

Anniversary trip proves lucky!

The fourth round of the BTRDA Tesco 99 Octane championship saw the SM Rallying Saxo set sail for the seaside again, to Minehead for the BETTA Somerset Stages Rally.

The weeks up to the event, have again seen work done on the Saxo with fitment of a set of Citroen Sport works front brakes plus several other small modifications. The brakes have been the sore point of the car for a while, and we were never 100% confident in them, but this has sorted the problem out. The car flew through its first MOT in the week before the event, and after a good outing to the Coleford Carnival of Transport, a feeling of excitement was felt in the team.

Friday saw us up nice and early getting the car cleaned and applying some sponsor decals on the car, while our new little helper, Alistair, sorted out wheels and tyres ready to load in the van. We loaded every thing into cars and vans and off we went down the M5 to Minehead. There were no problems on the way down, and we off loaded the car at the digs and went through scrutineering without any problems, with comments of how nice the car looked from the scrutineer. Good start to the event!

The normal evening of beer and food took place, but left us all a bit shocked when the bill was given. £62 a round! Won't be going back there in a hurry!.

I got down for breakfast in the morning, to be told that Martin had been taken to hospital feeling ill overnight! He hadn't eaten with us, so perhaps Karen's cooking skills?

We drove around to service, and setup camp for the day, then Steve and I went off to the first stage, 11 miles of Croydon. Nothing like a gentle opening to an event is their! The car performed faultlessly, and the brakes were really good, allowing a lot more control under braking. There were already some large stones getting dug out, so have to watch out later in the day.

Again, stages 2 and 3 went with no real problems, just dust and stones. Stages 5 and 6 were steps into the unknown with the Saxo, as we have never ran the car on tarmac tyres in anger before. We took it quite steadily to start, but as Steve got more confident we started to push. The corners were coming up fast and flowing, and we saw quite a few of our sponsors on the top section. The second run was even better, and we improved our time. Turned out that we had set second fastest B8 car on both stages! So much for Steve not liking tarmac!

The afternoon loops included the tricky spectator double run, and we knew that there would be loads of bales about. These had been placed exactly where you needed to cut the corners, so we took it steady.

The final stages saw sense taking over, and we aired on the edge of caution, but kept up a good pace. The stages were very rough on the second loop, so we kept out of trouble. The end of the last stage was a very welcome sight, as I had drank my drinks bottle dry, and it was not too far to the finish and a well deserved ice cream..

We were greeted at the finish by Leigh, Matt and the 2 Johns, along with Martin, Karen, Janet and Dave. A set of intermediate results were handed too us, which made for quite interesting reading. Everyone had enjoyed the day, and the comments on our pace up Porlock were encouraging.

We finished 53rd overall and 4th in class, which is our best result on a BTRDA event, but more importantly, we won the BTRDA B8 class and now lead the championship class and have jumped to 11 overall in the championship standings. Thanks to everyone in the team for you support, and off to Swansea now for the next round, the Red Dragon Rally in May.

Mark and Steve.