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Plymouth Motor Club Diary 2019

January 2019		
8th		Committee Meeting
10th		12 Car Season Planning Meeting 7:30pm Hunting Lodge Ivybridge
10th-13th		Autosport International Show
19th		Annual Dinner & Dance Awards Presentation
February 2019		
8th		Scatter Rally
15th		Valentine 12 Car Rally

Werrington Park Hillclimb
4th & 5th May 2019

Series Dates 2019

Scatters:

8th February,
8th March,
14th June,
11th October,
8th November.

12 Car Dates:

29th March,
26th April,
24th May,
28th June,
26th July,
27th September,
25th October,
29th November.

Comus Cup:

12th April,
10th May,
12th July,
9th August,
13th September.

Editorial

Another full magazine ? Yes
Ending the year well ? Yes
Can we continue this next year ? I Hope So

Above are the questions I've been asking myself as articles have been rolling in towards the end of this year at such as rapid rate that I am holding articles back because I physically don't have room to include them.

It's a huge departure from the thin magazines of last winter and I only hope that this momentum can carry us forward into next year. Perhaps even persuading some you reading this now to put your own pen or at least one on long term lone from someone else's pencil case to paper.

As this is the magazine of reflection on the year that has passed, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has contributed to Spotlamp over the course of 2018.

We've had articles from a large variety of motorsport disciplines and from those young, old and older still.

Spotlamp 2019 seems to have started well however with a contribution on circuit racing from

Gavin Hearden. This is something we don't usually get to hear about due to geographical location putting us at a great distance to the popular racing tracks in the UK.

Also starting off 2019 is our resident rambler Alf Chanter with a review of his last event for 2018 in the Honda (This car really needs a name Alf next time its included). A big thanks also needs to go to Alf for his continued support in printing the magazine for the club each month and his persistence in trying to improve the print quality.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Festive period and of course a Happy New Year. Until Next ~~Month~~ Year, Good Bye. ***Rob Selley***

LeJOG Photos Courtesy Of John Sluman





Membership

If you are competing early in 2019 please get your membership renewals in early to avoid disappointment and any last minute rush/panic.

Chairman's Chat

Well here we are at the festive time. The time for family, friends and those we hold dear. It's also a time to reflect on the year. So where do we start? For a change I'll start at the end and will start with a huge thank you to all that gave up their time and helped with running the LE JOG test at Werrington. Thanks to Peter Locke for being burdened with holding the fort and organising the personnel, cones and everything else. I did feel for the competitors heading North through the rain not the weather to be in an open top car!.

Whilst talking Werrington, the 2018 event threw up an unusual problem, both days of glorious hot sunshine packed Mediterranean weather! My thanks to the whole Werrington team organisers, officials, marshals and volunteers that made our flagship event one of the best yet! Although the manpower (especially for packing up) is dwindling and we need more people to help. Peter and helpers have done a fantastic job in organising tyres into "towers, bales" or whatever you like to call them, added with the telehandler/forks has made life a lot easier, but we still need help setting up and packing away so if you can help for the 2019 event then that would be fab. When you have an event that is so well supported by entries makes all the more reason to make sure we can set it up and pack it away as easily as possible (many hands make light work!)

The 12 car series this year had a few ups and downs but all in all everyone seemed to enjoy the events, and thanks to Kevin, John and the individual event organisers for running the series this year. There is a 12 car meeting scheduled for Thursday 10th January, 7:30 pm at the Hunting Lodge (between Lee Mill and Ivybridge) to discuss series regs etc for the 2019 PMC Series. This is your chance to have your input. We have struggled with marshalling this year, not just

