

Plains

Reckoned to be one of the best road events in Britain this rally, run by the Knutsford and District Motor Club proved to be very tough with the pressure being kept on right from start to finish—so tough, in fact, that of the 117 starters there were only 35 crews classified as finishers.

Being a round in the championship of a well-known weekly motoring newspaper, the rally attracted all the top names, and leading the field away from the muddy start near Welshpool were George Hill and Keith Wood in the familiar Martin Group Viva. Frank Pierson did not turn up at number two, so navigator Colin Francis brought along Les Watkin in his Escort RS—and they were to prove the sensation of the night. Thomas Motors of Blackpool had entered John Edwards-Parton/Don Davidson at number three, whilst at four was an unusual car in rallying—the Allegro of Don Kettleborough/Dennis Osborne. Cyril Bolton/Paul White moved up from their original number 11 seeding to take over number 5 in their Mini Sport Mini when Ron Shipp/Dave Whiteley failed to show up in the Firenza whilst at 6 were Bill Gwynne/Terry Thorpe, another quick Escort crew.

Another unusual BLMC rally car, the eight port Marina of Philip Cooper/Dave Orrick started at 7, followed by Ted Cowell/Julian Chitty in the RS 2000. Rounding off the top ten were Mick Briant/John McKerrell and Lakeland Motor's Peter Edwards/Nigel Hunter, both crews being in Escort RS's.

The Shawspeed Fiat of Keith Jenkins/Ken Jones came in from the reserve list to take over number 11, followed by Demon Tweaks Bryan Roe/Peter Forrester in the group 1 Mexico. At number 13 were Martin Watson/Jeff Hignett in the Escort, followed by another group one car—the Red Garages' Avenger G.T. of Colin Mack/David Thomas. Jim Bullough was making a return to rallying, with Barry Hughes at number 15 in an RS 2000, followed by the 1600 Anglia of John and Stephanie Mason. Well-known names continued down the list, with Chris Beddow at 17, John Parsons 18, Keith Watkinson 20 and John Haden at 25—who turned up on his Land-Rover, much to the dismay of

Lawrence Wells who was seeded one behind!

Leading semi, at number 42 was the Kirkby Motors Clubman 'S' of Graham Bloor/Aleastair Chalmers, followed by Terry Woodcock's Escort and eventual class winners Peter Taylor/Jim Bothwell's Cooper 'S'. Then came the flying Hereford crew—Peter Gerbez/Dave Hurds in another Clubman and the Toyota Celica G.T. of Gerallt Evans/Edwyn Evans.

Leading novices were Martin Chapman/David Thomas at 69 in a BP Super Visco-entered Imp, followed by M. Davies/R. Hargreaves' Cortina and the Capri of Dave Davies/T. E. Davies. Eventual class-winners Tony Shute/Steve Wright were at 72 in their Viva Driver's Club entered Vauxhall Magnum.

From the start a short loop north of Welshpool took crews onto map 125 with a twisty run down the yellows and whites of the south-eastern corner and to map 136. The difficult slot into Stingwern hill is now clearly defined on the metric maps, but didn't prevent a few wrong-slots whilst further a little on the route went through the field in 0203 causing a lot of trouble. This section almost brought to a standstill the Oslo Trophy rally a couple of years back, and it was only thanks to the police that it had to be used on the Plains. There are so many official black spots in the area that this was the only road available, and the Police refused permission for the organisers to P.R. any of the black spots to see if

they could run the rally another way. Although the section through the field was very slackly timed, many crews got stuck and consequently the time loss was too great to be recovered as there were no relaxed sections at all in the event.

Escort crew Nelson/Riddle got carried away going across the field—they caught and passed the Evans/Evans Toyota only to fall onto its side and the sight of a 13' long Escort going through a 10' wide gateway on its side was unbelievable!

The Cooper/Orrick Marina did nasties to its propshaft trying to get round a non-competing car which was stuck, whilst a couple of Land-Rover owners did a roaring trade in extracting crews from difficulty.

