

T R A C K

March 2020



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Durham Automobile Club

Est 1952



As I type this I am acutely aware that everything I say will be out of date by the time you read it. We have just seen the Australian GP postponed, the Mexico WRC round cut short and a host of other sporting events and fixtures postponed.

I think the only thing I can say that will still be pertinent is...wash your hands!

We seem to be playing, in real life, the first 15 minutes of most recent disaster films. Those faux news reports outlining the descent into chaos from a minor glitch, the snowballing of an unfortunate series of events and whilst your expecting Tom Cruise to appear on a ridge staring into the eyes of oblivion, nobody expected him to be weighed down with 96 rolls of Andrex!

I tend to class myself as a pragmatic optimist, I support Middlesbrough FC, my favourite band is Marillion and I am celiac, if that doesn't mark me out as someone who embraces all that life can fling at you I don't know what does!

Whilst its true that we have some challenging times ahead, its important to realise that many of things we get foamy mouthed about are an irrelevance. The spread of this virus will have lasting effects on our lives, some of which we will be unable to reverse. Our communities will need to come together and accept that some things are beyond the powers of social media or just shouting loudly.

I have every faith that some of the spirit that we are reknowned for will kick in. I am also sure that we will become aware of just how fragile our society is and some people will let the side down, people will seek to gain an advantage and some to profit from this period of change.

For many of us whilst we may end with the time to work on our hobbies, we may not be able to spend the money in progressing things forward. We may find that the supply chain will fail us in that respect anyway with stockists and shortages denying us of clevis pins and "O" rings.



There will be casualties and the effects will be felt for a long time. We can all remember how Foot and Mouth, the fuel crisis and then Foot and Mouth changed our sport, but they were minor compared to the potential we have here. It would appear the closest we can compare it to would be that of Global War.

Economically we are headed for uncertain times, the joined up globalisation that runs our lives is exposed for the arrogance its run on, each countries soft white underbelly cruelly exposed as one by one the borders to frictionless trade slam shut.

When the dust settles, and it surely will, the human body is an amazing thing, many will survive this, many already vulnerable to seasonal flu will be acutely aware of their own mortality anyway, they have already lived with this fear, but we will carry on, we must.

Our communities and those weaker, less well prepared will need us to be better than we are today, better than we were yesterday.

Any advantage you seek to create may well be taken away just as swiftly.

I wish everyone reading this the best wishes possible, lets hope we are able to just moan about cancelled events and a few wasted opportunities when normality once again strides back in as nothing had ever happened.

Alan Hawdon
Editor



THINGS TO DO IN 2020

CONTINUE DAC MEMBERSHIP



APPLY FOR YOUR

COMPETITION LICENCE

At the start of the year I competed in two rallies at Croft, the Christmas Stages and the Jack Frost Stages.

A welcome surprise being no ice or snow this year and both events were dry-ish, the outcomes however couldn't have been more different.

Ed had the engine on the Wee beastie (GTM) repaired ready for the Christmas stages but after much arm twisting from me, he bought one of my all-time favourite rally cars, a Darrian (Dazza).

Now most people who know me, know I'm a big lad...so getting into the GTM is only possible because I'm very flexible.

Well when Dazza arrived I was surprised to find the entry and cabin space is less than the GTM.

So I've had to devise a new way of entering the Darrian because as I get older my body is much less flexible. There will be a report on the rallies above later.

Hexham & DMC's John Robson Rally was held on February 22nd.

A few Durham members were out "playing" in the lanes of Northumberland.

John Nicholson was out in his newly built mini and finished 5th overall in the Historic section.

Andrew Grimstone, guided by Andrew Hutchinson, new to the navigation rally silly seat, had a bit of a mare from the word go.

A wrong slot meant they went full circle and ended up back at the control they had just left. The Marshals were shutting down the control and were surprised to see them again.

They finally went OTL and headed back to the finish venue for a consolation pint. Don't worry Andrew H, it will get better with more experience.

Simon Jennings and Colin Fish were supporting the event by driving as the fast closing car. Driving 30 mins behind the last competitor didn't mean they finished any faster and it was a long night for them.

