



Ripon Motor Sport Club Ltd

Club Newsletter

July 2012

Rallying Bajan Style – by Tim Pearcey



The offer came out of the blue – 'would you like to take advantage of a free trip to Rally Barbados?' Well I thought, I'm pretty busy but I'm sure I can fit in 10 days of sun, sand, and oh yes a bit of rallying...

The lead up to the event was fraught – with the worry of shipping a car half way round the world and the thought of something silly stopping play, the decision was made to pretty much re-build the car, including repaint, engine back to Alan Sherwood for a refresh and more power, change over to tarmac suspension, check, re-check, some appropriate livery to celebrate the jubilee..all finished just in

time for a quick run up the road before loading onto the trailer and the long trip down to Portsmouth.

David and Richard from Willowgreen very kindly offered to come down to the dock to wave goodbye to the car, though hopefully not for too long....I did wonder if we'd hear reports of a Gp 4 Escort doing donuts around the town on Saturday night, however all seemed well with a report a few days later that the car had been loaded safely onto the boat with another 20 or so other competitors.

Three weeks later 5 very excited guys boarded a plane and we were off into the unknown! Following the normal airline delays we arrived at the hotel around 10 hours later, tired but equipped with the party bus – some sort of Suzuki people carrier that struggled to break 60mph, but mercifully had air conditioning. Boy was it warm! Or humid to put it more accurately.... Talk had already begun to turn to how hot it would be in the rally car, in fireproofs and balaclavas/helmets...suddenly the prospect of 3 days in a stifling rally car didn't seem quite so enticing...

After some navigational challenges around Bridgetown we eventually found rally central (directional issues were to be a common theme of the first few days whilst we found our bearings) we were re-united with the car, and met Dave Crawford and his team. Dave had kindly agreed to look after the car and service on the event – he had a number of other cars in the rally, including the top Group N runner in an evo 9, and the well known Scotsman Alan Mackay, known throughout Barbados for his mid stage donuts! Introductions made, a few beers drunk, even more beers drunk, adjustments made on the car and we were ready for scrutineering the following day.

We'd been warned scrutineering would last all afternoon and early evening – what on earth could take that long? Well we soon found out – the answer is Bajan time keeping and their ability to make a social event out of everything. Forget scrutineering in the UK – this was an opportunity for thousands of Bajans to look at the cars, talk to the drivers, do interviews, drink beer etc....you kind of get the picture. This was also to be the service park for the following day, so the tents and groundsheet were all set up etc. Imagine my horror when I returned to find a Scottish Saltaire hanging over my car, and a highly amused pair of Scotsman in Alan Mackay and Neil Shanks grinning close by.....

We'd already recced the stage for the following day's 'King of the hill' event – a short, 2.5 mile or so stage through the cane fields on the most patched piece of road I've ever seen – not rough, just incredibly uneven, with probably a thousand tiny little patches and repairs every hundred yards or so. I was assured 'you won't feel them at speed'...

'King of the hill' was made up of 4 timed runs through the same stage, with each competitor's best time to count. The event also determined the seeding for the following weekend's rally. It's also the first chance for

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the locals to see the cars in action, and do they enjoy the action! All round the stage grandstands and viewing platforms had been erected, with barely any areas of the stage free from spectators – every corner and straight seemed people deep!

Our first run passed as a 'sighter' and to get a feel for the car – it certainly felt a lot quicker after the rebuild, and the handling felt great – we had one little moment where we got carried away and nearly left the road, but we managed to improve by 2 seconds each run to finish 2nd historic – our last run had felt great up to the point I missed a gear and then couldn't find anything but neutral for what seemed an age. Still, 3 seconds off the fastest in class was ok and gave us a decent seeding for the following weekend. We'd certainly fared better than one of the local drivers who'd gone straight on at a square right after the flying finish and totalled his Evo.....

At the end of the event everyone gathered at the finish to exchange stories, discuss their day, and yes drink some beer....very sociable this rallying thing in the Caribbean...

With no real official commitments until the following week, and with the re-prep of the car entrusted to Dave Crawford, we set about reccing the stages for the main event. The decision was made to get up early each morning, recce for 3 or 4 hours, and then retire to the beach or pool for the rest of the day. The plan worked well other than the night I decided to test the theory that there isn't much rum in rum punch...yes I was very ill..... and there is lots of rum...

