Spotlamp



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Plymouth Motor Club Diary 2019

June 2019		
28th		Hillman Cup 12 Car Rally The Cardinals Hatt, A388, Saltash PL12 6PJ, UK
July 2019		
8th		Watergate Bay Meeting
12th		Comus Cup Treasure Hunt
12th/13th/ 14th		Formula 1 British Grand Prix
26th		Vauxhall Cup 12 Car Rally
31st		Yealmpton Show We hope to have a stand at the Show again this year

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

This month has passed by at a slower pace than usual, which is reassuring because the rest of the 5 months of this year have flown by in the blink of an eye. Continuing the Formula 1 theme of this years editorial, I guess the big talking point would be the Vettel Hamilton penalty that occurred in Canada.

I did initially disagree with the penalty because at first I thought it was difficult for Vettel to regain control in such a short amount of time but after looking at some of the slow motion replays I think I that it was justified seeing as he turned towards the wall once he had regained control therefore hindering Hamilton on the racing line.

As for the French Grand Prix last weekend, it was pretty uneventful but at least the broadcaster missed the only bit of action in the race on the last lap!

The Le Mans 24 Hours has also come and gone since my last editorial, it was nice watching it on the TV although Dad did have the better view by actually going over and watching it in person again. Hopefully I can get the time off next year to join him and the gang down there .

On the front cover this moth is Ben Bonfield pushing hard at Tregrehan last weekend were the weather was somewhat unpredictable I have heard.

Until Next Month, Good Bye.

Rob Selley

The Editor reserves the right to amend articles received as necessary. The views expressed in Spotlamp are the views of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the Club and its Officers. Copyright Plymouth Motor Club 2019©

Hillclimb Central

Just when you thought it was safe to read the magazine without any mention of hillclimbs – fooled you!

With one "W" word out of the way, it's time for a bumper crop of two more. They aren't happening for a couple of months but you need to be aware of them if you are a competitor as entries open soon and both were quite popular last year.

Coming over the horizon first of all is the ever popular most popular event in the Tillicoultry Quarries Wiscombe Championship more times than anyone else - 5 Clubs Wiscombe weekend on 7th & 8th September. Entries usually open in the middle of July but if you register with ***www.enteronline.org.uk*** you'll be amongst the first to know when they do.

Hot on the heels of the 5 Clubs weekend (the next weekend to be exact) is the Watergate Bay Hotel backed Watergate Bay hillclimb weekend. After last year's inaugural event – the first post-war hillclimb to be run on closed public roads in England, in case you'd forgotten – when club member Doug Bennett took the FTD award on Saturday, a lot of thought has gone into improving the event for both spectators & competitors alike. The course is now 150 yards longer, the paddock is in the field to the right of the course when you ascend the hill, the viewing areas are better, there's a big screen in the bottom car park showing movies on Saturday night to name but a few changes. Entries open on 15th July so don't delay!

We will be looking for marshals for both events too, bottom paddock and hill marshals for Wiscombe and hill marshals

for Watergate bay. Contacts are either John Sluman or Peter Locke (Werrington @ plymouthmotorclub.co.uk should find us if you omit the spaces) for Wiscombe & Neil Gould (via the Watergate hillclimb website) for Watergate bay.

Peter Locke
Speed Event Central

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The Westcountry Rescue Team would like to thank SouthWest Timekeepers for there support in acquiring this very useful portapower equipment, pic 1. We have used it in training at Thruxton in March pic's 2 & 3.







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Batting for the other side
Otherwise known as driving is more fun.

Ive done the TSH Stages rally a number of times as a navigator and always enjoyed it, its certainly one of my favourite rallies as a nav, you have a bit more to do there and the natural layout of the stages feels a bit more like a "proper" rally to me as there is something for everyone, tight and twisty, fast and smooth, bumpy, a bit of gravel, some fast tight sections, its all there for a nav to enjoy. It couldn't get any better locally I used to think foolishly. From behind my map. And the views were stunning as a nav, looking out over the coast I could see for miles, and inland you had beautiful Cornwall. I could see all of this from behind my map. Stunning.

