

HRCR OLD STAGER CHAMPIONSHIP PART 2

Car: ACE222B 1964 TR4

Driver: Steve Hall Co-Driver: Aggie Foster

Service Crew: Charlie Exton & Dean Hardcastle

In my last jottings we had surprisingly won the Opening 2 rounds of the Championship, but in motorsport, as I'm sure most of you know things can change quickly.

On the start line of Stage 1 on Round 3 the oil light came on in the car before the green start light. The resulting damage required a full engine build and new crankshaft. Therefore, Rounds 4 and 5 were missed.

So to the Manx International which was to serve as Rounds 6 and 7 of our championship.

Digging out old notes proved I had not been to the Island for 11 years. We headed for Heysham on Tuesday 12th September, arriving at Douglas in the evening, picking up our hire car (Recce car) and checking into our accommodation.

Wednesday was spent sorting pace notes over the 20 stages.

Thursday scrutineering and the event start over three dark stages. The first being a very 'Mickey Mouse' affair on the sea front at Douglas. Everything had seemed to have gone well, but the results showed we had lost a lot of time to the leading competitors of our Historic Section.

Friday was a late start, about 11.00ish, though we didn't finish the leg until 1.30a.m. Saturday.

Determined to catch up we pushed on hard and by lunchtime were making progress on 7th, 6th, 5th and 4th places, but the top three were away, and too quick for us.

More of the same Friday afternoon. Confidence growing, then the problems started.

Firstly a very long brake pedal, requiring left foot tapping to keep some sort of feel to them..... then a notchy clutch release..... and then a starter motor failure. All this left me juggling a dodgy clutch action so as not to stall, and dodgy brakes so as not to put the car off, where even if we survived an off I would need to keep the car running.

Naturally the chase was over and getting to the finish became a priority.

Five stages in the dark Friday night were tough with many delays. The TR having to be left idling for hours. I must confess I was pleased when they were over.

Saturday was the final 6 stages and in lovely sunshine everything including me was much happier. We pushed on as well as possible holding on to a 6th overall to the end of the event.

Over the years I had forgotten how demanding the Manx is, though I suspect when I've stopped aching and the bruises have disappeared I will be keen to have another go.

HRCR results show we have finished 2nd in the Old Stager Tarmac Rally Championship.

Steve

And now some thoughts from the other seat....

As we were aware that the majority of the event was “new” to us in the sense that most were not stages covered by our own notes from Steve’s last visit, we had therefore purchased a set of commercially produced notes and DVD of the stages which I then roughly amended to Steve’s way of reading the road prior to setting off for the Manx. I really ought to have shares in Tippex. A “Movement Schedule” was also compiled for the team (a “who, where, when, what” covering the week of the rally!) and a Refuel Schedule.

Wednesday was certainly a long day, beginning with Recce signing on at 8.00am – the 2016 Rally Isle of Man consisted of 20 stages run over 3 days / 4 legs. There would be approx. 163 miles of stages timed to the second, and an additional 270 miles on the road sections. We had only two passes of each stage in which to check or make our pace notes – and anyone who has been to the island or viewed rally footage will know just how tricky some of the lanes can be. Anyway, we took full advantage of the time available to us finishing by the 10.30pm curfew the organisers had imposed – a debrief with our service crew over a beer followed, however that still meant I was working into the early hours, but determined to have some free time (and a late breakfast) on the Thursday.

Thursday – scrutineering and the car sailed through. Drivers briefing... and so to Leg 1 with 3 stages in the dark – ACE was great and the new spotlights were absolutely stunning!

Friday was to be the longest day timewise – Leg 2 having 6 stages, run in pairs with service between. It included my hated Druidale (in daylight), and as Steve has mentioned, things were beginning to go awry..... Leg 3 (5 stages in the dark without service) was started with a degree of trepidation (and a bit of a “muck or nettles”

attitude), however we managed to book into the final control of the day back at the TT Grandstand without any more major dramas. As Historics we were then allowed free service – I think we were last crew to leave service, again the wrong side of midnight by some margin!

Saturday – a further 6 stages (the longest day in terms of mileage – 60 stage miles) to be run in pairs awaited us for the Final Leg – accidents caused a couple of stages to be lost, and there were long delays. We emerged from Service K with the final two stages ahead – the two longest stages of the event culminating in SS20 Classic which includes Druidale again and then all the way down into Douglas finishing in front of the TT Grandstand. Well, we made it! Steve's notes (and skill!) got us to the finish – possibly more than we dared hope on the Friday – and secured us Second in the HRCR Old Stager Championship (Category 1 car – pre 1968)

Charlie and Dean were brill in looking after us and ACE – cheers boys!

The best part for me? That's easy – Steve's comment above "...I will be keen to have another go." – that's a result!

Aggie