



## SCARCE NEWS No 23 ( November 2014 )

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November saw two SCARCE entries on the V.S.C.C. Lakeland Trial - SCARED TEAM 1 comprising driver Mike Littlewood in his 1930 Model A Ford Fordor, with Martin Bradbury navigating, and Gerard Marsden and Deryck Pickup fulfilling bumping weight duties on the back seat.



SCARED TEAM 2 (In period dress and crates of Moonshine ) with Alistair Littlewood in his 1930 Model A Ford Tudor and his old college chums Jason Brown and Luke Shield fulfilling navigating and bouncing duties, swapping over part way through. In Alistair's Model A the front passenger is required to hold the handbrake in the off position with one foot and hold the gear lever in 1st gear with one hand! The handbrake has been known to flick on when going over the rough stuff in the past and the gearbox likes to knock out of gear (mainly in 2nd gear on the

road, but it's a good precaution). Rear passenger is obviously main bouncer.

Our base was the Old Posting House at Deanscales near Cockermouth, at which we arrived at about 9.30 on the Friday night to a warm welcome from the landlord who had managed to persuade his chef to wait on until we arrived to ensure we were fed. We managed to down a pint of Jennings Best Bitter whilst the grub was being prepared though, as one should never eat on an empty stomach!



Daft o'clock the following morning saw us unloading the cars from the trailers and driving to our designated signing-on point at Hobcarton Forest, where our scrutineering also took place. The entry was full with 100 cars.



It should be pointed out that the object of the exercise is to drive the car, full of passengers, as far as possible up a ridiculously steep muddy hill that would deter any self-respecting mountain goat, until either the top is reached, or forward motion is lost in an ignominious cacophony of revving engine and spinning wheels. The hills are marked out with flags numbered from 1 to 25, and points are given according to the flag number reached, i.e. if you get all the way up then 25 points are awarded. On most of the hills the passengers are

then ejected at the top in order that they may observe their driver struggle to reverse back down the track he has just ascended.

It will be appreciated that this can be quite a time consuming procedure, so a rota system is operated such that at the hill opening time of 9.00a.m somebody will be ready to ascend each one of the fourteen hills. Our start hill was in Whinlatter Forest and called Hill 24, for a reason presumably known to someone, somewhere, but not us.

When we reached Hill 24 we discovered that not only was it our first hill, but it had never been used before and we were the first car ever to use it. The reasons for this were fairly obvious to me in that it bore not the slightest resemblance to anything that anyone in their right mind would think of presenting a car to, let alone one eighty-four years old. It bore more resemblance to a not-so-dried-up riverbed than anything else.

Rear tyre pressures were reduced to 12 psi to improve traction before we lined up on the start line and were given permission to start in our own time.

So, a large application of right boot to get all forty horses excited, clutch up and all hell lets loose.

As this was my first time at one of these events I was amazed at how quick this car was off the line, and how well it dealt with the incredibly rough surface of this grass covered house-end.

Buttocks were duly applied with force to the back seat to try and increase traction but forward motion ceased at flag no 19. It was then I discovered that obtaining egress through rear-hinged suicide doors with the car facing up a forty-five degree slope requires the use of either a block and tackle, or a Martin. Martin duly did his best block and tackle impression and I popped out of the car like a champagne cork from a bottle. This then became one of Martin's duties for the rest of the day.



SCARED 2 were the next to go and they also scored 19.

The next hill was much easier and both cars scored 25 points.

Before tackling our third hill we had to blow the tyres back up to 32psi as we had to traverse the public road to get back to Hobcarton Forest where the next 7 hills were located. To accomplish this both cars carried electric compressors powered by portable power packs.

The third hill presented no problems and both cars again scored the full 25 points.

Our fourth hill, Graystones, was also cleanable but halfway up there was a stop and restart which would not ordinarily have been a problem. However, after setting off again we went a couple of metres and the engine stalled and all forward motion ceased at a score of 13. It turned out that the advance/retard quadrant on the steering wheel had been knocked during the ascent and whilst the engine still pulled strongly at higher revs, at low revs it would not pull away. Eee we were reight vexed! Unfortunately for Alistair his car also had a problem restarting so the scores were still equal. The next two hills were cleaned by both cars, but the next one, Long Crag, turned out to be a reight slutchy brew, and forward motion ceased at Flag 18. Alistair made 17, so the Father/Son battle was now one point up to father. Both cars made 20 on the next one, then parity was restored on Grisedale where Alistair scored 12 to our 11. The next hill gave both crews 25 points each, but the one after that had another stop/restart. This time we were wise to the advance/retard lever and



restarting was accomplished satisfactorily resulting in another 25 points. Alistair's engine though was still sulking at having to stop and refused to set off again giving a score of 19. As two of the original hills had to be cancelled owing to access problems, this left us with only one hill to go, the famous Drumhouse Hill at Honister Slate Mine. This hill is totally different to those we encountered so far, being an ascent on loose shale and slate to the top of a hairpin littered 1 in 3 climb to 2200ft in about a

half mile length.( Start shown by arrow)