Fast forward to 2019 and I find myself "batting for the other side" now that we have our own car to play with in the class C Honda Civic Type R, I found myself placing an entry when the regs came out with me sitting behind the round directional thing otherwise known as a steering wheel, yes, after doing the event on previous years and being able to hide behind a map, 2019 saw me driving the event for my first time. Taking responsibility.

A part of my plan in this last year as its all a bit new to me and indeed new to the car was to enter different types of events to gain a variety of experiences, the first event was a 90 left 90 right event at Smeatharpe to settle in to the car, then the crash at Bocconnoc in the "lanes" of the estate, followed by the flowing roads of the fabulous Bovington and now the testing stages of the 2 day DL Motorsport parts TSH Stages rally organised by South Hams MC and held on 14 stages over 2 days at the RRH Portreath airfield site on the north coast of Cornwall.

The event has a bit of a reputation as a car killer due to its tough stages and fast pace so I spent some time over the

few weeks before the event running a spanner around it whilst myself and Mike Perkin double drove at the Portreath Sprint and then the Werrington Hill climb, where we ended up evens on the score.
The week before the TSH I swapped out front and rear brake discs, wheel bearings and ball joints for a past time, one advantage of the Honda is that most of the parts are totally standard so widely available for very little money from such notable sources as eBay, you can practically rebuild the thing from the comfort of your chair for under £100 and you have the benefit of the legendary Honda reliability using standard parts, many people would tell you that you need to upgrade bushes and the like, in my experience, if it wears out quick then upgrade it, if its reliable and lasts an age, then throw some bits on it that Honda designed to work. They had a fairly decent budget when they designed the Type R as their hot hatch and didn't scrimp on the design. The car is a genuine 137,000 mile car still fitted with the engine that Honda dropped in it some 17 (yes 17) years ago, the legendary Honda reliability works. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
Improve it maybe, but you cant fix something that's not broken.
So mid May and we set of from Chez Sam and Alf and head for the Cornish coast, dragging the Honda fully loaded with all its spares etc behind our T5 Camper fondly know as Harriet. As you might guess, I didn't choose the same. Who would have thought, a VeeDub on the way to the Cornish coast and not a sign of a surfboard. We arrived at just after 7.30 PM to drop the car of in Portreath the night before and retired to the Perransands camp site for food and beer, before kipping for the night in the flexible service bus.
Joining us on the weekends sport was my nav for the weekend Beccy Stuart from oop Bournemouth way, she

was a veteran of 2 events to date, crashing out on the first at Bovington and then helping to break the car at Down Ampney so her run of luck was errmmm not so good at that point and foolishly she was sitting with me thinking that things might get better and we might be able to cross the line at the end of the rally. In with the in crowd so to speak, we were joining a couple of Cornish crews in their rally specials, starting with Mark Clayton and Nic Clayton in their exceptionally rapid Mini, don't be fooled if you've not seen the car, its not like any Mini you've seen on a rally before, its a shouting screaming fat arsed mini with an attitude. And that's just the navigator. Luckily she wont get to read this article. She's Cornish, she struggles with words that don't have aaarrrggghhh in the middle of them. Having said that she is navigating for me on the next event so I my well have bruised legs after that.

Also allowing us to join them in Cornwall was the 2017 ASWMC champion Dan Gibson in his Darrian T9 Batmobile, assisted in this instance by Frankie Hillman, who strangely enough, is the boyfriend of my navigator Beccy, so whilst we were linked, we weren't really a 3 car team, more a group of proper rally cars and a simple old near standard Honda. Its clear who were going to be the winners and the losers from that group. You would think.

