

CLASSICAL GAS

April 2005

About Classic Trials and Falcon Motor Club Events and Personalities

Keith best on March Hare



Keith Pettit made the best performance on The March Hare, winning National B in the process. Last years winner, Ian Davis, was second and Ross Nuten was best in Clubsport.

Above – Keith Pettit on Norton Street Lane. Keith had one of six clean sheets and won through his times on the regularity and special tests.

Below – Ross Nuten won the Clubsport event in his Dellow Mk2.

The Start

THERE WERE 42 CREWS ENTERED BUT THE FLU BUG STRUCK AND 36 CREWS gathered at The Watling Street Café, just off Junction nine of the M1, on 13th March. It had been dry for a while before the event, with none of the snow we had last year. This year The March Hare was an official ACTC invite and in order to accommodate this was run in both Clubsport and National B sections.

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Marlin's are justifiably very popular in Classic Trials. We have lost one, as Verdun Webley has sold his, but gained two more. Arnold Lane is building his from a kit and now Roger Dudley has acquired this smart green car. Read about it on page 4.

Norton Street Lane [Byway - A long straight climb on loose stones with the left hand rut getting deeper towards the summit, straight run through for all classes.](#)

WITH DRY CONDITIONS, NO RESTART, AND AN ABSENCE OF LOOSE STONES, NORTON Street Lane was cleaned by everyone except John Wilton who retired his venerable Trojan with a seized engine. John had rebuilt the two stroke motor after it was down on power on The Exeter and reckoned he hadn't honed the bores sufficiently. The only other cars to hit trouble were some of the lower slung FWD cars who strayed into the deep rut on the left hand side and scrapped their bottoms in the process.

Whitehall Lane [Byway - Tree Lined Lane with a very good surface now the council have resurfaced it and removed the fallen trees.](#)

IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO THAT THIS SECTION WAS TOTALLY IMPASSABLE. THEN ALONG came the council's road gang and now it's probably smoother than the nearby M1! It's so smooth that it's not competitive as an observed section so it was run as a regularity again, under the eager eye of sponsor Murray MacDonald. It involved driving an un-known distance in a known time. This defeated most people but it was a condition of using the track that outright speed would not be a factor.

Cress Beds [Byway - Short well surfaced climb up a tree lined gully.](#)

LAST YEARS PR PROBLEMS HAD BEEN OVERCOME AND CRESS BEDS AND WATER TOWER were on the agenda again. Arnold Lane and Mike Pearson's road mending was still in place at the top and only Pete Crawford had problems when he stalled his Marlin changing from 1st to 2nd.

Water Tower [Byway - Water Tower starts straight across the road from Cress Beds. It's a long section, starting with some very muddy ruts, then climbing through a tree lined gully. .](#)

THE CHALLENGE AT WATER TOWER WAS THE MUDDY RUTS AT THE BOTTOM WHICH were avoided by most people apart from David Symons in his Citroen AX and Alun Lewis in his Yellow Marlin. Alun created the biggest bow wave of the day, drowning out the Marlin and giving the recovery crew some exercise!

Next up should have been Half Moon Lane but it had to be cancelled when the County Council decided to close it for resurfacing. Unfortunately this is likely to emasculate it for the next few years just like Whitehall Lane.

Edlesborough Hill [Two sections on Private Land – The dry conditions gave plenty of grip on this notoriously slippery surface when it is wet.](#)

DRY CONDITIONS MEANT THE SECTIONS AT EDLESBOROUGH WERE NOT AS DIFFICULT as usual but a tricky restart on the first one for the sevens and eights stopped much of the entry, including classic trials debutant Roger Dudley in his newly rebuilt Marlin.

Brickhill [Three sections on Private Land. The third section went up the sandy gully where the ruts were quite deep.](#)

THERE WAS AN EXTRA SECTION AT BRICKHILL TO COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF Half Moon Lane. The local 4x4 Club had been using the venue and the ruts up the sandy gully were very deep, causing problems for some of the lower slung cars including Cliff Morrell in the ex- Barrie Parker Citroen AX. Cliff had given the sump guard a good clout in the Pepperstock ford, loosening some bolts.



Above - Cliff Morrell and Kevin Alexander on Water Tower.
Below - Peter Manning emerges from Cress Beds, Alun Lewis created the biggest splash of the day on Water Tower and Geoff Hodge further up the section.



Ivinghoe

Special test and Section on Private land, the section was all about a steep bank at the start and a deviation right up to the fence at the top of the hill for cars in seven and eight. After they rejoined the main track a new route had been opened up to a new finish, with a restart for the higher classes.

THE STEEP BANK AT THE START PROVED TO MUCH FOR MORE THAN HALF THE ENTRY. Having survived that the restart was to prove to much for some and Harry Butcher, Clive Booth, Paul Weston and Colin Sumner all lost their clean sheets here.

Fellow Liege driver Stephen Kenny also failed and was struggling without reverse gear in the replacement box fitted after breaking the transmission on The Northern Trial. Stephen had come all the way down from Rochdale to take part having made his trials debut in last years March Hare.

Hawridge Lane

County Road - Used the other way to last year with a restart in the gully.

