



## Going down the Mine

What a good weekend it turned out to be, even the weather wasn't that bad. It only rained overnight but I'm pleased to report that the roof of The Miners Arms is fully watertight. The huge bed was also very comfortable as well. I'll tell you more about that later though.

After getting the trial started on Sunday morning a few of us set off around the site to mark out the comp course. Rachel and Linda were driving around loaded with stakes and arrows while the rest of the party followed on hammering and stapling, and fending off an idiot on a motorbike! Why he needed to ride through a group of people is beyond me..... Needless to say, they all kept their distance after he'd realised that we were not happy, and that we had big wooden stakes, crowbars and sledgehammers in our hands!

Enough moaning, back to the plot.

It was difficult to visualise how the comp motors would cope with the course as we set out, especially for a non driver like me. As I watched Rachel and Linda drive the 110 Land Rover and our Fourtrack around the course at walking pace it was obvious that it wasn't going to be a smooth and easy drive when driven flat out.

Alan Burns had very generously offered me a ride in the passenger seat of his racer on Monday, but sadly it broke down.

To lose rear drive on the 'reccy' lap for no obvious reason in a well prepared motor was a huge disappointment for Alan, and all of us that enjoy Alan's 'enthusiastic' driving style.

But that was Monday, there was still a trial going on and we got to watch some of the afternoon sections, which was a lot of driving with 21 drivers, or 19 by then as Prys and Stephen had retired for some reason, I think they had lost drive to an axle as well.

There's a wide variety of scores on every section, but there was a wide variety of motors as well so that's to be expected I guess, although there was a clear or a one on every section, and on some sections the low scores were from drivers like Jim in Class Two, Angus in his Range Rover and the Class Five guys, which is how it should be I think. Just look at the scores for section two and eight.

That pile of concrete and rubble in the middle of the site is always good. It's been tipped out of lorries and is as lumpy as a teenagers acne.

To drive through that you need good articulation, which is the only bad point on Half Pint and gave both Frank and Alan 9 points. Alan had seen Frank perched with opposite wheels in the air and decided that the comping approach might be successful. It wasn't, and he bounced into a huge lump of concrete.

Brian nearly had an early bath as well when his 90 went it's own way and hung precariously over the putrid pond. It's a good job we have some stout lads to provide ballast!

The last section was very good, the climb up the loose stone with the ledge halfway up is always difficult, especially as you can't see the big pit at the top.

The CoC's relented and allowed everyone except Class Five to go straight up, they had their own 'dogleg' route!

Chris Spittle had other ideas though, and saw a line that made their climb a straight line as well, but it did involve a hell of a climb at the bottom!

Very spectacular, and it earned him a clear. Jo tried the same line with no luck, and Hal drove the dogleg with some fierce fiddling and scored 3.

The finish was also difficult, and many drivers looked as though they were going to roll there, but there were three clears, Chris I've already mentioned, and the others were J.P.R. and An-



gus.

And you can't get any more different motors than that - a purpose built Class Five motor with fiddle brakes and diff' locks, a 'classic' coil sprung Bowler, and a standard Range Rover with the back body chopped off.

For me, that's a perfect section when some good machines and drivers get caught early on and others, with a wide range of experience and vastly different motors, get a clear.

The sections I watched were excellent, as you expect from this crew, and I expect the mornings were no easier.

So, after the usual session of applauding the victorious drivers and talking Linda and I headed off, and for a change it was a 5 minute drive instead of a 2 hour crawl behind some old git towing a 25 foot caravan behind a Nissan Micra all the way home to Telford.

The last time we stopped at The Miners Arms at Pont-rhyd-y-groes was a couple of years ago, and it was warm and dry with food. It was somewhere to stay and absolutely nothing more, but the new owners are transforming the place, with the help of Tom Jewell's building skills, and we're looking forward to stopping there again.

To say it's changed is an understatement, the room was superb with it's en-suite bathroom, king sized bed and a TV that you could actually watch without a blizzard of interference. The food was first class, we both agreed that our steaks were the best we'd tasted this side of the Atlantic, and the full cooked breakfast, served in the new and tasteful restaurant was more than I could eat.

I don't usually do country hotel reviews, but the Miners Arms does deserve a mention, and if you live close enough to sample the locally produced food then it's well worth going.

Stuffed full of bacon and sausage we returned to Trisant on the cold Sunday morning to find a bleary eyed crowd who'd tried to sleep through heavy rain and a car rally the night before, but they were ready to race.

It was a bit disappointing to see only eight drivers sign on, but they were keen, and we had everything ready, we actually had more officials than drivers!

The ancient lead mine workings at Trisant are unforgiving, the sand and rocks wreck even the best prepared motors and Alan Burns was the first to retire when he lost rear drive on the parade lap.

Mike Jones went out on lap one and was closely followed by Ian King on lap two and Chris Riggs on five.

Every motor had problems at some time, Mark Williams blew a steering hose so Ian shot off home to get one and they finished the day.

At one point Graham Swanton was the only survivor, and once he'd got all four cylinders working in the Suzuki he was going well, I think it was his first comp as well and he was definitely going faster throughout the day, eventually knocking nearly a minute of his early lap times.

Chris Bowler was also going well in one of Malcolm Whitbread's new creations, I didn't get a chance to look at it closely but it seems as though Malcolm has been innovative once again.

There was some good driving on display as well, Mark Williams flew over the track from lap one, and that means he wasn't backing off on the climb and gaining valuable time. And you needed momentum there as the ground above the track was softer than it looked, as Chris Bowler found out when he was forced to back up and take another run at it.

The table top also provided some good photo' opportunities as drivers took to the air.

It was a tough day, and eventually only three drivers completed enough laps to qualify, and

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luckily for them they were all in different classes and scored maximum points.

That might sound as though these drivers had an easy time of it, but that was definitely not the case, they had to finish for a start, and that was no easy thing to do. And I didn't see any driver taking it easy, that's not why these guys go comping, they go to race.

Once again it was a great weekend, and there are far too many people who all worked very hard to thank individually.

It's a credit to our club that we get so much support, even for the tedious jobs as collecting and sorting the stakes and arrows after the event.

Many thanks to you all.

Dave