So there we were, the rally is held over 2 days and before lunch on day 1 we were in the queue seeded at car 32 with a good midfield entry, it was Beccys first time at the TSH so we marked the maps up a bit and I gave her my words of advice which basically went along the lines of "the views are great out over the coast, make sure you check them out". I am wise indeed. The routine for the day was 9 stages on the Saturday run in groups of 2, so straight out of stage 1 and in to stage 2 with no service, both stages at about 6 miles each. Our time came and we counted down the seconds and we were off in to the

stage, with the plan being to have a steady couple of stages settling in to the event, and getting Beccy in to the rhythm of the Honda, as we all know such plans fall apart after about 3 seconds and 2 gear changes and immediately your driving like your leading the Wales Rally GB and the win was dependant upon it. At least, that's how it feels, in reality I went as fast as I could and set a time appropriate to our seeding, I'm aware that I'm very scrappy on the technical bits as its something Ive not yet got the hang of, and the Hondas relative lack of a usable handbrake was a bit of a pig on some of the chicanes, but as the Honda seemingly goes quite well we had a blast in stage 1, Beccy worked her way through the map and kept us pointing in the right direction. Stage 1 was cleared with no real issues, the car felt solid and we were all happy. Stage 2 was using the western side of the airfield and used quite a lot of the technical bits along with a good spread of chicanes as well, so once again we went as well as we felt comfortable and pushed on, actually managing to pass a couple of the slower cars on the first laps while we were on out 2nd lap after the split, but with no real problems we had cleared the stage again with no issues. Beccy had lost her place on the map during the stage, as a navigator myself I know how hard this can be at a venue your not familiar with to pick it up again, but she found her way and all was good.

The talk of the town after the first pair of stages was the Mini of Mark and Nic Clayton, as it was broken down on the stage seemingly after one of the hairpins, they had spun at the approach to the corner and clouted a drain cover ripping a tyre of, luckily the new rules are that you must carry a spare, unluckily on the mini they had to swap a tyre front to back as well as replace the punctured front to make sure they had traction, sadly their demise was shortly afterwards as during the spin they had damaged

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something on the brakes and lost all braking while in the stages later, so it was game over for the mini. That was the demise of the first highly tuned and developed rally car in our group. The Honda needed its headlights wiping down. Reliability. Legendary. Its not the fastest, but its 137,000 miles must have earnt it a chufty badge.

As the stages were rough and very aggressive on the front tyres we found that on the technical stages the tyres were overheating on the first loop so we changed to some hard compound tyres for the 2nd loop of stages. As it turned out they were much better and as we set in to stages 3 and 4 the car was working really well, they were a repeat of the first loop so we were able to push on a bit harder, the tyres were working hard and the brakes were working probably harder, the venue took me by surprise as a driver due to its demanding nature and tricky stages, lots of loose gravel on the corners meant that you had to have your wits about you. It also meant that it was fantastic fun in the car. Stages 3 and 4 nearly broke Beccy initially as she was suffering a bit from Mal de Navigateur or what ever it is the French called it, again, having suffered from time to time on night rallies theres nothing worse and its very hard to concentrate and to pull it back, so I think she was relived when we reach the end of stage 4. She was doing a great job with the map but the sickness just about broke her as she found the stages very aggressive. It didn't top her though, she was keen to get back in the Honda for the next loop.

Stages 5 and 6 were much the same for team Honda, we set of to drive as hard as we could but without being a he-ro, and at one point nearly lost the badge of honour as a hero whilst we approached a very fast chicane on stage 5, it's a long fast gentle right down to a tight hairpin right with an immediate turn 90 left on to the long fast centre road leading back to what we call the complex. Ap-

proaching it there were 2 cars in front of us, Matt Cuzens in his BMW and another chap in a Subaru, at this point I'm thinking about getting around the hairpin and they were far enough in front of us to not worry about, so I pushed on towards the chicane, they were at the chicane by now and fighting for position as we were approaching at a decent speed, I was still thinking that they were going to be gone when I got there. Perhaps I misjudged my approach speed, and perhaps they were tangled up in their own battle, but suddenly I was at the chicane, and they were still there spread across the road, with the Subaru half was across the chicane and the BMW just sorting himself out to go around. At this point the Honda is now locked up on all 4 wheels heading straight for the rear quarter panel of the BMW, I'm trying to take it left as the BMW was trying to go right, I could pretty much have brushed his hair as he nipped to the side and we scooted past him before turning in, its my closet call yet in the Honda, and it goes to show how high speed straights and low speed chicanes bunch the cars up quickly. And closely.