A combination of Mike's driving, Henry's unstoppable chugging and vigorous buttock application resulted in another 25 points for SCARED TEAM 1. Unfortunately Alistair's engine problems resulted in a lack of forward motion at Flag 16.

Solace was taken however in the slate mine cafe, where we all sheltered from the drizzle rain behind slabs of lemon drizzle cake.

In due course we arrived at the finish venue, the Wheatsheaf Inn at Lorton, where the words rammed, packed-out etc. did not even begin to convey the numbers of people crammed into this not overly small pub. Between 3 and 5.00p.m. on Saturday this place definitely had the highest character/square metre quotient of anywhere in the country! We managed to get a drink and then retired outside to watch the remainder of the competitors roll in. This was when we appreciated that we had been in a saloon car all



day. Some of the returning crews in open two seaters looked as if they had all been covered in chocolate, except it wasn't chocolate, it was mud! You could only tell where the vehicle finished and the person started if they had wiped their goggles and you could see the reds of their eyes!

Eventually the results were announced. 1st; 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> class awards were given in each class arrived at by some mysterious process known only to the organisers. Both SCARED entries were in the same class, that for standard cars with long wheelbase.

Out of 9 cars in the class 3 won 3<sup>rd</sup> class awards, 1 (SCARED TEAM 1) won a 2<sup>nd</sup> class and 1 a 1<sup>st</sup> class award.

SCARED 1 had a total of 256 out of 300 and SCARED 2 241. The car that won the 1<sup>st</sup> class award had a score of 270, 14 more than us, of which 12 points were scored on the hill where we failed the restart, leaving us only 2 points behind, so we are in the right ballpark. (An American expression in deference to our use of an American car, even if it was made in this country).

To put this in context I should point out that the event was won by a young lady driving the oldest car on the event, a 1919 twin cylinder 1100cc GN. Her score was 297 out of 300, only dropping 3 points all day. A remarkable performance which this year completed her hat-trick of wins on this event.

The weekend was rounded off by a cracking meal and celebrations back at the Old Posting House and a leisurely drive home on the Sunday.

Roll on the next do in the Cotswolds!! DERYCK

## A Rave from the Grave.

I've been having a bit of a rummage through stuff from way back and discovered these extremely grainy and poor photographs of what I was driving in 1967. I did not possess a camera in those days and I must have either borrowed one to take these photos or got somebody else to do it. Either way they're pretty crappy, some aren't even pointing the right way!

Anyway, the car was a 1952 MG YB chassis fitted with homebuilt open 4-seater tourer bodywork. I should stress at this point that I had nothing whatsoever to do with its construction, I bought the car as a going concern in running order. I think £60 if memory serves. At some point in its life the car had been owned by a sheet metal worker who had constructed a beautiful stainless steel radiator grille and also an exhaust system.



The registration was from University Motors in London who seemed to have a hold on UMG's. This is where the original YB came from.

If I had had the presence of mind to take a picture with the bonnet lid removed then you would have seen resplendent in all its splendour a 1948 Vauxhall Velox six, of about 2.2 litres. I think it may have been around 60bhp.



In its original home the Vauxhall would have been fitted with a column change, so a floor change conversion had been fabricated. See below. ( I know, you thought it was from a Ferrari didn't you ). In practice it was fairly pointless, as the car was quite capable of setting off in top gear anyway ( it only had 3 ) , bottom gear being reserved for starting on a 1 in 3 with a full steam train on tow, and also for breaking halfshafts which happened more than once. In those days you simply got another from a scrapyard.



It only had one door on the nearside, below which ran the exhaust system. I remember giving a lad a lift home from college and as he was getting out he must have felt a pain on the back of his leg, which he thought was caused by a protruding nail, so he put his hand down to free the nail and burnt his fingers as well. Poor lad never asked for a lift again!

All in all it was a real fun car and I ran it for two four months road tax. ( In those days you could tax a car for four months or twelve, so financial reasons meant four months at a go ). It finished up with a 2.4 litre Jaguar engine but never hit the road again through a succession of subsequent owners, and was responsible for my next car being a Jag!

Deryck.