But they did get to see some very interesting tracks off the road.

A reminder that 2020 membership opened on 1 February and at the end of March any 2019 member who has not renewed will cease to receive emails from the club.

So if you want to stay in touch with events and information you will need to renew your membership.

Of course you can re-join the club at any time throughout the year but on the 1st April you will stop receiving emails from the club until you re-join.

The Wearside Classic will again be held at the Nissan plant on 6th September and once again we will be looking for marshals and competitors. As I have said many times now, this is a great event at a North East landmark and you can use your normal day to day car. No specials or rally cars required just turn up and have a good days sport.

If you would like to compete or marshal on the day, then please contact Gordon Dundee using the contact details that will appear on Facebook or the club website nearer the time.

Apologises but we are still pulling together the club events calendar for the year. But we hope to finalise the calendar soon and issue it out to the members.

If you would like to run an event for the club please contact any member of the committee using the contact details at the end of this magazine.

Have a good and safe month

Andy Brown
Chairman





INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

Coronavirus, there really isn't another story currently.

I'm typing this on March 15th so whatever I say will have been completely overtaken by events before anyone reads it. Already we've seen the F1 season abandoned probably until June at the earliest. The day after organisers announced the Geneva Motor Show was going ahead they announced it wasn't to the fury of manufacturers who lost a fortune as a result.

Rally Mexico has been shortened, Rally Argentina postponed and future WRC rounds are in severe doubt. Ferrari are closing both their F1 and road car production departments for at least two weeks.

The virus started in China of course and the effect on the industry there has been dramatic. China is now the World's largest car market (or was until Coronavirus arrived). In February 80% of Chinese car dealers were closed and the remaining 20% did little business with new car sales 92% down on February 2019. Now 80% of the showrooms are open but mainly with skeleton staff and doing little business.

This is really hurting manufacturers already reeling from reducing sales in many markets (like the UK) and the vast investment required for the development of electric and self-driving cars.

Now the same virtual stop in car sales is happening in Italy, Spain and to an extent France. Whilst in the UK we don't (yet?) have the draconian rules being imposed in other countries, the industry is feeling the pain already. March is the most important new car sales month of the year in the UK (see below) and dealers already report showroom traffic dropping. I was talking to a Nissan dealer a few days ago who had a healthy number of cars sold for March in advance and having been very short of attractive used car stock so far this year was much looking forward to the part exchanges against new deliveries arriving.



Now he says he's got the cars but few customers and so is running out of space to store them. With this situation looking like it will go on for months yet manufacturers and dealers face a very difficult time and amongst the dealers at least there will sadly be casualties, just as there will be in many other industries of course, particularly travel and hospitality.

My regular reader may recall that a long time, maybe about 2 years, ago I wrote that Ford couldn't carry on with the number of dealers they had. The reason? over the last 35 years Ford's share of UK new car sales has dropped from around 33% to around 10%. Although the market has increased over that period it still means that Ford dealer who in the 1980s shared around 500,000 new car sales now share around 200,000 so in simple terms there just isn't enough cake to go around.

Over time Ford have allowed the number of sales points to reduce by natural wastage from a peak of around 650 dealers to around 400. Now they have announced that they will accelerate the process and by 2025 will have around 220 sales dealers so about 180 will go. Of course Ford are not alone. Two years ago Vauxhall announced they would reduce the number of dealers by about a third and these cuts will come into effect in the next few months. Honda are doing similar.

To the end of February this year the average Ford dealer sold 60 new cars. VW have similar total sales but less dealers so their average dealer sold just over 100 new cars. Top performer was Mercedes where the average was 136 cars per dealer. Audi and BMW also topped 100.

Ford have said their aim is that over 90% of UK customers will be no more than 30 minutes drive time away from a Ford sales point. It is the smaller dealers who will go, so if your local Ford dealer is a small one and less than 30 minutes drive from a big one it's a good bet that small dealer won't be selling new Fords for much longer.

Ford hope these smaller dealers will stay on as service dealers but the general reaction from the dealers so far is, only

if the deal on the table for the Service Franchise is significantly improved. With all the problems facing the industry I can't help wondering for how much longer Ford will be making and selling cars in Europe. General Motors sold out to PSA and seem happy with the outcome.