the 12 cars but at Werrington as well, I would ask/plea that if you can spare some time to help with the events we would be eternally grateful.
The Comus Cup and Scatters , entry numbers are somewhat disappointing for these, whether it's a clash with another event or something else I'm not sure. If you have any ideas or suggestions to help raise these events then please let us know.
We ran some grass autotests this year, organised by Kev Moyses and thanks to Kev for getting the venue sorted. Just need a tarmac one now!
This years' Boconnoc or to give it the full title Motorsport Carnival @ Boconnoc was unfortunately a very wet affair, although for a couple of hours it did stop raining. For 2019 we (Plymouth Motor Club) need to have a larger presence at the organising meetings there have been several pleas put out, if you can help please contact me asap. It would be a shame to lose PMC involvement in this event. It is the only spectator stage rally this side of Bristol!
Wiscombe 5Clubs had another fantastic weekend and my thanks to all PMC members involved in this.
The Club is also involved with the 1st running of the Watergate Bay Hillclimb closed road event a hugely successful first event, and the planning for 2019 is well underway.
Don't forget the Dinner& Dance annual awards evening on Saturday 190th January, this year to be held at the Yelverton Golf Club. For menu options and ticket info please see the main advert in this mag. Please remember to submit your options also a reminder that it is a ticket only event.
Pmc have had a few Championship winners:-
Congrats to Ian Ingleheart on winning the ASWMC Tyremarks Hillclimb championship, and well done to PMC member Ben Bonfield who came in Third.

Another Championship win for PMC committee member Simon Heywood who took the ASWMC Open Navigational Rally Championship drivers title. Well done and congrats Simon.

Finally all may I, on behalf of the Plymouth Motor Club committee, wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Don't forget my "door" is always open so if you need or would like to talk to me, please don't hesitate to contact me email is: chairman@plymouthmotorclub.co.uk or 07867 86094 is my mobile number.

Jay Brown
Chairman

Membership

To comply with the DPR regulations introduced this year we have had to make alterations to the way we take and store everyones details. The two ways to join or renew membership are by completing the online form , or by sending me one of the new forms both of which conform to the latest regulations. Payment can be made by bank transfer, cheque or cash. The form you receive with this magazine is the one for postal applications and this can also be downloaded from the website. If you have any queries regarding your membership or magazine delivery please do not hesitate to contact me.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas & New Year.
More importantly plenty of Motorsport in 2019.

Keith Selley

Competitions update – December 2018

Before we get stuck into 2019 I thought I'd review 2018 whilst I can still remember (some) of it.

I guess that the year started with trying to get the 12 car series up and running and finding a co-ordinator to oversee it (I'm ignoring the fact that we started planning for Werrington 2018 in October 2017 for a minute). After much debate Kevin Moyses said that he would be the co-ordinator – thanks Kev. He has been ably supported by Simon Heywood, especially after Kev's altercation with a saw in July – thanks Simon! I'm led to believe that it has been a closely fought season, especially in the drivers department, but congratulations to Alan Frame & Shaun Layland on coming out top of the pile.

If you can remember, the early part of the year was cold and wet – very wet! So wet that I was seriously concerned that we were going to struggle with getting cars into and out of the paddock. To try to improve things as much as possible I persuaded (didn't take much!) Rob Selley to use the mini digger that I'd hired to scrape the paddock entrance to uncover the plastic mesh that we laid many years ago. Dad Keith came along to help and spent all day barrowing loads of earth across the road to tip it somewhere where Mr Williams couldn't see it. Thanks guys! In the end it stopped raining about two weeks before the event and the ground was reasonably dry but still very soft. Werrington weekend itself was bathed in sunshine and we had one of the best weekends of competition that we've had in several years. I'd first like to thank Debbie for her help in the week preceding the event, and then everyone who worked tirelessly to keep the event running at the weekend, including our telehandler driver Duncan Heywood and tractor driver Nigel (Winky) Winkworth plus all of the drivers who stayed to help pack up on Sunday evening. Special mention goes to Keith Harris who

won the Best Veteran award on both days – now officially an "Old Codger"!!!!!! Sorry Keith, I couldn't miss this one!
Then came the lightning bolt! Kevin found a field that we could use for autotests. It was all a bit of a rush to get things sorted but we did it in the end and on Sunday 15th July we held our first grass autotest in many years. We had 18 entries on the day and, just to prove that he hadn't forgotten his autotesting driving skills, the event was won by Ben Parker. We subsequently ran another two autotests, one evening one and one on a Saturday in August. Due to the heatwave weather that we had during the early part of the summer stopping the grass from growing we had to curtail our autotesting there for 2018 but are hoping to run more events there in 2019.
We have also run several scatter rallies and treasure hunts during the year with varied levels of support. Why don't you try one in 2019? They really are a great way into motorsport.
The Boconnoc Motorsport Carnival suffered from a return to the monsoon rains that we experienced earlier in the year, thanks to Keith & Rob for running the Saturday autotest and to those who braved the elements on Sunday.
Wiscombe 5 Clubs ran with the usual full entry, thanks to the "few" who came to help run the paddock & marshal the hill. Ian Ingleheart was hoping to seal a third Tillicoultry Quarries Wiscombe championship win but would have to wait until the following weekend's MGCC event to make sure of a championship win. Congratulations Ian (and team!).
Watergate Bay – land of good surfing and a large music festival – was the location of the UK's first closed public road speed hillclimb in September. Organised, largely, by Truro and District Motor Club with some assistance from Newquay Auto Club & ourselves, the event seemed, to me at least, not to have captured the imagination of