Other than that stages 5, 6, 7 8 went well. With the exception of tyres and brakes, as we came of the stage I was aware that the brakes were far from their best and the tyres were certainly not doing what they should be doing. On examination my brand new hard Dunlop X02 tyres were significantly less brand new and were down to the string, and my incredibly expensive front Ferodo DS3000 brake pads were no more, so a quick change of new pads coming out of exceptionally hot calipers, and the decision to speak to the nice man on the tyre van and get some spanky new Pirelli hards meant we were ready to go for stage 9. 8 short stages had destroyed 2 hard tyres and a set of brake pads. That's about £500 to me. Ouch. 8 stages. £62.50 per stage if you work that out. And I was one of the lucky ones who wasn't chasing at the front.

Beccy was still suffering from a bit of sickness so I put her in touch with Nic Clayton who famously gets sick in most rally cars, but over the years has developed some ways of working around it, and she gave Beccy a patch which you fix to the side of your neck and makes a helluva difference. For some its ginger biscuits, for others it's the wonders of modern science.

So we entered stage 9, the longest stage of the day at 10 miles as it was a combination of the days total layouts with fresh rubber, fresh brake pads and fresh neck patches. And everything worked, Beccy felt great and was on the maps, the car felt fantastic again and we were back to having a blast in the car. After 10 miles I was ruined, the weather was hot, in the car was hotter, and lets be fair, in no athlete unless it's a pie eating championship. That said, stage 9 was a real blast and gave us a taste of the Sundays 5 longer stages.

Finishing the first day 24th overall, with no dramas I was quite happy, my target for the weekend was to break in to the top 20 and we were on target, the event was a car killer and there were many cars broken after day 1, to the extent that 3 crews went away to fit replacement engines after the first day having detonated theirs during the day. But the Hondas reliability was legendary.

After a few refreshing drinks and some Cornish meat on the Saturday night, we returned to Portreath again on the Sunday morning to hit the final 5 longer stages. The only thing the Honda needed was to bleed the rear brakes just in case it improved the poor hydraulic handbrake, and to run my eye over it generally, hit a few things with a spanner, check tyres and fluids etc before the first of the 5 stages. 12 miles of RRH Portreath on stage 10 lay in front of us. Beccy was in tip top condition and very pleased that we had got through day 1 with no real issues, and ready to attack the days stages again. Stage 10 was drama free

apart from a small spin on a high speed loose corner. My highlight was possibly letting a couple of the big power Escorts through on their second lap as we were on our first, I'm never keen to get in anyone's way so I moved to the left and then let them through as we went in to a very fast 90 right followed by a fast 45 left, the Honda has the power on the fast bits to stick with them easily so as we went through the first corner we were literally on the ass of the Escorts, with both cars having massive full lock sideways moments which we could watch from probably less than a cars length away, it was fantastic, and very exciting. A good stage all round, Beccy was fully with it by now, the patches had transformed her sickness and the crew were having a good giggle in the car at the stages.

Stages 11 and 12 came and went with no issues, both long enough to get in to it, with a great selection of corners, the car was staring to feel a bit loose on the straight fast bits and a quick inspection showed we had smashed a ball joint on the passengers side and unfortunately destroyed another pair of hard compound tyres. They had managed something like 5 stages and they were done. I wont add that to the financial total as frankly its not a pretty number. Fortunately the final 2 stages were longer but less technical, and I dropped my medium compound tyres on the front to drag us around for the final 2 stages.

Setting off in to stage 13 we were laying 20th overall and holding our own with no real issues, the car behind was far enough behind that they were not likely to catch us as there was something like a 30 second cushion, the car in front wasn't that far in front but I wasn't overly concerned at catching them, the rally was now in its closing stages and the only car I was willing to fight with was the Honda, both Beccy and I were keen to finish the event, the car was very twitchy with its tired front suspension joints and I didn't want to throw it away by smashing the joint any

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more than it already was, its fair to say at the start of 13 I was nervous on many levels. Stage 13 was a 12 miles, with a 14 mile blast on stage 14 so we still had 26 miles to go and I decided to nurse the car to a certain extent.

