

Mark Hoppé at home as ever on a slippery surface in his Suzuki Alto



Evening Production Car Autotest Clay Pigeon, Warden Hill, Evershot Hoppé takes victory on the flat

Words and photos: GEOFF PICKETT

Enduring dry and settled weather conditions must have given autotest Clerk of the Course Gary Morris hope that the return of autotesting to the Woolbridge calendar would be blessed with a warm sunny evening (Friday June 30th) at the Clay Pigeon Raceway/George Albert Hotel on the A37 between Dorchester and Yeovil.

Unfortunately Warden Hill became shrouded in cloud and mist to such an extent that the far reaches of the tests, to be run on grass which had grown to about sixty centimeters, were barely visible from the startline as drivers walked the course in preparation for the ensuing competition. The cloud base did lift at the conclusion of the driver's briefing and the event got under way with two dyke style tests which were destined to provide much fun and amusement and hopefully without the 'wear and tear' on gearboxes, the drive-train and tyres which is usually associated with such events run of tarmacadam or concrete surfaces.



Mini man Clive Morgan finished fourth overall



Charlie Dovey learning RWD/LSD skills

For more recent members who may not be familiar with a Production Car Autotest it is a low speed test of precision car control against the clock and is a motor sport discipline currently promoted by Motorsport UK under the 'Streetcar' title which promotes the use of street legal cars. The course is defined by cones or pylons and includes tight ninety degree and 360° spin turns which are most efficiently executed with the use of a handbrake, particularly in a front wheel drive car. Time penalties are applied to a competitor's times for hitting a cone, taking the wrong route, not stopping with all four wheels in the 'finish box' or jumping the start. In addition the event regulations mandated that a front seat passenger be carried during the competition and as per Motorsport UK rules all persons in a competing car must hold a RS Clubmans which is readily available online and free of charge.

The lion of the Peugeot badge dates back to 1847 (which makes it the oldest car emblem in the world) but probably of little import to Stewart Green who took his 106 to second overall - a mere 1.2 seconds ahead of Will Lawrence's 206



Brendon Hampshire opposite locks Volvo 340

A convoy run for all competitors helped to flatten the grass which in turn made following the prescribed route that much easier but the rain returned and grip, or more correctly the lack of it, became an issue irrespective of whether you were conducting a front wheel or rear wheel drive machine. Considering the majority of the drivers were car trials competitors and therefore familiar with a paucity of traction, where was the problem!

The first test gave an indication as to the main players in Class A, which catered for cars having an engine capacity up to 1400 cc, with Mark Hoppé clocking 29.9s and seizing an early advantage of one tenth of a second in his Suzuki Alto over the Peugeot 106 of Stewart Green who in turn led David Mears in his Volkswagen Polo. Clive Morgan had a slow start in his Mini and collected penalties on the second test for contact with a marker cone but then got his eye in and by the fifth test was recording class leading times with a 28.6s effort and reducing the margin to the leading duo. David and Alfie Mears gave their Volkswagen Polo, usually seen on trials events, an outing and the class was completed by Brendan Hampshire who conducted his Volvo 340 with great vigour which often required a rapid application of opposite lock to maintain the chosen course. Hoppé maintained his pace throughout the seventeen tests to secure not only victory in Class A but overall with a total time of 495.7s which gave him a comfortable margin over Stewart Green who finished on 528.9s and third placed Morgan on 531.6s. David and Alfie Mears completed the evening with just four and a half seconds splitting the father and son duo.



Will Lawrence took a third place finish in 206

Brendon Hampshire opposite locks Volvo 340

Safari style autotest for Merv Brake and his Mazda MX5 more regularly seen hillclimbing and sprinting



		CLAY PIGEON ALL FORWARD PRODUCTION CAR AUTOTEST - FRIDAY JUNE 30th 2023																										
		Test 1	Test 2	Pen	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Pen	Test 6	Pen	Test 7	Test 8	Test 9	Pen	Test 10	Pen	Test 11	Test 12	Test 13	Pen	Test 14	Test 15	Test 16	Pen	TOTAL	O/A	Class Pos'n	
CLASS A																												
Clive Morgan	Mini	35.0	41.6	C	29.6	28.4	28.6	27.9	35.7	35.6	34.9	32.2	32.1	33.1	35.9	34.1	34.9	32.0	531.6	4	3							
Brendan Hampshire	Volvo 340	35.7	35.1	33.6	33.6	33.3	36.2	43.6	41.6	41.2	49.8	36.9	37.8	40.6	39.9	42.0	49.5	C	630.4	10	6							
Stewart Green	Peugeot 106	30.0	28.5	30.0	29.0	31.2	28.7	36.6	36.0	32.8	34.9	35.8	32.7	36.2	35.6	35.6	35.3	528.9	2	2								
David Mears	VW Polo	32.6	30.9	31.8	28.7	30.0	28.8	37.1	35.8	34.8	43.1	N	34.2	32.4	34.2	32.4	34.0	32.7	533.5	5	4							
Alfie Mears	VW Polo	35.3	32.6	32.5	29.9	32.1	28.9	37.8	34.4	35.8	33.4	34.2	32.2	34.2	32.2	37.1	35.4	538.0	6	5								
Mark Hoppé	Suzuki Alto	29.9	26.3	28.4	27.6	29.5	27.6	35.4	33.3	30.6	32.9	30.1	31.2	35.0	33.6	32.0	32.3	495.7	1	1								
CLASS B																												
Merv Brake	Mazda MX-5	37.8	28.8	29.9	32.5	32.2	40.3	c	34.6	41.3	32.9	37.3	36.3	36.8	35.3	37.8	35.3	37.2	566.3	8	3							
Charlie Dovey	Escort RS	56.0	86.0	WR	40.0	31.5	33.4	30.0	46.1	41.6	39.1	51.6	c	44.6	36.9	48.6	c	37.8	38.5	39.3	701.0	12	6					
Geoff Lang	Escort RS	48.9	33.5	43.4	35.8	44.0	32.0	42.6	43.8	52.8	c	37.6	41.8	33.8	37.2	49.1	36.7	39.4	652.4	11	5							
Tim Dovey	Toyota MR2	29.0	30.1	36.5	29.5	27.8	27.9	36.7	33.2	39.6	36.2	33.6	34.5	34.2	35.1	41.8	36.8	542.5	7	2								
Will Dovey	Toyota MR2	30.7	31.6	32.5	29.3	29.0	c	30.2	35.9	36.4	36.5	35.5	33.2	35.0	41.0	44.8	37.4	37.1	599.3	9	4							
Will Lawrence	Peugeot 206	31.5	38.6	N	27.3	31.8	66.0	30.2	36.1	32.9	33.4	34.3	33.2	33.7	34.8	44.9	35.3	36.0	530.1	3	1							
Roz Wilson Carr	Non-Starter																		0									
Richard Wilson	Non-Starter																		0									
John Kirby	Non-Starter																		0									
Emma Kirby	Non-Starter																		0									

C: Time includes penalty for hitting a cone. WR: Includes penalty for a wrong test. N: Includes penalty for not stopping with all 4 wheels in finish box



Rally specification Escort was not ideally suited to the conditions but provided fun for drivers Geoff Lang and Charlie Dovey plus their passengers