many of the hillclimbers outside of the South West. The event itself was well received by those who competed in it with Dougie Bennett getting FTD on Saturday & Stewart Lillington getting FTD on Sunday. We seemed to have an impressive amount of class award winners from our club, let's hope that the event can be even better in 2019.
Talking of awards, our own Awards Presentation Evening for events held in 2018 is on Saturday 19th January 18:30 for 19:00 at the Yelverton Golf Club. I hope to see you there.

More news next ~~month~~ year!
Peter Locke

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An Italian Affair

I have been meaning to put pen to paper for some time, apologies Mr Selley, but finding the time has been a challenge.

Some of you may know me from running an Orange MK2 Escort in the stage rally scene for the last 20 years, but in 2015 I found my enthusiasm for rallying starting to decline. Costs of remaining competitive, hours spent rebuilding the car and running over the same stages that I had for years didn't help.

Alex, my son, who had sat in the co-drivers seat a few times, hinted that circuit racing maybe worth a look. I had previously had a go with a friends Caterham 7 and found it more difficult than it appeared, especially in a car made for a small child. Alex had been working with Jota, a European Endurance racing team and his interest was with the circuits. We went to a couple of meetings and had a colleague who had bought an Alfa Romeo 156 cup car, but following a problematic first race for him, it had sat in his drive for the last year or so. Alex, being the shrewd one, thought that if we did a series that we could both drive in, then the expenses could be shared…. by me with me. So after not much haggling and a trackday, we bought a tired Alfa 156. Not the usual choice, as unlike Hondas, Vauxhalls etc, there aren't many off the shelf parts available and as I was to find out, most parts need to be fabricated or modified.

'Spia Leggaro motorsport' was born. For those who don't speak fluent Italian, this means 'warning light' as we can't get the flippin thing to go out on the dash.

A trip to Autosport in 2015 meant we could have a look at the racing on offer. We looked at the MSVR Trackday Trophy, a series meant to encourage novices into racing. The

classes are based on power to weight ratio, so the car has to have a power output run on a nominated Dyno and is weighed at the first race. The results then determine the class you are in. It isn't a championship so you could drop in and out and as Alex had only watched me make a fool of myself and not driven competitively, this looked an ideal introduction. Pressures of work meant the year shot past before we got our act together but we made the promise to try a race before the season was over.

We were offered a guest race at Oulton Park, a lovely circuit in Cheshire. This meant that we could have a go and see whether it would suit us. As we didn't know the circuit, we booked a test day on the Friday before race day. However so had the European GT circus, so we pretended to be a chicane as Astons, Porsches and BMWs shot passed us.

Fairly despondent as we felt outgunned, we made qualifying on Saturday not really appreciating the that this was a standard car. Qualifying was damp and the Alfa loves rain. We qualified just inside the top 20 in a field of 34, 4th in class but the class was very close. It was Alis first race so he went first in case the Alfa didn't make the duration… The traction on the Alfa is brilliant, so a good start saw the Alfa climb up the grid. However the track was drying and following a slower driver change, we finished 3rd in class but it was as good as a win to us.

We learnt a lot, not least that with a 2 minute driver change window, we mustn't overrun this as we can't make the time back. 2016 arrived and we thought we could get a few races in and maybe an offer of anF1 drive…!

The Alfa, having been built some time ago as a Cup car, was pretty standard as the regs don't allow much modification. We carried out the basic check overs so that the car would run reliably and headed up to Essex for the dy-

no run before the first race at Brands Hatch. The dyno run gave us a whopping 125 hp at the wheels, ok not great but fine for learning. This would put us in class D along with MX5s, Fiestas, 106s. So cars that were smaller and lighter. The Alfa does however have great handling and brakes so we weren't completely deflated.