Ford are moving closer to VW and I could envisage VW taking over Ford's European car business and Ford adding VW's van business to their own which is already very successful, that means less dealers again of course?

PSA which is Peugeot, Citroen, Vauxhall, Opel and currently merging also with Fiat Chrysler recently announced record financial results for 2019.

Vauxhall Opel came into profit in 2018 after 20 consecutive years of massive losses under General Motors and results improved further in 2019. PSA say they are now "Eager to enter a new era with the projected merger with Fiat Chrysler". Of course that's what they were saying a few weeks ago, things may have changed!

In complete contrast Renault announced a loss for 2019, their first for 10 years. The figure was a negative of 141 Million Euros against a profit of 3.3 BILLION in 2018. Renault blamed the fall in demand for diesels in Europe and falling sales in China.

They also said they expected 2020 to be no better, and again that was before the virus hit. Nissan remain in profit but report they are 74% down on 2018.

In the UK March is by far the biggest new car sales month, this year heralds the arrival of the new 20 reg plate. So a good performance in March is vital for new car dealers, have a bad March and you pretty well guarantee a bad year.

Some come into the month licking wounds from January and February. Alfa Romeo are 23% down against last year, Citroen -15%, Hyundai - 23%, Mazda - 39%, Mitsubishi -43%, Renault -32%, Subaru - 68%, and Suzuki -63%.

Ford although only 8% down won't have enjoyed being beaten by VW in February.

It's a very rough number but if a dealer targets to sell 100 new cars in the month of March they would normally expect to have around 50 orders "in the bank" by end February and sell the other 50 during March itself. And that's the 50 that are in danger at least in part from the arrival of the virus.

Will the British public "Keep Calm & Carry On" Reports are mixed so far. I really hope for my many dealer friends that the damage isn't too great.

It's ironic that just when we got over the uncertainties of Brexit and the Election this dreadful situation arrived.

The rescue plan for Aston has changed a little (!) in the last few days. Because of the market volatility caused by Coronavirus the issue price for the new shares has been slashed by 86% from £2.07 to 30p! The total amount to be raised has increased from £500M to £536M.

The consortium led by Lawrence Stroll will now end up with a 25% share rather than 16.7%. They have also agreed to increase the short term loan they are making to the company from £55.5M to £75.5M to give Aston breathing space until sales of their new SUV start helping out.

Mr. Stroll will take over as Chairman as soon as the paperwork is all complete and he obviously intends this to be a "hands on" role.

For many years he's been the Ferrari importer for Canada so doesn't lack experience and wants Aston to be the "British Ferrari".

They are to stop building new cars, the unsold cars which they already have they will sell at discount, subsequently production of sports cars will reduce but margins will increase.

Aston acknowledge they have some pain, considerable pain, to come to move the current "excess" stock so if you're looking for a bargain new Aston Martin sports car now's the time!

Jaguar have not had a good time recently. Last year they sold 161000 cars globally which was almost 11% down on 2018. This is a tiny number when compared to the likes of BMW and Mercedes and it means Jag can't achieve the economies of scale needed to compete on price with their German rivals.

Saloons are Jaguar's big problem. The XF achieved 50% of the 2018 sales at 15000 units (a tiny number) and the smaller XE was 15% down at 26000 units. Even their best seller, the F-Pace, was 14% down.

Coming soon is the new XJ, it's to be pure electric and in addition there will be a flagship SUV to be called J-Pace, again pure electric.

The electric I-Pace will continue for a few years more it is thought. The F-Pace is due a major facelift soon as well, which is important as it's easily Jaguar's top seller at 48500 units last year. The F Type sports car sold only just over 7000 last year.

So whilst Jaguar are greatly looking forward to the new electric flagships and facelifted F-Pace they are left to wrestle with the problems of what to do about the XE, XF, & F-Type. Can anyone imagine a Jaguar range without saloons and a sports car? You might have to get used to it.

Every year the National Franchised Dealers Association (NFDA) carries out a survey of the manufacturers they represent, and the results for last year have just been published. The relationship between manufacturer and dealer is a complex one.

