meirion Evans and Iwan Jones made it three Ford Escort Mk2s on the overall podium before the flying Sunbeam Lotus of Owen Murphy/James O'Brien.

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Right from the start, Elliott stamped his authority on the event. He went seven seconds ahead and then extended his lead with another push in Myherin. The long 15-miler that started in Sweet Lamb and then moved into Hafren added another 10s to Elliott's lead and, after the shorter Hafren South, he headed out of the second service for the final Pikes Peak stage with a 28s margin.

As co-driver Price pointed out, it was a repeat of the Red Kite scenario and that had ended in disaster. Elliott admitted to feeling under some pressure, but he drove within himself and allowed Robinson to nibble back 10s. "I just wanted to get through that one cleanly and I did back off a bit," said Elliott. "It's been a tough day and there was very little grip," added Elliott, who had a scare on Saturday when an ignition problem developed during a shakedown test. Fortunately, it was finally traced to a faulty rotor arm and all was well for the start on Sunday morning.

However, Robinson was content with second and another strong result. "We had a steady day: the last stage was mega and I loved the downhill section," said Robinson. He had 40s in hand over Evans and Iwan Jones, but it was another result that showed just what rapid progress road rally ace Evans is making on gravel.

Meanwhile, Murphy drove a fine rally to get right up among the Escorts on stages he'd not seen before. "The stages are great, but we just don't know them," said the Irish driver. "But we're getting there," he added of the ever-improving Sunbeam project, which also topped class D4.

Early championship leader Richard Hill and new co-driver Steffan Evans had an average day and a minute lost on Myherin to what Hill described as pilot error left them down in fifth and just clear of Darren Moon/Alan Walker, who had a great run as Walker delivered notes for the very first time. "The co-driver has been faultless," said Moon. They topped the FIA class for Appendix K cars, and edged Tomas Davies/Eurig Davies back to seventh overall by two seconds. Notable retirements in Category 3 included Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke with a broken halfshaft and Terry Brown/Den Golding with a broken anti-roll bar in the Sweet Lamb bowl. Brown had been well on the pace over the first two stages.

Once again, one of the drives of the rally came from Ray Cunningham and Gary McElhinney as they claimed Category 1 victory in their Mini Cooper S against some serious opposition. "Absolutely brilliant," said the Galway driver. "Pikes Peak was something else: I loved it!"

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Simon Wallis and Graham Wride made the initial Category 1 pace and still set the best time as they finished Myherin on three cylinders. That was down to a suspected dropped valve and they retired the Lotus Cortina at first service. Meanwhile, Bob Bean and Malcolm Smithson went out with steering damage in their Cortina.

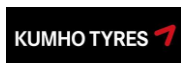
Following up their impressive pace from the Red Kite, Gwilym Roberts and Don James ran home an excellent second in their Lotus Cortina with newly-registered Graham Waite/Gill Cotton third after a misfire in the ever-spectacular Volvo Amazon. Father and son Bob and Dale Gibbons (Ford Cortina Mk2) were also in the mix, while Stephen Higgins/Don Bramfoot (Saab 96) won class B1 despite dropping seven minutes in Sweet Lamb after a detached throttle spring sent them into a ditch. "Too many hills for the Saab, but going down Pikes Peak was awesome," said Higgins.

Category 2 was the domain of championship newcomers David Stokes and Guy Weaver (Ford Escort Mk1), who had to change the clutch release bearing at second service. Stokes won the category by 48s from the hugely impressive Stanley Orr and Brian Cairns in their Pinto-powered Escort Mk1. The Northern Ireland crew loved the quality of the stages and headed many BDG-powered cars in the process.

Behind the flying Irishman, Peter Smith and Patrick Walsh forged the Opel Ascona into second and went clear of a mighty battle for third as 25s covered Terry Cree/Richard Shores (BMW 2002) and the Escort Mk1s of Steve Magson/Darren Smith and David Kirby/Chris Rixon. "Good rally, good stages but tricky conditions," reported Peter Smith. "We lacked a bit of commitment in the morning," admitted Kirby, while Cree reported a catalogue of dramas. The gear lever jumped out of its socket on the first two stages, making gear changes difficult, they spun twice on SS3, stalled and got the handbrake jammed on. But it all came together on the final stage. "Absolutely mint: loved it," said Cree. Magson agreed: "I could go down Pikes Peak all day long," he said.

Warren Philliskirk/Eurig Evans ran third in class C5 despite stopping in Hafren to assist Jonathan Brace from his upended Escort Mk2. In class C2, for the 1600cc cars no-one was ever likely to trouble the Escort Mk1 of Robin Shuttleworth and Ronnie Roughead, but they were frustrated to drop three minutes limping out of Hafren South with a puncture.

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Bouncing back from a first stage gearbox failure on the Red Kite came Graham Thatcher and Robert James to clinch class D2 in their Hillman Avenger, while Shawn Rayner and Declan Dear were the class of D3 in their Pinto-powered Escort Mk2 ahead of Gareth Lewis and Dan Holley.

In the Open category, brothers Simon and Alister Crook were top in their Opel Manta after a day that started badly on the wrong tyres but ended well. Layton Waters and Kevin Bowcott took second in the Toyota Starlet, but the loss of power steering left Waters exhausted at the end of the 15-miler in Hafren. Geraint Davies and Chris Williams ran strongly in their Peugeot 205GTi for third as Dave Hemingway, rallying in Wales for only the second time, took fourth with Simon Ashton alongside in his Escort Mk2.

From the MSA about closed roads for motor sport

You may have seen that the government has launched its long-awaited public consultation on closed road motor sport. This is great news for British motor sport and the culmination of many years' lobbying by the MSA. Now we have to ensure that everyone connected with the sport responds to the consultation and demonstrates the support that exists for this initiative.

We would be grateful if you could please encourage all your members to do this. If anyone requires further explanation about the proposal or the consultation, it can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1naMwl>

If you have any further questions, please contact the MSA Press Office on 01753 765005 or media@msauk.org

Co-driver available

Hu Kent is available to co-drive this season and his CV is available at <http://hukent.tripod.com/>. He can be contacted on 07931 357225.

Social media

Don't forget that the WWRS R.A.C. Rally Championship can be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RACrallychamp and on Twitter: @RACRallyChamp. Please give us a like or a follow and let us know if you are active on either platform.

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