Race day meant half hour qualifying shared between the two drivers and a 45 minute race with a driver change between 20 and 30 minutes in the race. I took the first qualifying session and found that although Brands is a short circuit, it was tricky to master, especially in a slow car as keeping the speed up was essential, if you don't have the right line, speed was punished. The Alfa was very low as well, so running the curbs was a no no as the sump was the first thing to have contact with the ground.

Ali took his stint and we qualified around 16th in a 32 car field, about 3rd in class, I struggle to remember, as I do with most things these days. We were happy with this to be honest as a starting point.

Race starts are like nothing else. An intense moment when everything converges to a single second, you are totally consumed as you anticipate the lights. Engine revs go up and you try to pick your way through anyone caught napping, while trying to keep anyone behind at bay as 32 cars all trying to gain an advantage in a few meters and hustle to get the best line into the first bend.

So Ali started.

He was nervous but he didn't cock it up, running midfield. However my warning about running the kerbs went out the window as he chased down the pack. After 20 minutes we had a notice from the race officials that fluid was coming from the car so we called him in. As he rolled into the pit lane and shut down the engine, the sump dumped its guts on the floor so our race was run, but we'd learnt a lot. Hopefully.

We knew were we were and were we should be. So an LSD, polybushes, GRP panels and a diet (the car not me) were ordered.

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Races at Oulton, Silverstone and Snetterton were all on offer but again work got in the way of some of them. We finished the season at Brands, home of our very short earlier debut. A damp track meant that we qualified well, 1st in class and in the top 12. Generally the driving standard is very good, but I noticed a little more aggression than usual in qualifying. The series has become very popular and originally open to novices only, it has now been opened to anyone which has attracted the odd trophy hunter.

My turn to start and the car in front was slow away but I got past and into Paddock hill bend only to see cars spin off to my right and then the Fiesta on my left span right across my path. Keeping the old saying if you aim for it, it won't be there when you are on it, paid off and the Alfa emerged in the top 6 by Druids. We dropped back as the track dried out, but Ali crossed the finish line with a class win which we couldn't believe, following our start at the beginning of the year. Champagne on the podium tasted good.

Last year saw a big off at Cadwell park after Alex qualified it in the top 10 on a fast, dry track, I have no idea how.. it was a lightening lap, but on the little Alfas limit. Ali spun off and damaged the back, then as we started the bigger cars seemed to be a tad annoyed that the Alfa was running with them and I got punted off, damaging the side and front. Unfortunately this put us back a bit while the car was repaired, a great job done by Anton Shaw. We got out for Brands and Oulton where Alex had the best race of his life whilst battling with an MX5.

The racing is very close and completely different to stage rallying, I thought it would be a simple transition but it has

brought up a new range of challenges, track racing is much more precise and apart from keeping the momentum up, battling other competitors adds a new perspective. Getting every possible advantage from the car is essential. It sounds obvious but you need to try it!

We have seen a few 2nd and thirds, but the Alfa needs more power to keep up with competitors development which is the next step.

Work commitments and Ali completing his Masters degree this year have meant that racing has got shelved, but this has meant that the Alfa has been stripped, the suspension and engine finally being worked on.

We're going to tackle the 750MC Roadsport series next year for a change, faster cars so the challenges continue.

Circuit racing is certainly cheaper and less demanding on the car (unless you crash) but the distance travelled to circuits is considerable, although they do have cafes and showers unlike some Welsh mountains we have competed on in the Escort.

Slow progress on the Alfa meant that it wasn't ready for an invitation to the Birkett 6 hour relay at Silverstone in October, so the Escort got the dust knocked off it and it took to the circuit. It didn't shame itself, so it maybe that it'll take to the circuits in the future, but that's another story to be continued!