All both want is, in the end, to make money. For the manufacturer he wants the dealers to sell lots of cars but also represent his "brand" properly which includes lots of things like facilities, staff and marketing to name but a few.

The dealer wants the manufacturer to supply cars that people want to buy, promote them properly and price them so the dealer can sell lots at a profit.

Obviously there's lots of room for conflict.

In days gone by Ford used to proudly refer to themselves and their dealers as "The Ford Family". Dealers were often heard to mutter under the breath that there was far too much incest in this particular family!

The NFDA asks dealers to answer 53 questions covering all aspects of the relationship with their manufacturers. Top score went to Lexus who got 9.4 out of 10. They were closely followed by Mercedes on 9.2 then Toyota and Kia tying for 3rd on 8.9.

Manufacturers at the other end of the scale were Hyundai on 3.2 out of 10 (!),



Alfa Romeo scored 3.4, Abarth 3.8 and Jeep 3.9.

Mercedes, Toyota, and Jaguar did much better than last year, Suzuki, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Land Rover, Ford and Vauxhall much worse.

The last two of course are in the process of dramatically reducing their dealer networks so will no doubt have some very unhappy dealers – turkeys don't celebrate Christmas after all!

If there is an historic centre of the British motor industry it is no doubt the West Midlands and Coventry in particular. I was therefore a bit surprised when Transport for West Midlands announced that they would be offering Coventry motorists £3000 not to help upgrade to a cleaner car but to give up having a car entirely!

The £3000 can then be used for car sharing or public transport journeys. What Jaguar Land Rover, who must pay a fortune in Business Rates in the West Midlands every year, think has not been made public, probably because it's not printable?

There is no doubt Europe is adopting electric cars more quickly than the UK. In January 13% of cars sold in Europe were Electric or Hybrid. In the UK the figure was 11%. However there are vast differences between different markets.

In Norway 77% of cars are Electric or Hybrid, Sweden 38% and Finland 28%. Germany, Spain and Italy come in behind the UK. Different tax treatments in different markets have a lot to do with this.

However in spite of all this in 2019 Europe's CO2 emissions from car rose for the third consecutive year. Reasons are the fall in diesel sales (diesels produce less CO2 than petrol's) and the continuing increase in sales of SUVs which because of their greater size and consequent weight and poorer aerodynamics inevitably produce more emissions.

However in the UK concern remains about the lack of charging points and now the cost of some of these.

If you charge a Nissan Leaf at home overnight it will cost you around £2.67 for the power to take you 100 miles. If you charge at a public recharging point this will cost you an average of almost £10 with the highest cost from Ionty being £23!

Ionty is a joint venture between Ford, VW and Mercedes by the way.



GVC

Gilligan Vehicle Consulting
Paul Gilligan
pg@gilliganvehicleconsulting.co.uk
www.gilliganvehicleconsulting.co.uk
07785 293222

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The hotel's renowned AA rosette awarded Baileys Bar and Restaurant. Food served all day, offering a quality combination of locally sourced food, a relaxed atmosphere and friendly service.



Menus change seasonally, created by respected Executive Head Chef Harry Bailie, with inspired dishes and hearty classics.

Bailey's Bar offers a more relaxed dining option, where dishes such as the popular Homemade Classic Steak Burger; Fish and Chips served, along with an extensive selection of beers, wines, spirits. Speciality teas and coffees are available throughout the day, along with a lite-bite lunch menu. We look forward to seeing you.

The Honest Lawyer Hotel,
Croxdale Bridge, Croxdale,
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Tel: 0191 378 3780

Email: enquiries@honestlawyerhotel.co.uk



We have moved!

After years of planning and a hectic week of unloading office supplies, Great North Air Ambulance Service's new HQ is open for business!



The move to Progress House in Urray Nook, Eaglescliffe, has brought fundraising, lottery and admin teams together under the same roof for the first time. Office staff are excited to welcome the operational team based at Durham Tees Valley Airport to the new headquarters later in the year, while our Cumbrian base in Langwathby will continue to operate in the West.