We all know that in reality nursing a car doesn't really work, we are there to go rallying and to have a blast, so stage 13 whilst initially a bit steadier, we both got in to the rhythm and it was a really good fast flowing stage. No issues with the car or the crew to report, we pushed on, hit pretty much every cone there was to hit, attacked a few straw bails but only with glancing blows, the car felt good, loose, but good (we all know that feeling after a night on the beer don't we lads) and after the 13th stage we had a decent run, the tyres had held up and the ball joint was no worse. The gearbox was perhaps a bit notchy but this could just have been me changing gear badly. Still 20th overall and 5th in class, we joked that we needed to lose 2 in our class to get a trophy. We did laugh. Har de har.

Stage 14 and this was essentially 3 laps around the outside of the airfield with some of the infield chicanes etc, but it was going to be a fast run right around the outside. 3 laps, no prisoners, one stage, one event to finish. 14 miles is all we needed. We sat on the start line, did a high 5 as the lights counted us down, and off we went. The pace felt frantic, I was Stig Blomqvist at his best, I was stunning, Beccy was doing her very best Nicky Grist impression and was clearly enjoying the final stage. Lap 1 nearly done and we came down to a tricky 90 left 90 right and hair pin left on the coastal side of the venue after a very long fast run down at over 100mph only to be surprised to see the remaining car in the "team" parked up on the hairpin with the Darrian of Dan and Frankie seemingly broken and the boys waving us on. The first thing that occurs to you is the devastation that your team mates have broken down. You really feel for them. However, every cloud as they say,

has a silver lining, they were in front of us and in our class, so we were now 19th overall and 4th in class, so very sad outside but just a tiny eeny weany bit excited inside.
Of we went in to lap 2 of 3, very fast and committed but nothing stupid, hero to zero is pointless on the last stage when a finish is in sight. Half way around lap 2 and broken down by the side of the stage was another car in front of us and in our class, so we whooped this time as they weren't in our team, the car seemed ok just something mechanical by the looks of it. This meant 18th overall and 3rd in class we thought, although unsure as the results hadn't been working much during the afternoon so we were trying to work it out in our heads.
Towards the end of lap 2 you come out of a series of bends and on to the 2 longer straights, I say straits, they are bumpy and loose, as we joined the straights right in front of us was a gaggle of slower cars, and being on the straight it was a perfect time to catch and pass them before the twisty stuff, so a brave effort by team Honda meant we kept the foot hard on the throttle and picked our was past 3 cars approaching the chicane at the end of the straight, I was pleased that the Honda has such good brakes as standard (fitted by Harry Honda) as we were just about able to nip past them all and turn in for the complex of corners, past the still waving Darrian and off again in to lap 3, the final lap of the 2019 TSH stages. Our only interaction was with a Peugeot 205 who we caught rapidly and he was a tad reluctant to let us through eventually waving us through on the left as we beeped and flashed him a fair few times. In his defence it was a very fast part of the stage approaching a series of corners and I have no doubt that he was feeling much like we were, he was keen to finish and have a blast, as we pulled up beside him it nearly all went wrong, the road started to go long easy left and he moved across sharper

than the stage did, so I was almost sat in the navigators seat, the power of the Honda dragged us past and we finished the final lap with no issues, the approach to the finish was excitable in the car, Beccy was whooping and I was still fighting with the wheel, but we both let out a yell as we crossed the finish line of stage 14, we had completed the rally.

It has been tough, the car has battle scars on each of the front corners and the front bumper, along with cone and bale rash down the passengers side, and a smashed mirror, all relatively minor points, but it shows it was rough, underneath there were lots more knocks and bangs than when we had started. It was a tough event. At the start of stage 14 I was really worried at how hard on the car it was, with the 137,000 mile engine revving to 9000 rpm for a chunk of the weekend, you always have that thought in the back of your mind. What if. At the end of stage 14 all the stress goes away and you'll only remember the good bits, which was every inch of every mile. The bubble only bursts when you check your bank balance in the week after the event. But there were many good times in the car.