Gavin Hearden



Plymouth Motor Club Menu

Starters

Coquille St Jacques
(black pearl scallops in a white wine sauce topped with mashed potato,
gruyere cheese and toasted breadcrumbs)
or
Home-made leek & potato soup
or
Hog roast pork, apple & sage pâté
or
Wild mushrooms in a Champagne sauce on garlic ciabatta bread (v)

Main Course

Locally sourced roast top-side of beef & Yorkshire pudding
or
Chicken breast wrapped in Parma ham with a sage & onion stuffin
or
Fillet of salmon with a hollandaise sauce
or
Beetroot tarte tatin (v)

All served with roast potatoes and 3 seasonal vegetables

Dessert

Caramel apple pie with custard
or
Raspberry & white chocolate meringue roulade
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Luxury Ice-cream selection

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LeJog 2018

After making a trip to Exeter racecourse in 2017 for our annual LeJog marshalling fix we were back at Werrington for LeJog 2018. When I looked at the weather forecast on Monday it said dry & mild for the time of year, when I next looked (Friday evening) it said rain – heavy rain – all day until late afternoon. Time to find the waterproofs then!

I'd spoken to my fellow timekeeper Adrian White from Torbay MC and some assistance from them again this year. With them and the volunteers that I'd rounded up I thought that we would be OK for marshals as usual but I was astounded when Linda told me at signing on that we had 27 people, including two junior marshals. I hope you enjoyed the day, Lewis and Elliott.

Well, the weather forecast was right, it rained – all day! But that didn't dampen the spirits of our marshals, everyone that I spoke to seemed to be happy to be out doing something even if it was just getting wet.

With the course quickly set up by John, Keith, Robert & Debbie we all stood round for a chat. It's surprising what you learn at times like this, today's revelation was that our Patron has become a sniper! It seems that his garden backs onto woodland where there are lots of squirrels. These squirrels have taken to eating the bird food that Dave puts out, so much so that Dave is now fighting back and is (allegedly) shooting at them with an air rifle. He wasn't letting on if he had actually shot one, he did say that by the time that he had got from downstairs to his shooting window upstairs the squirrels had disappeared!

For once, the event was on time with the first cars appearing right on cue at 11:20 and we finished about two hours later. Job done!

Thanks to everyone that got wet, hope it hasn't put you off coming out again next year! And guess what? Everyone got a badge this year! **Peter Locke**

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Tanks for the memories
The Challenger Stages 2018

So the entire point of having a rally car isn't to continually fix it, the plan is always to go rallying. A point in question there for the likes of Gary Parker and Mike Perkin, both owning currently low mileage rally cars, although in fairness to Mike, I was driving the Puma when it turned in to a garage ornament and blew up so whilst I accept absolutely no blame in any way shape or form (prove it copper), its not Mikes fault entirely. On the other side of this heavily biased coin, its given Mike the opportunity to concentrate on finishing other projects, using the word finish in a very loose sense. Gary of course has no other projects, just a blown engine. No excuses Parker, the 2019 season approaches.

I lost track for a moment then for some reason. Its always good to start by poking someone else.

So, this starts with fixing the rally car. As most/some/none (delete as required) know, Samantha and I crashed the Honda on its 2nd event at the Bocconnoc Stages in August, my record in rally cars as a driver isn't really that good overall as I've only done a few test days and 2 stage rallies at this point, and had either crashed or broken the car on them all, so Bocconnoc was no surprise to me, or for that matter probably most other people. Luckily, we didn't do that much damage at Bocconnoc and it could have been a whole lot worse as we were close to rolling the car during the accident and making a real mess. Once we dragged it home it was a fairly simple steering arm, bottom joint and windscreen and we were mobile again, ready for its MOT well in advance of the next rally on the calendar, I was organised in advance and everything was going to plan, so on the day of the MOT, I started the car

and went to drive off, only to find that the hydraulic pipe to the clutch master cylinder had split and the car wasn't going anywhere, a quick call to the Star Garage and push the Honda back in to the corner of the works carpark.
Sadly (not actually sadly, it's a nice house) this all coincided with Sam and myself buying a house and moving everything, so the next month was taken up with sorting the old house, sorting the new house and actually moving, the poor old Honda sat forlorn and neglected for the next 6 weeks until I had a bit more time to sort it out, a fairly simple fix, but finding the time was the key. Having bought a house, it has a garage, so I was keen after the initial move to sort the junk in the garage and get the Honda in its new dry home, so the clutch pipe was repaired and it came home to its nice dry garage for the final MOT tweaks, at this point just over a week away from the Challenger Stages up at the tank testing ground at Bovington in Dorset, luckily (good preparation) the car was sound and past its first MOT as a rally car with no issues, so with a week to go the car was ready and it was all systems go, a few tyres to sort etc but that was it, the rain had been smashing down so I thought a set of wets would be nice, off to see team Parker and get Ben to pop the tyres on rims, and then we were ready. Being ready is one thing, actually being ready is another, its amazing how many hours can be soaked up doing nothing much on a rally car, so the entire week was spent doing "stuff" in preparation for the weekends rally, nothing significant, just stuff.
As the days drew near and the weekend approached, and with Samantha Richards navigating again, I tried to prepare Sam for what lay ahead at Bovington, it's a very fast venue and certainly different from the events that Sam knows from her previous 2 steady events, as a navigator I always enjoy Bovington, its one of my favourites, as a driver I would be telling lies if I said I wasn't slightly wor-