£120,000

each year

is how much we will save on rent and other expenses by moving to our very own headquarters



395

cubic metres of concrete

has been poured to make the base of the hangar as we get ready for the helicopter to join us

Our new address:

Progress House
Urray Nook Road
Eaglescliffe
Stockton-on-Tees
TS16 0QB



I think I have bleated on long enough at how much I had fallen out of love with all things VAG, how I had then gone to the dark side and ended up with another Premium brand from Germany.

I had always taken umbrage at the road tester bias that seemed to proclaim the Bavarian cars to be the drivers cars and the Ingoldstadt cars lacking in finesse. That they were indeed to ultimate in tuetonic efficiency, crushing all tarmac before them without any flair, not even a laugh, just a wry smirk.

My "lifestyle choices" mean I need something that can tow, something that can carry around enough music gear to half fill a pub (therefore pushing what audience is left into a huddle resembling a crowd) and get me out of the clarts.

Added to this is my ego and lack of self awareness or indeed irony, so my Bavarian barnstormers have been an indecently quick X5 40D and lately a still perky but purportedly more efficient X3 20D, both SUV's

The reasoning behind that was although my elderly Audi A4 is on its original exhaust, after 250K any more scrapes with the earths crust and it may well take the huff!

I, like many people, need far more ground clearance than is deemed adequate in these autobahn

demolishers, I also have an aversion to spinning my wheels on greasy UK tarmac...I much prefer exiting the junction/roundabout in a timely manner! So I have driven 4wd vehicles almost exclusively for this whole century.

So I am trapped in some sort of denial/need circle of discontent!

On my first few months behind the Blue Propellor I revelled in the deftness of control. The steering was a delight (damn you journalists), the brakes a delight in their modulation and the agility of this 10 ton truck was a scales from the eyes moment.

However the honeymoon was short lived, tyre wear, jittery stability control, electrical psychosis, interior trim gullibility, fuel rail and driveshaft problems took away the gloss of a finely priced addition and precipitated its early release back into the wild.

But maybe I just needed something a little bit newer, more sensible, easier to park. So after looking at our options and glancing at the VAG group options (I still found the resentment too much to ignore) we found a lovely X3.

It has all the kit I can justify I need, it can do 42 on a motorway run at speeds unlikely to get you some points and is comfortable and capable. It tows well and is fast enough that I rarely use sport mode, unless I can be sure the cameras are in bed!

But then again, first it was that tyre wear issue again, the runflats aren't cheap and to run off the inside edges is basically an insult when the outside

still has some of those nippley things left on it!

Then the electrical gremlins started again, weird things that reset after a reset, stability control upset by puddles (surely thats what your designed for?)

Limp home mode has visited a couple of times and then I noticed the turbo whistle during a quiet bit of music, had it always been there?

I will have to get that checked when I get the tracking done I thought, but then limp home mode came again. This time a restart didn't work, I was going very slowly so glancing in my rear view mirror I saw the beginnings of a cloud of smoke Pink Floyd would have been proud of!

Turbo failure, 95k on an 8 year old car with FSH. A car from the company who introduced this decades old tech into cars decades ago, literally consumed in a cloud of smoke and bearings!

What car magazines never have to be accountable for with their propognada, that we willingly buy into, is the long game. They never have to live with or report what its like for the second, third or fourth owners...they take great pleasure in shaming us for prioritising reliability, fit for purpose motoring. They raise our expectations of fit, finish, ambience, massage our ego's with power and efficiency figures so that when we do our own due diligence, find out what is actually the best fit, we are presented with something that to us has the allure of a 1980's Candy automatic washer...even down to the red LED's I have looked at the wise choices, but

only in passing and only on paper, why do I find them so....dissapointing? I looked so cool sat there on the side of the A66 waiting for the recovery guy!

"What do you pick up least?" I asked him..."Japanese stuff, the big hitters are the German stuff, not massive failures, just annoying stuff that needs dealer linkups, stupid things, the occassional big jobs that write off reasonably new cars"

So thats the dilemma. I know the VAG issues, but the Quattro systems are bombproof in comparison to the X Drive system. I will need to find one that hasn't been ruined by the software update, chip it, remove bits of the emmissions system from it to make it reliable, then cross my fingers.

