

PWA7C Winter Trial 2009. December 30<sup>th</sup> at Butts Quarry Ashover

Good wine is said to improve with age and airing, well there was certainly plenty of fresh Derbyshire air at Butts Quarry on December 30<sup>th</sup> and the nasal sensors were inhaling the distinctive aroma of Castrol R a fragrance perhaps not quite as 'heady' as a full bodied red but equally compelling.

The annual post Christmas Winter Trial has certainly improved with age and could possibly be ranked as 'vintage'. To be fair the Derbyshire waters had more than a little influence on the occasion more-so than a highland stream would have on a straight malt, but it would be a tardy fellow who had not enjoyed but a little of what was on offer.

2009's event would see a change of personnel with Dave Wilcox having a well earned rest from the tribulations of rules and regulations. Similarly some of the Midlands pool of support from previous years had elected to spectate and enjoy more than one hill.

The boots of these folk however, were amply filled by members from the Lincolnshire Group, led by Ian Bancroft (Meeting Secretary) together with Chairman Graham Beckett (Clerk of the Course) ably assisted by John Gray (Chief Marshal) of the Sheffield Group.

Over the last six years as the event has blossomed with increasing numbers of entrants, the administration and changes in rules etc., have made the organisation considerably daunting but there was no doubting the enthusiasm that was apparent with the new volunteers therefore ensuring the maintenance of a much enjoyed festive gem.

In keeping with previous years the entrant numbers increased and their diversity maintained. Some new faces appeared - Tom Walker in his GN, Tom Duffin in his Ulster a car incidentally previously owned by Tich Allen who was one of the founders of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club. It was particularly pleasing for Tom Duffin, he entered last years Trial too but broke the cars crank en route to Ashover so his baptism into Trialling has been on hold for the last twelve months.

On the Monday preceding the Trial adverse weather conditions began to put doubts into the minds of some of the more far flung protagonists, particularly to the west. A potential record entry of 62 eventually ran to 51 drivers in 34 cars. Youngest driver was 16, the oldest, mmmm – well who am I to divulge such sensitive details especially in view of the eventual third place person!

Competition was started promptly at 10.00am and it was obvious that the falling misty rain would have quite a bearing on some sections most notably hill 5.

The sound of well tuned high revving Austin engines was occasionally punctured by the thump of a twin cylinder GN doing its best to give its driver the benefit of differential-less traction. Everywhere the mud became thinner and all enveloping. The bright colourful display of well presented cars that had started the morning was gradually being reduced to a monotone of 'Butts Brown'.

Lunch saw an interval lead for Don Skelton closely followed by fellow Austineer Ron Bailey who in turn was just a tad in front of Fraser Nash Super Sport pilot Philip Tillyard.

Surprisingly VSCC Trials Champion Dave 'dead eye' Dye had blotted his copybook on hill 5 hitting a marker post and scoring a meagre 6. So it was going potentially down to the wire. Would it be a re-run as we had last year? That would take some beating.

In the early afternoon gloom, more rain ensued, making conditions very difficult but the essential ingredient of consistency was being practised par excellence by Don and by the finish his 3 point lunchtime advantage had been maintained allowing him to take the 1933 Thornton Query Trial Cup for the second year in succession.

Ron Bailey persisted to second place never giving up but the biggest surprise of all was Don's daughter, Sarah, in her first ever Trial beating lots of aging wrinklies, loosely referred to earlier, for third place overall and also the Ladies Cup.

What a splendid effort. A credit to the encouragement of her father Don and mother Helen this lady will be one to watch for the future.

Each year we have said the next Trial would have a hard act to follow and thus it will be for the 2010 event. Can Sarah surpass her dad, will Dave be rung out to dry again by Ron?

Join us next December for the next instalment...

Septimus