

CLASSICAL GAS

February 2005

About Classic Trials and Falcon Motor Club Events and Personalities

Gold Rush on Stormy Exeter



Peter Manning concentrates as he rounds the corner on the deviation for lower classes on Wooston Steep

This years Exeter benefited from a lot of work on the sections, making them more palatable for many and Simms achievable for the mortal. Normans Hump was difficult but there were still 67 gold's awarded and Falcon's Peter Manning won Class 5.



Michael and Mike went marshalling on The Clee Hills and received some un-expected help. You can read about it on page three.

It was a stormy night for the run down to Haynes museum. Rain and gusts of wind making driving conditions difficult and a tough night for bikers and drivers of open cars. A couple of the Falcons were lucky to make the start. John Parsons had found problems with the lights on his buggy, discovering that mice had gnawed their way through the wires and had a go at a CV joint gaiter as well! Neil Bray ran Primrose back and forth to work for a few days before the event to make sure everything worked OK. It was a good job he did, as the engine coughed and died. Neil eventually found the problem was with the Rotor arm and had problems finding a replacement for the special distributor that has to be used with side draft Webers.

Scritineering generated a bit of excitement, with numerous competitors given tickets because their rear lights couldn't be seen from one side, obscured by the spare wheel carrier. The first competitive section was Windmill Hill, which is of course the exit road from Sugg Lane, which in turn became the exit road from Windmill Hill this time. This didn't present any problems and neither did the next section.

After Gatcombe Lane it was into Bovey Woods for Normans Hump and Clinton. Normans was challenging this year, especially for the higher classes who had to restart, as the box was positioned on the gradient after the cross track. This caused severe problems, either with getting going at all or failing to build up enough momentum to carry the car over the steep bit at the end.

This fate befell a number of people, including Ed Nikel, who got

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within half a length of the section ends board. Peter Thompson didn't have a restart in his Opel but was another to come to a stop within sight of his objective. It was certainly possible though. Peter Mountain and Mike Pearson both got cleans in class eight but Ian Davis didn't get to the summit and John Pasons was given a run back on the restart.

Class 5's were denied the challenge of the upper reaches and deviated off with the ones and twos. Colin Sumner probably wished he was back in his Morgan. He had to do the full hill in his class four Beetle and couldn't get out the top. Clinton was easier, with only the upper part of the section being used and the restart on the level so it didn't trouble the scorer too much.

Across the road was Waterloo, where there was a long delay, even for the early numbers in the main trial, as the class 0's were having problems with their section, known as Rockenhayne, which is the failure route for the main trial. One of the Mini's had got stuck broadside across the hairpin and by the time it was extricated a long queue had developed. Then a car over-turned. Even when the class 0's had gone there was still a problem as classes one, two and five were using the escape road as their section, and every time one came along the recovery Landrover had to reposition from one section to another, causing the minutes to tick by. When the queue got all the way back to the road the marshals sent some of the cars up the escape road to keep things moving and the section had to be scrubbed from the results.

Plyford didn't stop anyone but there were more delays at Stretes, again caused by the Class 0's who had difficulty with the leaf mould at the top and a few of them got well and truly stuck, a Beetle broke its transmission and a car turned on its side reversing back down. Things weren't a lot better for the early runners in the main trial and the chief official soon cancelled the restart in order to get things flowing.

The first cars were over an hour late at Exeter services, but still had to have the full 60 minutes rest break,

time enough for many to pop to the local supermarket for petrol rather than pay motorway prices. In Fred Gregory's case he and Pete Stafford tried to insert a spare leaf into the nearside rear suspension of their Rickman Ranger as it was sagging and the exhaust was banging on the propshaft. The delays built up and running down the field Stuart Harrold and Chris Phillips were two hours late for their breakfast.

Tillerton was smoother than in recent years, but it's still a difficult one and Peter Mountain ran back on the restart to lose his clean sheet. Fingle was its normal glorious self. A super blast round the hairpins with little chance of failing. Unless you had a puncture that is, like Dave Nash who had to resort to a tow from the rescue Land Rover when the wheel started to spin inside the tyre. Ian Bovill also had problems with his magnificent ISOC Sport, not surprising he had problems with the hairpins when you consider the wheelbase!

Fingle was the scene of Nick Ikin's first MCC retirement in 14 years of competition. Halfway up the car started making horrible noises and then it stopped steering. Nick kept going but after a couple more bends the car ground to a halt, lying on its belly. A critical eye-bolt had broken and it took considerable manhandling to get it onto a side track. Nick managed to rob a similar eye-bolt from the rear and block that corner up with a block of wood. This enabled the car to roll back down the hill to await the RAC.