Or do I look at a Mazda, a Toyota, a Honda, a Misubishi, go Korean with Kia or their Hyundai cousins?

I rally French but many years of road car misery in gallic chuggerbugs still sting, and their modularised failures infect many other makes as well, despite the badge, you might as well buy British....maybe a return to Sweden and my old rally provider Volvo? but they are also a bit odd... still, and expensive and not foolproof!

I would ask you, my gallant reader, for advice, but why trust you, you have read this article, your judgement is suspect...and you have a common flaw, shared with me, you love cars...how can you trust anyone who loves cars? they are all demented! ...FFS!

Alan the Fowl Mouthed Fox

Crofting in Winter

The Christmas and Jack Frost Stages

Andy Brown



David Henderson & Katie Henderson

CHRISTMAS STAGES 2019

In December last year I competed again with Ed Todd at Croft, on the Christmas Stages. A welcome surprise being no ice or snow.

Ed had fixed the engine on the Wee beastie (GTM) ready for the Christmas stages, but after much arm twisting from me, he had bought a Darrian (Dazza), my all-time favourite rally car.

Now most people who know me, know I'm a big lad..... so getting into the GTM is only possible because I'm very flexible. Well when Dazza arrived I was surprised to find the entry and cabin is even tighter than the GTM.

So I've had to devise a new way of entering the Darrian because as I get older my body is much less flexible.

We were seeded as unlucky car 13 behind the Lotus Exige of Martin Tinker, well we shall see if 13 was unlucky.

This was our first rally of anger in the Dazza and it took a few stages for Ed to get used to the "new" car and the sequential box with flat shift.

1st stage we were 1 second slower than Martin in the Lotus and approx 5 seconds per stage slower after that, up to the lunch halt.

We had had a few teething problems with the Dazza's brakes but had fixed these ready for the afternoon reversed loop.

We were just outside the top 10, 18 seconds behind Martin.

After Ed had some grub we set about chasing Martin and boy did we catch him.

By the end of the seventh stage we had pulled back the 18 seconds to draw level with Martin and equal 1st in class.

On the last stage we had a slipping clutch and posted the same time, finishing level with Martin.

But if you remember he beat us by 1 second on the 1st stage so took overall and class honours by that 1 second on SS1.

At the awards Martin asked me if we'd fitted new tyres as he couldn't believe the time we had pulled back. But we had kept the same tyres on all day as Ed got used to the Dazza.

If the clutch had held out for that stage we would have taken 9th overall and the class win. But it was still a good first rally finish in the Dazza and we learned a lot about the car.

The slipping clutch was traced to shims fitted by the previous owner between the clutch and the fly wheel. What they were doing there in the first place nobody knows.



John Nicholson & Kari Bates



Andrew Grimstone & Andrew Hutchinson



Andrew Hutchinson telling his adoring fan to "calm down"





Christmas Stages 2019

DAC Crew Results

1. David Henderson / Ian Forgan -
6th Overall / 2nd in class
2. Ed Todd / Andy Brown -
14th overall / 2nd in class
3. Andrew Grimstone/Andrew Hutchinson -
Retired SS5
4. Andrew Drake / Jeff Bedford -
58th overall / 19th in class

Jack Frost Stages 2020

DAC Crew Results

1. David Henderson / Katie Henderson-
4th overall / 1st in class
2. Ed Todd / Andy Brown - Retired
3. Andrew Drake / Jeff Bedford -
50th overall / 13th in class
4. John Nicholson / Kari Bates - Retired

Jack Frost stages 2020 – Croft circuit

After a great finish with our debut outing in the Darrian, we were looking forward to another good run at Croft on the Jack Frost stages.

From the off we had problems with the brakes, coming into a chicane after the Jim Clark Esses the brake pedal went to the floor and we aimed for a gap in the tyres as we shot through the chicane.

For the rest of that lap and the next stage Ed checked the brakes early to ensure the pedal wouldn't disappear to the floor. After bleeding the brakes in service, we headed into stage 3.

Heading down to Sunny IN the brakes went again and we launched it over a tyre into the run off area!

