

Its lovely here, isn't it!

The weekend of May 18th/19th, saw us wing our way down the M4 to Swansea for the Red Dragon rally, held over some of the worlds most famous stages.

This was a first venture for the SM Rallying team to South Wales, so another step into the unknown, but not without years of visiting the area and having a reasonable knowledge of the stages.

Friday went to our normal routine of collecting the trailer from a sponsor, getting stuff ready and collecting all of the team from several corners of the county! We had a good run down, with no problems, but Leigh thought that scrutineering was at the junction after, so a quick tour of the local roundabouts ensued. We passed straight through with no problems, but had a lot of interest in our 'secondary' plumbed in extinguisher system covering just the fuel tank and pumps. Some very good comments were received. We had a slight problem at the Travelodge, but this was spotted, and sorted within minutes, so I put my hand up – My fault. Well spotted.

Friday eve was again our normal out for food and a small beer, before hitting the sack for a good nights rest. Not quite to plan, as the Travelodge we stayed at was over run by drunken young kids running riot, so an eye was kept on the cars overnight.

Saturday morning came around to early, unload car, van taken to service and management car brought back to the start. We went with a conservative wet setup, as we weren't feeling brave enough for a full block tread! The first stage was wet and muddy in places, but we were still spinning the wheels on the straight, so still not convinced about the tyres. May just be us? We felt we had a good run, and the times were not that bad. Stage 2 was again wet'ish and ended in Walters Arena. The car climbed very strongly out of the hairpins, but Walters central part around the lake, caused a few comments from the drivers side! None repeatable on here! Service was just the normal spanner check and fluids stuff.

Stage 3 was quite fast, and we passed Karen stood on the side of the stage, after Carwyn had stuck it in the trees. We had an incident on this stage as well, when we hit a large hay bale with the passenger's side of the front. Steve did very well to only hit the outside of the car. There was no way that we could fit the car between the bales. Not too much damage, so we carried on. Stage 4 was very twisty and slippery, so we aired on the side of caution, but still felt like we were quick.

Service showed not a lot of damage, so a bit of tape to hold in the indicator, and off to the final loop of stages.

Stage 5 was the long 11 miler, and we decided to keep at the steady pace, rather than go for it and throw away our championship points. We had a good run through with no mistakes, and Steve was really surprised when I shouted 'Over finish', as he felt that we were only just over half way! The run to stage 6 was quite interesting, as we took a wrong turn, but judging by the tyre marks we weren't the only crew to do the same! Stage 6 was a final dash around Walters, so a good clean run was taken and off to the finish.

The scores on the doors at the end were:

71st overall and 3rd in class B8, and we are now 10th overall in the championship and 1st in class.

Thanks to all the team, Leigh, John and Matt, and to our new little helper Alistair.

Next outing is the Dukeries Rally based in Sherwood Forest. We have a score to settle with this event, so let's hope that the good form continues.

Mark and Steve

www.smrallying.co.uk