ARNOLD LANE AND ANDY CLARKE HAD SPICED THINGS UP A LITTLE BY BRINGING some water up from the wet patch at the bottom to add some action to the restart. The slippery conditions necessitated a delicate right foot to stop wheel spin settling in.

Fred Gregory got away very smoothly, Reg Taylor failed and Simon Groves smoked his way off the line, just inching forward until he suddenly found some grip. Ted Holloway stopped, then stalled to the accompaniment of some choice four letter words! Chris Wall lost his clean sheet here when he was judged to have run back six inches or more. Then both Kevin Alexander and Stephen Kenny sat on the line with wheels spinning and failed to get away.

Binghams Warren

The first of two new sections in woods on private land near Potten End. The route for the first of the two sections was marked out with tape.

Falcon's Folly

The second of the two sections at Potten End started down amongst the trees then picked up a long, steep, straight track to exit the wood.

THE ROUTE TRAVERSED HILL FARM AS USUAL BUT NOT AS AN OBSERVED SECTION THIS year. The final two sections took place on private land in a wood near Potten End. The first was an artificial journey through the trees, marked out with tape. The second started amongst the trees before picking up a long, steep, straight track with a restart for the sevens and eights.

Falcon had thought this last hill would be a real stopper but in the dry conditions that was not the case. Stewart Ikin was the only non-restarter to fail in his very standard Fiat Panda. Everyone else attacked the steep bit at some speed for successful climbs.

Life was a bit tougher for the re-starters with the line on the steepest part of the gradient where there was a handy tree root, although with care this could be avoided by going well to the left. The root took its toll of notable class eights Harry Butcher and Rob Wells. In class seven it was a magnet for Marlins, catching out Alun Lewis, Peter Crawford, Roger Dudley, the Westfield of David Kirby and Ted Holloway in his very special Mini.

The Finish

BACK AT THE A5 TRUCK STOP DOT PARSONS AND FRANCIS WEBLEY SOON PRODUCED the results and the trophies were presented. There were seven clean

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Above - Fred Gregory, Roger Dudley and Colin Sumner in the gully at Brickhill in these pictures by Julian Robinson. Below - Peter Thompson on Falcons Folly and Jim Mountain receiving his Class 8 award from Hazel MacDonald.



Michael's Musings

The March Hare went very well and was a tremendous credit to the organising team. Arnold, Mike and Verdun spent a lot of time in the weeks leading up to the event clearing undergrowth and cutting back trees so some of the sections could be used.

Then just before the event there were route authorisation problems in the Whitwell area, these were solved, only for the last minute discovery that Half Moon Lane couldn't be used because the council were re-surfacing it!

There had been some concern about having enough marshals but Verdun had over 50 on duty on the day, including a full team from the Herts VW Club who had re-organised one of their own events so they could be present at Brickhill.

The following week there was good turnout at the AGM where John Parsons was elected as Vice president. A well deserved honour for all he has done, and is doing for the club.

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(Murray's March Hare, Continued from page 3)

sheets so the regularity and special tests came into play. This was shame but was an almost inevitable consequence of the dry conditions.

There had been no more retirements after the unfortunate John Wilton. With the simultaneous National B and Clubsport events there were plenty of awards to go round and Roger and Christina Dudley were particularly delighted to be awarded best Falcon.

Looking Back

IT WAS SHAME TO LOOSE HALF MOON LANE AND THE DRY CONDITIONS MADE the sections on public roads much easier than anyone would have liked. However, the restart on Hawridge Lane was certainly a challenge for many and things seemed to be OK with the landowner in the woods at Potten End which bodes well for the future.

Particular mention must go to Verdun Webley who assembled more than 50 marshals on the day. The local Herts VW Club took care of Brickhill which meant they had to go to the trouble of re-arranging one of their own events scheduled for the same day. Thanks guys.

Rogers Marlin

Roger purchased his Marlin as a "just run out of MOT" car off the Marlin owners club web site last October. Some research revealed the bits necessary for trials and during the Falcon Guy Fawkes trial Roger arranged to purchase a Marina 10cwt van off Duncan Welch and the MGB Rostyle wheels off Robin Howard. Dave Smith very kindly donated a cast iron single carburettor manifold.



Roger Dudley's Marlin at the start of The March Hare

It was January before Roger started to prepare the Marlin for Trials. This included fitting the van axle, raising the front suspension, fitting a single carburettor, side exhaust system and sump guard. Roger also replaced the shock absorbers, lots of bushes, wheel bearings, prop shaft and most of the brake system! Nothing was straightforward, everything on the car had complications and each job seemed to take a long time. Roger finally got it MOT'd on 3 March and the only drive in it prior to the March Hare was 5 miles each way to the tyre depot to get the tracking done.

Cristina passengered for Roger on The March Hare. They were delighted to finish and win best Falcon. The plan is to take in some more Classics in the future and if Rogers PCT and Autotest [performances are anything to go by Class Seven had better watch out.

Specification :-

- Marina based
- 1800 cc B series engine
- 4 speed gearbox
- 10cwt van back axle with the 4.56:1 ratio diff
- 185 x 14 Colway tyres all round
- Shortened steering arms from Fortune Engineering