Ed got out of the car to check for damage reversing backwards to extract the tyre from underneath the car. We headed back to service to recheck the brakes again.

Stage 4 went without hitch but we couldn't set any quick times as Ed had to check the brakes before



going for them in anger.

After the lunch halt we set off into stage 5 & 6 a reverse of Stage 4.

On stage 6 after the Jim Clark Esses we were heading to a chicane before tower bend and again the brakes let go.

This time we launched the car over a set of tyres and head butted a straw bale at probably 80 mph doing some damage to the front clam.

We were both ok but agreed enough was enough and we drove to the finish missing out 2 laps and retired the car before we totalled it.

First time in some years I've heard Ed panic heading into a chicane and when I hear Ed panic I know it's going to be a biggy.

Good job I'm MR COOL.....

Thanks to our team on the spanners, Alistair, Jamie, Tim, Jamie Coulson and Ash.

Thank you again to Julia and Jim Little on the stage arrivals and all the Marshals.

Edward Todd is back out for the DCC stages at Ingliston with a pretty stand in Co-Driver, behave yourself Ed.

Our next outing together is the Warcop stages on April 12th.

13 Minutes and 42 sec lost forever, But alive

Living in the North East of the country where the road network is not as exciting as further south has led me to follow the debate on smart motorway from a distance, but I have travelled on enough smart motorways to know what it's all about, or so I thought.



I am therefore not afraid to report how I experienced all the unexpected high drama that goes with a mechanical problem on such a road. It's something I would like to share with those like me, living miles away from such monstrosities.

Regardless of all the training in the world, the best advice I can offer is to have your affairs in order and your will made out before heading out on a roadside job.

My problem could not have been simpler, using a van and empty trailer, the jockey wheel worked loose and lowered itself till the wheel made contact with carriageway, hearing the noise I knew all I had to do was stop and reset it.

Issue one,

I was on the M5 approaching the M42, a road with all lanes live, so I scraped along till I found the refuge area which was not a lot bigger than a van and trailer. 30 seconds later and the wheel, which was almost worn away, was raised and made good.

Issue number two, preparing to rejoin the carriageway.

First of all I thought out of good practice I would follow the instructions displayed on a large sign attached to the emergency telephone.

It said call before you rejoin, and that was a mistake because of the high noise of passing traffic I could not understand a thing, not one single clear word, whatever I was being told to do was just lost.

So, assuming they could hear me, I told the operator that I was a skilled recovery man and knew how to rejoin a live lane, quickly hanging up I looked around to see how many big brother cameras were watching me.

Issue number three, getting back onto the carriageway.

If I was to avoid causing a major incident, it was going to take all of my 50 yrs of experience.

Firstly I reversed as far back as possible, so as to get some speed as I rejoined, then I waited, and waited and waited... for a gap.

Because I was just over a crest with a slight curve, sighting fast moving traffic and trying to blend in was a nightmare.

After what seemed forever I went for it, but even then I suffered the wrath of a following HGV who gave me hell with his flashing lights.

A little less impatience from him would have been appreciated.

At last after almost 15 minutes I was free from a hell hole and still alive. What if I had been collecting a car with a recovery truck not to mention a broken down heavy.

I struggle to understand why the first of these smart systems, the M42, seemed to be ok?

Was it because it has a hard shoulder used for busy time running?

The M42 always seems to be a slow moving motorway, unlike the M5 and others which are all lane running and faster moving.

It's alright putting on a suit and meeting MPs and so forth on their own turf but what's needed is to put them in a mini bus and get them to a smart motorway.

Then develop a misfire in the n/s lane, get them to watch behind so they know what is going to hit them, and finally find a refuge.

Then let one of these government ministers take the wheel and get you all out. Don't be surprised if you are all still in the lay-by come Christmas.