ried, scrub worried, scared is a good summary. Sam didn't really seem phased at all so she was either supremely confident on my driving abilities (errrrrmmmmm) or delirious. As it turns out delirious was a much better word.

The weekend of the rally arrived, the Honda was wearing its new wet weather rubber despite the forecast telling us it was going to be a glorious weekend, we were loaded on the trailer, and set off on the Friday evening after work to drive up to Poole where we had a caravan booked for team Pinky and ourselves for the weekend, with Sam and myself deciding that we would explore Poole on the Saturday before rallying on the Sunday. As it turned out we could have explored Poole during the break in the stages the following day and it didn't really inspire us or take up to much time, but I did have a nice carvery for Breakfast.

The rest of Plymouth Honda joined us that afternoon in the form of Ben Parker in Pinky the Honda with Gary Parker and Simon Heywood jointly spannering for the weekend and Jody Excell being team mascot sharing the glamour with Samantha. The morning of the rally was very fresh and dark, with the venue opening at 6.30AM, where we met Shaun Layland who had travelled up on the morning of the event.

I'm not a fan of early morning starts, we have all done it for years and perhaps it's a sign of my greater maturity but I do now much prefer a leisurely evening drive and a couple of beers with some freshly cooked cow before a rally nowadays, and a good nights sleep, its an older persons thing.

Scrutineering was fine with no issues, and we set the team up in the service area, no awnings required as the sky was awakening from its sleep with the colour of a summers day, something which settled my nerves down massively, as I noted earlier, I was a tad nervous, whilst Sam remained calm, or delirious, depending on your outlook. I

know the truth.
With Ben and Shaun seeded at car 9 and Sam and myself Seeded at car 64, it was more deserving of my lack of experience behind the wheel and I actually felt very comfortable and under no illusions or had any expectations of greatness, I was just keen to get in the car and start driving, I was calm and I was ready. Just like Sam, oh, no, that was delirium.
Stage 1 was cold but dry, so after a chat with the team tyre technician Simon Heywood, we went for leaving the soft wets on the back and then dropping some soft inters on the front, it's a fairly typical set up for Ben and Pinky so we know it works. When I say we, let's not forget I have no experience what so ever so just nodded. Softs it was.
As Sam and I sat on the start line, I had checked the map, very familiar to me as a navigator, and asked Sam how she was feeling, to which she replied she was fine. Fine, that's a funny word isn't it, I'm fine you tell people. Its fine. We were about to find out. With Ben and Shaun at car 9 they were finished the first stage well in advance of us starting the stage, starting immediately in front of us was Phil Ferguson and Ryan Harris in their yellow Astra 2.0, while I still had no expectations, its always nice to have a target, and mine was the rear bumper of the Astra, he was going to leave the stage start 30 seconds before me and I wanted to see the rear bumper again before we reached the end of the stage. It would have been nice at the very least.
The start clock counted down and at 10 seconds I engaged wharp speed, OK, first gear, and as the clock ticked away we launched in to the stage. Now, not to knock other events, as every rally has its merits, but Bovington is for the brave, its different that the others that Sam and I had done, its fast and wide, plenty of opportunity for speed and very important to carry that speed