Back onto map 125 the route went to petrol at Llanerfyl. Already out were Kettleborough/Osborne, Bolton/White who had damaged the front end, Cowell/Chitty with various maladies and Jenkins/Jones' Fiat

which had split the manifold. Ron Beswick retired the Imp having an off-night, whilst John Morris/Richard Tomkinson retired with damage to the front-end of the Escort RS.

Hill was leading the event along with Briant, both on 7 minutes, with Watkin and Edwards-Parton breathing down their necks, whilst also well up were Gwynne on 10 along with Roe, and Mack/Thomas on 12.

Immediately after petrol came two selectives—the first just south of Llangadfan on which Hill dropped 3.55 with Gwynne, Briant, Bullough, Mack and Wilson the only others under five minutes.

The second selective used the muddy whitethrough 9812 and the not-as-map yellows round to 9912. Again Hill set fastest time, dropping 2.42 with Gwynne on 3.03, Briant and Bullough both on 3.04. Wilson on 3.18 and Mack on 3.19. More tight Targa sections followed, moving gradually westwards across the map to the third selective south of Llanfyllin. Once again it was Hill with a penalty of 3.28 with Gwynne both on 4.07 Bullough on 4.09, Watkins on 4.17 and novice crew Shute/Wright getting into the leader-board on 4.57.

The route then headed up the eastern side of map 125 with a short petrol halt near Llanrhedr-ym-Mochnant before the long grassy white through 1228 and a loop round to take crews back to map 126. Reading northwards up 126 to the west of Oswestry the route gave no time for mistake or for cutting. With only a few controls to go Edwards-Parton, who was really trying hard took off over a grass bank to land the right way up, fortunately in a field, whilst Watkin/Francis had been spotted shooting over a give-way line—strange as Colin Francis is one of the advocates of the rule!

The route then took competitors off one map and onto the next a few times before finally ending near Vivod, followed by a run to Corwen where the crews who were successful in completing the course were really in need of a rest.

A more demanding event would be impossible, but everyone was full of praise to the organisers for such a fantastic rally.

George Hill/Keith Wood became the first crew to have won the event twice, whilst Bill Gwynne/Terry Thorpe became second crew for the second year running, in the same car. A brilliant performance by novice crew Shute/Wright brought them into tenth place overall, one place ahead of leading Semi crew Taylor/Bothwell. Only fourteen crews managed to get round without a fail.

DAVID THOMAS

Results:

1. George Hill/Keith Wood (Viva)	33.06
2. Bill Gwynne/Terry Thorpe (Mexico)	42.48
3. Mick Briant/John McKerrell (RS 2000)	48.52
4. J. Bullough/B. Hughes (RS 2000)	52.48
5. B. Roe/P. Forrester (Mexico)	57.53
6. Gerdi Fricke/Martyn Wainrow (Viva G.T.)	58.54
7. C. Mack/D. Thomas (Avenger G.T.)	60.21
8. K. Watkinson/A. Greenwood (Mexico)	65.31
9. J. Harris/T. Cork (Viva Estate)	72.27
10. T. Shute/S. Wright (Magnum)	73.59

Semi-Experts:

1. P. Taylor/J. Bothwell (Cooper 'S')	75.20
2. P. Gerbez/D. Hurds (Clubman 'S')	1F 75.40
3. R. Sheard/M. Doran (Anglia)	5F 93.21

Novices:

1. T. Shute/S. Wright (Magnum)	73.59
2. H. Davies/M. Hawkins (Escort)	3F 88.01
3. J. Ayres/S. Appleton (Cooper)	.9F 117.32

Fastest over selectives:

Experts:

George Hill/Keith Wood (Viva)

Semis:

Peter Gerbez/Dave Hurds (Clubman 'S')

Novices:

Tony Shute/Steve Wright (Magnum)



B. Roe/P. Forrester on their way to 5th overall



Tony Shute/Steve Wright in their Magnum