The MCC had been concerned they would be able to use Wooston because of PR problems with the exit road. Fortunately these problems were solved and classes seven and eight were able to tackle the steep hill after the fork. Michael Collins had a go at this route as well in his Golf and was well on his way to getting up the hill when he realised his mistake and had to back down. This was a shame as his fail cost him a gold and probably the FWD All-Stars the team award as both Paul Allaway and Dave Haizelden went round clean.

The restart caused problems for the early numbers and apart from Ian Davis the Falcons either failed to get

away or couldn't build enough momentum to keep going when the gradient was at its steepest. John Parsons made a valiant attempt but his wheels were spinning as he came away from the restart, he tried to back-off but lost speed on the steep bit and finally stopped. Ed Nickel made a good climb but again his wheels were spinning too much and he stopped on the upper reaches, high enough for the marshals to push him out the top.

Running further down the field Mike Pearson made his climb when there was more grip but there was little doubt he would have cleaned the section anyway with his smooth driving style. Peter Mountain was smooth as well in his Mk1 Dellow and cleaned the section. The climb of the day was made by David Wall in the family Dellow. He pulled smoothly away from the restart, accelerated away and was still increasing his speed as he passed the section ends board.

The lower classes were denied an assault on the main track and deviated off to the right as usual, with only class six having to restart. It wasn't too much of a problem for most but neither of the Trojans had the momentum to get to the fork and nor did Derek Reynolds in the DAF who came to a halt with an un-believable scream of the drive belts. Ted Holloway had to retire his rear engined Mini here after failing the restart.

The MCC road gang had spent done a lot of work on Simms during the summer, including bringing a Ready Mix truck along the exit track to the top of the section. So the organisers were concerned when a couple of weeks before the trial they heard their work had been damaged by a 4x4 invasion. Roger Uglade visited the week before and pronounced the section OK to use and on the day most competitors thought it was much smoother than the late few years.

The old hill is a tough one, even though the restart for the higher classes gave them more of a run at the gradient than usual. Stuart Cairney was spectating on Simms, reporting that the results showed a number of failures as clearing the section! These included Dave Nash who's MGeetle couldn't make the gradient and neither could

Fred Gregory. Barrie Parker also came to grief here with the big Audi 80. This was shame as Falcons multiple PCT champion was otherwise clean. There were organisational problems as the summit marshal didn't record who got to the top of the section un-aided. So anyone who got to the A boards was given a clean.

In class 5 Peter Manning didn't clean the section but got past the A boards in his Midget to win class five. Keith Pettit wasn't so lucky in his venerable Frogeye Sprite which was a pity as he had faster special test times. Like Dave Nash Keith had no less than three punctures during the event. Ed Nikel and Peter Thompson were both thrilled to clean Simms. It's a tough section though and both Peter Mountain and Simon Groves had to retire with broken cars. Simon's half shafts snapped as he bounced over the step, captured on video by Stuart Cairney, as was Dick Bolt who suffered a similar fate. Peter Mountain had the A frame sheer off the axle on his Mk1 Dellow. This damaged the rear of the gearbox and the prop-shaft and was glad to have a steel transmission tunnel to keep the flailing UJ away from his vitals. There were soon problems in recovering the car as the A frame was digging in the ground preventing Peter coming back down but it was soon accomplished with the many bodies that are always at Simms.

The trial was drawing to a close now, with only two sections remaining. Tipley was just over the road from Simms and was quite rough as usual. The gradient isn't too severe though, so drivers can choose their line and it didn't stop many, although it did catch out Colin Sumner in his shocking pink Beetle, quite a change from his usual Morgan. Slippery Sam was the final hill and only claimed a handful of victims this year as it didn't have its usual restart.

The days activities were concluded by the usual club supper at the finish venue which was enjoyed and appreciated by all. MCC President Gerry Wollcott presented last year's premier awards although he lost his struggle with an ineffective PA. The general conclusion was that this was good Exeter which finished on time despite the delays during the night.



Colin Sumner trying to look inconspicuous in his new Beetle on Fingle (picture by John Salter)



Ted Holloway's latest special, seen here on Fingle, has a rear mounted Fiesta engine. Ted retired after Wooston. (picture by John Salter)



Mike Pearson and Arnold Lane pull away from the Wooston restart under the eagle eye of marshal Brian Alexander.



Dave Nash suffered from multiple punctures and by Wooston Julie Fleet had taken up smoking again.