through the corners as well as you could, so we set of with a plan in mind, basically, don't cock it up. And catch the Astra. As it turned out, catching the Astra was easy as Phil had made an error a fairly short distance in to the 1st stage and as we arrived at very fast approach to a 90R with an immediate 90L, Phil and Ryan were stranded in a midst of cones while they sorted them selves out, not a true test of our speed, more of their issues in the series of corners, as the stage went on we had a misfire a few times, nothing major, but it unsettles you, but on we went and drove as neatly as I could, there's a couple of areas which I had concerns over as they were very fast corners, the Honda took them with no issues and I felt like I had already won the rally, on arriving at the end of the stage, there was no crown cheering me on and no winners laurels, so my hopes were dashed as I came back down to earth. I turned to Sam and asked how she had been, I only really asked as she hadn't said a lot during the stage, clearly she had swallowed a fly near the start and was struggling to get her "fast right in to 90 left" words out, but she was OK, quite unphased seemingly, and did the time card tasks, we had cleared the stage and all was good, the car felt brilliant although my tyres felt a bit loose on the second lap, so in service we swapped to some mediums on the front, the back was fine. Much banter was had between the team with Ben and Shaun in the top 10 stage times, whilst we were nearer the bottom 10 stage times.

There were already several cars broken down out on the stage, plus a couple with rally ending damage already, they were clearly trying far harder than me, as we hadn't even so much as considered a moment at any point in stage 1, and all was well in the world for the Honda. Except the occasional misfire.

Stage 2 was a repeat of stage 1 and we set of in to the stage again this time with Phil in the Astra behind me, my

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plan this time was not to see the front bumper after we had left the start line. We launched in to the stage and almost immediately the car started to misfire quite badly, it normally revs to close to 9000 RPM but in this instance it wouldn't clear 6000 for some reason for large parts of the stage, although when it cleared it was back to how it should be, but it ended up costing us about 30 seconds in the stage as we had to amble for a chunk of it, on a plus note no Astras were seen in the rear view mirror and in fact we came across them on the finish line, one of their tyres had delaminated and caused them to cut a lap and come in early.

In to service for us and we had about 40 minutes, Simon and I chatted and decided to swap the ECU, the car runs a modified ECU to make better use of the changes Ive done to the car and it had only seemed to cough with the modified ECU fitted, so out it came and we fitted the standard one before stage 3 as a process of elimination.

Stage 3 and we were starting behind Phil and Ryan once again as they had left the stage before us due to cutting a lap, so again I wanted to chase them down, the Honda was feeling brilliant other than the misfire, the brakes were really good and the power delivery was smooth and fun, all we lacked was a decent handbrake as due to the house move etc I hadn't had the time to fit a hydraulic lever, so there one tight hairpin (typically where the spectators were) I had to forwards and back, costing us armfuls of time, so stage 3 and we were off the line, like a limping cat. The misfire was much worse and for the entire first lap we were driving to 6000 rpm and then changing up, occasionally it would clear but in general it was a real struggle, but by keeping it tidy we were going OK, and we did eventually manage to see the yellow Astra in front of us, but at the rate we were travelling we were unlikely to catch them, fortunately the car then woke up and we

had full power for the next half a stage, when we were able to quickly catch and pass the Astra showing what a big difference there actually was between the cars, not long after passing them it started to misfire again but we had done enough to take 30 seconds out of the Yellow peril as we crossed the finish line, a reasonable stage but again we probably lost 40 – 50 seconds on our pace. Back to service and it was agreed by all that the fault wasn't with the ECU as the problem remained and indeed got worse as we went on, so the modified ECU was thrown back in the car and we started to think about fuel issues, stage 1 the fuel tank was nearly full, stage 2 we were on 3/4s and for stage 3 which had been our worst we were on a half tank, the misfire wasn't getting worse just more frequent and consistent, and did clear sometimes, so we topped the tank in the hope that it would clear the problem.

Stage 4 showed us that it was fuel related as we had a fairly clean stage with only the occasional flutter, we managed to catch and pass 2 cars, the car was going well and I wasn't having to worry about driving through the misfire. All was good. At the end of the stage I commented to Sam that it felt better, and she sort of grunted, in a kind of "was it" grunt. I had noticed during the stage that her breathing had become regular, almost concentrated, like she was thinking about what she was doing, every so often we did discuss how many laps etc and at one point during the stage I couldn't remember how many splits we had cleared, unfortunately neither could Sam, so being a good old nav I got Sam to tell me the stage start time while I checked my watch, we had been in the stage for near 8 minutes and it was clear that each lap was about 3 minutes ish, so we were close to the end of the stage, the next split was to be a split to finish. Luckily it was and we had a nice clean stage.