So, we finished in the end 18th overall and with a trophy in what Ive always classed as the big boys class. The Honda is far from the best car out there, and I certainly don't lay claim to be a decent driver when compared with some, I can peddle, but theres a lot to learn. We all know the expression, "you have to be in it to win it" and "to finish first, first you must finish". In class C some very rapid cars didn't finish, either through virtue of accident damage, mechanical breakdown or simple driver error. When it comes to the end of stage 14, we took fair and square a top 20 finish and a trophy. We finished where many didn't. It has been a fantastic event, I was totally delighted and its fair to say so was Beccy that not only had we finished, but it had been a decent finish, we hadn't taken any silly risks really, I

wasn't a hero, I learnt so much about the car and car control moving from the tarmac to the gravel covered tarmac caught me out a few times but it was brilliant fun.
As a team we had a brilliant time, Beccy no doubt learnt a fair bit about the role of a navigator and did a great job, we gelled well in the car and the car did its thing. We couldn't have asked for much more.
Without all of the organising crew, marshal and backroom boys and girls of course we wouldn't be able to play our games down at Portreath or for that matter any other event, so a massive round of applause to the army of people involved, some for most of the year before hand and others for the couple of days or so they could spare, we love you all in the same way (this isn't where batting for the other side comes in to it by the way) and were so grateful for your time and commitment, were nothing without you guys and girls.
I also need to thank my partner/girlfriend/better half/love of my life/biatch Sam Richards as she's put up with me messing with the Honda for close to 18 months now spending many hours tinkering in the garage instead of tinkering with her (still not batting for the other side) and on top of that she's been the team catering manager for many events this last 12 months and has always looked out for me as only a loved one can.
Next for me is Smeatharpe with Nic Clayton sitting next to me in the Honda in mid June, I'm looking forwards to that never having sat with Nic shouting at me from the passengers seat before. Ive navigated for her on a couple of road events and that was inciteful indeed so having her tell me where to go (nothing new there although it normal starts with an F) will be great fun. Geddon boyo apparently is her technique. Ill be going for the barf if I can. As mentioned she suffers from rally bark, I hope she brings her sick bag. She made me gallop through some trees on her

horse once. Revenge will be sweet.
So the reliability of the Honda won out over some well developed kit, theres always a lot of leg pulling about how standard Ben Parkers car was ref the engine, and how well Ben could peddle it, whilst im not at the top end of the peddling stakes, the genuine standard Honda engine and layout took us through 14 tough hard stages with relatively minor damage in the overall scheme of things. I couldn't have asked more of the car. And it was fun. That's why we do it, for the fun. **Alf Chanter & Beccy Stuart**

Car 32

Honda Civic Type R







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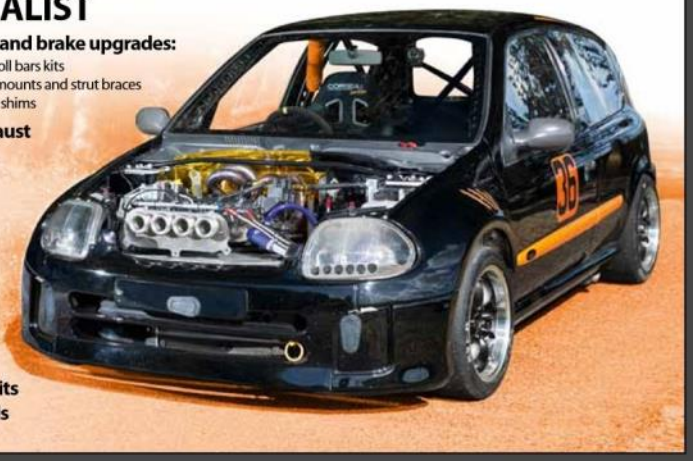

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