

Dukeries Rally 2008

After the disappointment of a non finish on the previous round, the SM Rallying team set off for the trip up to Sherwood Forest for the Dukeries Rally with a good feeling for the event. Last years event was a total washout, and everyone was hoping for a drier weekend. We arrived at the racecourse and unloaded the car. Scrutineering was gone through, and as we signed on the heavens opened..... Da-Ja-Vous! It poured down for around 30 mins. We were loading the car back up, when Karen came over to say that she had forgotten her coat and broly. Oh dear.....

Saturday started a lot brighter, and the drive out to the first stage was lovely. This stage had not been used for quite a few years, so it was new to most people. Narrow sprung to mind as we watched the cars in front of us take off. The stage flowed reasonably well for us, and we stopped the clock in a reasonable time. Equal 3rd quickest in class, and 3 seconds behind the leader.

Stage 2 was another short 2.3 mile run, and Steve was happy with the car. We dropped another few seconds to the class leader, but as he had local knowledge we were happy with our pace. At emergency service, we saw Karen, who explained that they were out with engine problems.

Stage 3 was the start of the longer stages. 6.75 miles. Loads of long straights saw the car hitting the shift light in 5th! We had a really good run and gained a few seconds and were up to 3rd again.

Stage 4 was another long stage, but an overshoot after a very long straight and demolishing a chicane lost us a bit of time. The side of the car needs a bit of TLC now! The time lost dropped us to 5th in class. There was only 18 seconds covering the top 5!!!

Stage 5 saw a bit more time lost, when we had a full 360 spin going uphill into a square left. We were certainly pushing on...

At service we had a chat about the tyres, and decided to bite the bullet and put a new set on the front. The run out to stage 6 told us that it was a good idea.

Stage 6 was a rerun of 1, but in reverse. It was quicker, as a fair wedge was down hill. We climbed back up to 4th in class with a time 2 seconds slower than the class leader. All the cars in the class through the stage were covered by 8 seconds. That's how close this event was!

At the start of stage 7, we were warned that there were a few ruts on some of the bends, but they failed to tell us about the 6 foot deep holes that were there from the first run! The car was thrown from one ditch to the next. Steve had the wheel ripped from his hand, damaging his wrist, and I thought it was best not to get out of the car in auxiliary service, in case I couldn't get back in. My back was killing me.

Stage 8 was another long stage, and we headed off into it at a great pace. On one of the long downhill sections, we hit a bump at a cross roads flat in fourth. The car coasted to a halt. After a quick check around, we found that the fuel pump was not priming when the ignition was turned on. End of the rally. The big jumps had finally taken their toll.

This means that our championship is now effectively over, so we will not be competing on the Tempest Stages Rally in November. We are planning to do the Woodpecker Rally and perhaps the Neath Valley Stages. Who knows? Next outing is the Forester Motor Show.