The stages each had their own very unique character – the first day stages generally being tight, twisty and narrow with a rough surface. It looked like there would be loads of grip. The second day stages were the Bajan equivalent of A roads, being mostly wide, smooth, lots of long straights with a few gravelly bits. Some of the roads were through cane fields and villages, others through cuttings with very solid rock faces on both sides. The recce went well, helped by us having a set of Paul Bird's notes from the previous year – we did however have to stop for a family of monkeys to cross the road on one stage (never seen that in Wales!) and were also highly amused to pass a dump for 'Blood and grease' a little further on. The road seemed especially slippery at that point....

Anyway the day finally came, and after a few panics over tyres and other bits and pieces, we were off. It quickly became clear that the grip was pretty good, the bumps and surface were fine, Andrew Siddall and I were going to be very closely matched in the historics, and the Bajan drivers are very spectacular but quite likely to crash!

Unfortunately we were delayed starting most of the stages due to a combination of crashes and sheer number of spectators meaning crowd control was difficult. We soon found the knack of parking the car up in the shade and keeping out of the sun – this made the heat bearable but still very uncomfortable. Think the phrase 'you stink' was used more than once in the car....

Still the stages were great fun, and due to multiple runs of all stages during the day, we became familiar with the roads and got faster and faster and braver as we got more miles under our belt. Only one moment of note when a bump taken at speed on a fast left threatened to straighten us up and pitch us into the fence and field, but we survived with a slice of luck and bit of the verge...oh and I tried very hard to crash on the last corner of the last stage in the dark....

All went well with the car not missing a beat during the first day – unfortunately the final run of the most popular stage had to be cancelled due to spectators spilling onto the road – we did drive through at speed and it gave us our first chance to truly appreciate how many people had come out to watch – literally thousands, mostly dancing, drinking beer and partying, women in bikini's.....just like the Riponian really....

We were concerned about the second day – the nature of the roads meant our car did not have enough top speed – our main competitors, both of whom had competed on the rally previously, had their differentials changed overnight to give them another 20mph or so. The gap of only a couple of seconds between us and first historic would disappear as soon as we hit the first long straight for sure.

Still it was clear Andrew Siddall was trying hard – a 50 metre overshoot into a cane field on the first stage

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when he misheard a note gave us a 15 second lead. He claimed to have got lost in the 10 foot high sugar cane and couldn't find his way out....meanwhile our fears had come to pass as we were flat out less than a third of the way down the straights, and having looked down and seen 9750 revs at one point, decided there was nothing we could do but back off and maybe hold onto second historic.

One very close call with some concrete blocks at the main spectator point was the only moment of note on the second stage, until I noticed a blue MK1 escort parked up at the end of a long straight – it was Andrew Siddall, whose gearbox had literally exploded....clearly he was out and if we could hold our position we would win the historic – the South African driver, Geoff Bell, was closet to us and about 40 seconds behind, but only matching our times and at a loss to explain his lack of pace.

We set about holding station and not doing anything stupid, whilst overcoming a few personal demons and taking some of the 5th gear corners absolutely flat out – I'd been wimping out earlier in the day...

Two stages to go, we cruised over the finish line, got our time, and tried to pull away. Stall! What? Start up, engine sounded awful, not on 4 cylinders, seemed sick as a dog....we managed to limp back to service, puzzled as to what had gone wrong – oil pressure ok, water temperature ok....surely we wouldn't have to retire with 2 stages to go? No sooner had we stopped when seemingly half the service area descended on the car – plugs, dizzy cap, ignition, coil all changed, but no better. Compression check, all seemed ok, endoscope down the bores, all seemed ok. Lots of head scratching and we were running out of time, having used most of our lateness. Quick run up the road to see if problem any better – the car pulled like a train over 5000 revs, but sounded decidedly sick up to 5000 revs. Decision made– shut the bonnet, carry on, watch the gauges like a hawk, any signs of any other problems and switch off. Must be a fuel problem everyone concluded....

The final two stages felt like they were going on forever –the car seemed ok, and still quick. All was well until halfway through the last stage – we were catching the car in front and would be with him before the stage finish. Coming into the spectator viewing point the car in front disappeared, and as we came round the corner, there he was, doing donuts on the stage for the crowd....deep breath, blast past him mid donut....much swearing and nervous laughter as we'd missed him by no more than a couple of foot! That would have been a seriously bad ending to our adventure...