Stages 5 and 6 were easier as we knew what the fuel problem was and we just had to keep the tank topped, everything else on the car was going well, I wasn't close to any sort of limit just driving the car and having fun with it, my experience is as I say limited and I had no intention of causing my own failure by hitting something or falling of the road as so many were doing during the event, it's a fairly typical Bovington fail really, its fast and people either crash or break their cars as they get over excited and drive outside of their limits, I wanted a finish and that was important to us. Stage 5 wasn't perfect as did have the odd misfire, so stage 6 saw me borrowing more fuel to absolutely brim the tank to almost overflowing from Will Frost, sadly their team were out on stage 1 after some steering damage on the rack, and they were the first people I thought of as I went searching for more fuel. In theory I had enough fuel with me if the car ran OK on a half tank, an extra 20 litres kept it toppers for stage 6 where I was keen to have a push a bit harder.

Sitting on the start line and chatting with Sam, she actually told me she was terrified and was shaking with fear, it seems that the high speed and aggressive corners at Bovington were taking their toll on her more than I thought, sadly there wasn't much I could do or say to help her suffering, some would say having me as a boyfriend was bad enough, but throwing her around Bovington nearly broke her mental resolve. Still, never mind eh. We had 8 miles of Bovington to get around still. And I was having fun.

Off we went in to the stage and its fair to say, I had a good time, Sam continued to breath steadily, always a bonus, she was never close to being sick etc as some navigators do suffer from, but in the same way she was probably wishing she was elsewhere. There were no complaints, shreaks, gasps or crys, she just held on tight and kept muttering something about "forgive me father". Many times.

Stage 6 of the Challenger stages 2018 was a lot of fun, the car was near perfect and we had achieved what we set out to do, there was no damage other than a scratched rear bumper where a nice chap in a Mazda MX5 shunted us on the hairpin as I was in the way, at the time I uttered much poorly constructed language aimed towards the Mazda, in reality he did the right thing and got out of the way as fast as he could with only minor damage to either car and he came down and shook my hand afterwards. Not bad for a hairdresser.

As we took the final few corners of the last stage I was very pleased, the final section was a very fast run up through the middle of the venue to a 90R and over the finish, delighted is a good word as the car had finished its first "real" tough event with no massive issues just the fuel starvation to look over. I had enjoyed it and for the best part I believe that Sam had, although as we left the final control to return to the service area she did ask if she could cry, I laughed, thinking she was joking, it seemed she wasn't as there was a tear of emotion and relief in her eyes, bless her. We all know what it's like, finishing on some events for everyone is emotional and a relief let alone your first serious event, considering the massive lack of her experience and the super fast nature of the venue, tied together with the fact that the car actually goes quite well and is very rapid, she did better than anyone could have asked for and played an important role in the event for our finish, having said all of that, she's not keen to navigate Bovington again in the future, its perhaps a bridge to far and I cant blame her in any way.

So, it's a bit like X factor, and the results are important. Ben Parker and Shaun Layland finished a fabulous 7th overall and 3rd in class, Pinky once again shone over many of the bigger boys toys and Ben should again be proud of his achievement.

As for Samantha and myself, I was very delighted to see that we had finished 36th overall in our first proper rally, the car showed that it can be a very good car, which is what I hoped for when I strung it together, and everything works well, a fuel issue needs looking at but I don't anticipate that being an issue longer term.

Ah, and off course, lets not forget why we were there in the first place, to have fun, it was a great weekend overall, with great company, very sociable, good rallying, decent people all around us with a great team spirit, weekends like this are what's important to me and I think Sam (with added wine), we all work hard and the chance to have some fun like these weekends is not to be missed for us.

Winter will see me run around the car with a spanner, changing most of the ball joints etc and generally checking everything over, Ill sort the fuel tank and will be fitting a decent hydraulic handbrake for those messy corners, with 2019 hopefully starting with a return to Bovington for the 2 day event in March as it's the first local event of the season. On that note, I will leave you with the image of Sam, breathing heavily in the intercom, as I listened. Strangely familiar I feel.

Alf Chanter
Samantha Richards
Car 64 Challenger Stages 2018
36th overall and 13th in Class C

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