Fred Henderson,
Breakdown Doctor



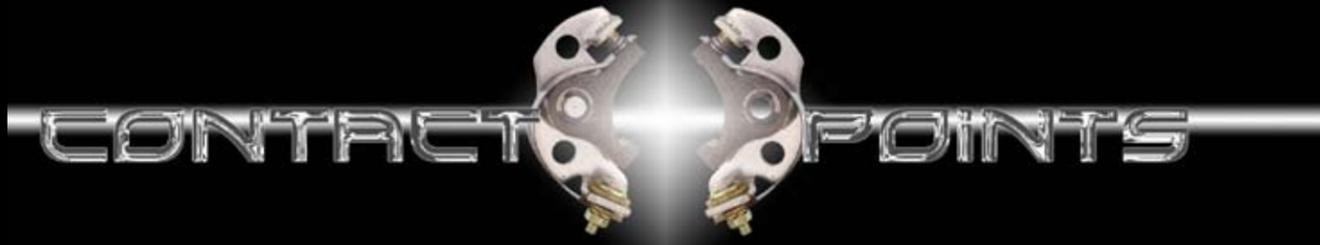
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2020 NESCRE CHALLENGE

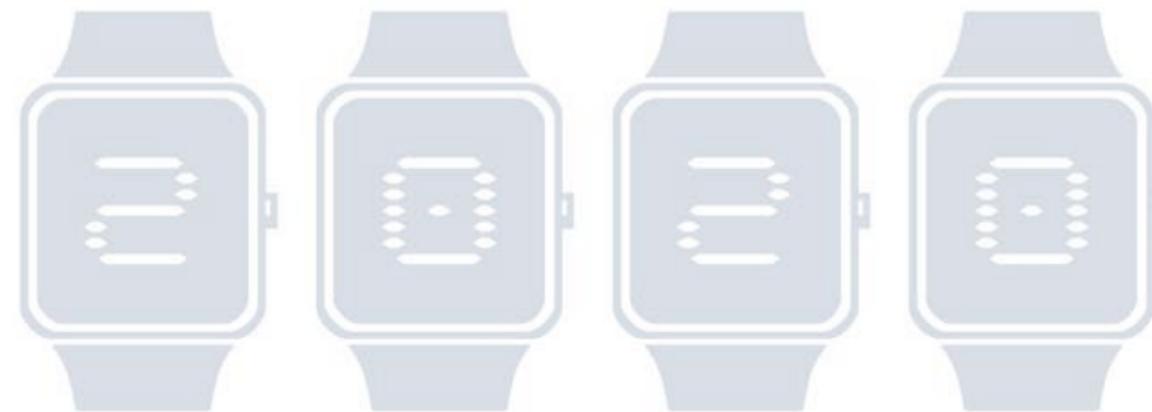
Sun 29th	March	Shaw Whickham & DMCHistoric/Targa
Sat/Sun 2/3rd	May	Berwick Berwick & DMCHistoric/Targa
Sun 24th	May	William Paterson South of Scotland CCTarga
Sun 7th	June	Rallye East Yorkshire De Lacy MCHistoric/Targa
Sun 28th	June	Lake District Wigton Motor ClubHistoric/Targa
Sun 19th	July	Northern Dales Hexham & DMCHistoric/Targa
Sun 16th	August	Blue StreakSpadeadam MCHistoric/Targa
Sun 6th	Sept	Wearside Durham ACHistoric/Targa
Sun 20th	Sept	Doonhamer South of Scotland CCHistoric/Targa
Sun 18th	Oct	Solway Wigton Motor ClubHistoric/Targa
Sun 22nd	Nov	Saltire Saltire Rally ClubHistoric/Targa

When these events are confirmed they will be added permanently to the Challenge.

Sun 25th	Oct	Tynemouth Targa NewcastleHistoric/Targa
Sun 29th	Nov	Solway Coast Targa KirkcudbrightHistoric/Targa

North of England Tarmacadam Rally Championship

Mar 28th	Ingliston Dcc Stages
Apr 12th	Warcop Stages
May 2nd	Granite Stages
May 31st	Jim Clark Reivers Rally
Aug 2nd	Tyneside Stages
Aug 30th	Pendragon Stages
Sep 27th	Cheviot Stages



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them into your car.

All of the above, contact me, Alan on
07940304242

Many Thanks to the contributions from

Andy Brown

Paul Gilligan

Fred Henderson

Cath Hutchinson