We'd finished first in class, 19th overall, top newcomer – not bad at all for our first trip – yes it's very likely we will be back next year, it really is that good. If you can only afford to do one rally a year, make it this one, after the Riponian of course!

Finally I need to say thank you to everyone who made the trip happen – Colin Heppenstall, The Barbados Rally Club, Dave and Jeanne Crawford who made us so welcome, David and Richard at Willowgreen, Dunlop who helped with tyres, Signs Express Harrogate (Jubilee livery), my dad for painting the car, running around to pick up stuff and doing loads of little jobs, Fred Beckwith for helping prep the car, and Kirsty for packing my case! Rallying in the UK will never be quite the same again....





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RMSC Members achieving results on recent events (congratulations to all):

MSA July British Championship Hillclimb	Tracey Taylor-West	2 nd Class 2E Best Time: 65.97
Jim Thompson Hillclimb	Tracey Taylor-West	5 th Class 2E Best Time: 80.06
Turnbull Trophy Rally	Paul/Chris Alsop	13 th o/a & 2 nd in Class
	Geoff Simpson/Mick Johnson	9 th o/a & 8 th in Class
RSAC Scottish Historic Rally	Charlie Taylor/Steve Bielby	2 nd o/a & 2 nd in Class H3
	Chris Blake/Tony Walker	9 th o/a & 3 rd in Class H2
	Kari Bosworth	12 th o/a & 5 th in Class H2
Greystoke Stages Rally	Matthew Robinson	4 th o/a & 1 st in Class
	Charlie Taylor/Steve Bielby	12 th o/a & 4 th in Class
	Kari Bosworth	31 st o/a & 4 th in Class
Nicky Grist Stages (formerly Quinton)	Matthew Robinson	12 th o/a & 1 st in B12
(commiserations to Tom Jordan and Charlotte Banner – "engine failed")		

Forthcoming Events

(Events in red marked "M" are appealing for Marshals. Please check with organisers before travelling)

July	20-22	Silverstone Classic Racing Festival	http://www.silverstoneclassic.com/
	29	Classic Car Gathering	Ripon Race Course www.riponclassiccargathering.org
	29	Shepshed AutoSolo	Loughborough http://www.loughboroughcarclub.co.uk/
August	M 4	Practical Training Day	Fulbeck Airfield http://www.anemmc.org/ or see below
	5	Phoenix Stages	Fulbeck Airfield phoenix.stages@btinternet.com
	12	Tyneside Stages	Otterburn www.alnwickmotorclub.co.uk/tyneside-stages-rally
M		radio marshals/RalliTrak operators contact	Lindsay Burnip 07727 098450
		stage marshals contact	Darren Smith darren.smith@jimclarkrally.com
	26	Mewla Rally	Epynt www.epyntmc.co.uk/news.php
September	1	Woodpecker Stages	Ludlow & Radnor www.woodpecker-rally.co.uk
M	2	Durham Dales Classic	Sunderland marshals please contact Peter Sewell ssewell15@hotmail.com
	8	Lincoln Green Stages	Blyton Woods http://www.lincolngreenstagesrally.co.uk
M	15	Lindisfarne Stages	Otterburn www.tynemouthmotorclub.co.uk
		radio marshals contact:	Lindsay Burnip 07727 098450,
		stage marshals contact:	John Telford jtelford@googlemail.com
	13-16	Wales Rally GB	Llandudno to Cardiff www.walesrallygb.com
	22-23	Harewood Speed Hillclimb Golden Jubilee	www.harewoodhill.com
M	28-29	Trackrod Rally Yorkshire	www.trackrodmotorclub.co.uk/ryhome.html
		radio marshals contact:	Chrys Worboys, chrysworboys@hotmail.com
		RalliTrak operators contact	Pete Baker pete.baker@rallitrak.com
	30	Patriot Stages Rally	Caerwent www.forresterscarclub.co.uk
November	4	Malton Forest Rally	Pickering, Cropton, etc. www.maltonmc.co.uk/mfr2011.html
M		Radio contacts as Trackrod.	
M	4	UTS Cheviot Keith Knox Stages , Otterburn	Lindsay Burnip 07727 098450