Clee Capers

As I am out of action regarding Trials Driving at the moment Mike Hayward and I decided to marshal on The Clee. We were sent to Phil's Folly, a new section before the farm on the approach to Gattens Gamble, on the lower slopes of The Long Mynd. The journey there was interesting to say the least, because there was snow on the Shropshire hills so discretion was the better part of valour and we detoured around The Long Mynd.

The section started on a level, rutted track, hair-pinned round a tight right hander and went straight up a muddy tree lined gully before emerging on to the exit track which was recessed into the side of the hill. This was to be the scene of some problems as it was very slippery and later some cars went over the edge. There were four of us on the section, Michael (Chief Official) and Richard from the MAC, Mike Hayward and I. It was an enjoyable, if challenging, day but we really struggled at times.

The first disaster was that the driver of the Discovery recovery vehicle went up to the hairpin and decided that he would get his vehicle too muddy, went back to the farm and spectated on Gattens Gamble for the rest of the day! After this, the four of us had real problems running the section and had to call on competitors and the farmer to help us.

The first car along was Jeff Buchanan. He couldn't get his ex Dennis Greenslade Reliant round the corner, he was really stuck and we had to go and ask the farmer for help. He came along with a Mitsubishi 4WD but even that struggled and it was more than 30 minutes before we got Jeff out of the section.

Then David Bowlas got his Midget stuck in the same place but we managed to turn him round in the field and gave him a run at the section. However, he half slipped off the bank on the escape road and in the end, the only way we could extricate him was to lower him down the bank with a rope and winch (the farmer's idea). By that time, we called Clerk of the Course Jonathan

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Michael's Musings

The March Hare will only be a month away when you read this.

It's become an established feature in the Falcon calendar but of course its one of the most demanding to run as the sections are spread all over our area.

Mike Pearson and Arnold Lane have been around and about with those helpers they an muster to prepare the sections. They could do with more help so if you can spare some time over the weekends please give them a call.

The event needs a lot of marshals on the day so do help if you are not competing and give Verdun Webley a ring.

Talking of marshals I was amazed to read that the one at the top of Simms on the Exeter didn't record who reached the summit so anyone who passed the A boards was given a clean!

As you can read in this months Classical Gas Mike Hayward and I went marshalling on The Clee Hills and received tremendous support from the landowner when things went wrong.

As usual news, pictures etc, always welcome - mleete24@hotmail.com

Michael Leete - 4, Rectory Close,
Clifton, Shefford,
Beds, SG17 5EL.
Phone & fax
01462 816313



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Toulmin and cancelled the section for the lower classes.

Determined not to give up the farmer bought along his JCB and scrapped the mud of the hairpin, coming down to a stone surface to give the afternoons runners a chance at the section.

Falcons Ian Davis was the first class eight. He rounded the hairpin without any difficulty and blasted up the muddy hill. We thought that as each car went up it would clean more mud away, making it easier for the later numbers. To some extent this was true, but it was too bring other problems as it wore the edge away at the top of the section and on the exit road, tending to drag cars off the track and down the bank.

Most of the class eights cleaned the section OK. It was all a question of getting the line around the hairpin right. Simon Woodhall clearly knew all about the hairpin as he came along the approach track with one wheel out of the ruts and up the bank. Although this should have given him the possibility of a wider turn it didn't work out somehow and his buggy under-steered straight on into the trees. The same befell Stuart Ridge in his flyweight. Tim Foster and Harry Butcher were two more who couldn't get around in one bite and failed. Dave Foreshew got

round OK but his GVS fluffed and stalled at the two marker and took a while to get going.

Difficult as the hairpin was the real drama was at the top of the section on the exit road.

Extricating the two class fives in the morning had weekend the edge of the bank and Simon Woodhall's VW Buggy slipped off the edge into the field below, only Simons skill as a driver preventing a nasty accident. The same thing almost happened to Stuart Harrold and Chris Phillips. The Troll was right on the edge and in the end Chris hoped out, and swung the front round at 90 degrees so Stuart could make a graceful if rather scary slide down the bank.

Most of the cars traversed the exit road OK but Tony Young saw what was happening and drove off the track and down the bank voluntarily.

By now the edge of the track at the top of the section itself was deteriorating and when Andrew Martin slipped off into the barbed wire on the section itself we had a group meeting with the experienced competitors in the queue and decided to call it a day! The farmer was more than disappointed and said that he would dig the track out and put some stone down so the section would be OK for next year!

Full Report of The Clee Hillls next month



Jeff Buchanan approaching the hairpin in the ex- Dennis Greenslade Reliant. He couldn't get round and it took half an hour to extricate him.



The farmer was very enthusiastic and didn't want to cancel the section so he bought along his JCB to scrape the mud away.