

STEYR-DAIMLER-PUCH MANX NATIONAL RALLY

# Civic reception

After taking his development-engined Honda Civic VTi onto the road for the first time, Richard Asquith opined that it was "a flying machine". He wasn't far wrong: Mark Higgins and Cliff Simmons were the sensation of the rally, bringing it home a sensational fifth overall after a string of top five stage times.

Both Higgins and Asquith were confident of a competitive showing, but neither could have envisaged just how quick the 1800cc-engined machine would be. Aside from its near-standard VTEC powerplant being stroked out by 200cc, a new Quaife diff and rose-jointed suspension were the only real non-Gp N modifications made to the ex-Julian Porter machine, and its Gp N brakes were perceived as a potential problem in places such as the Curragh's.

Right from the start, though, the Civic was near and occasionally on the pace, despite oversteering far too much for its driver's liking on the tighter stuff due to unsuitable rear damping.



MARK HIGGINS was simply stunning in the Honda, netting Asquith Autosport an unlikely fifth place.

As predicted, Higgins was unable to get into the top 10 on the first Curragh's test (named Kella on this occasion), but made the most of Injebreck Hill on the following Montpelier test to set fourth quickest time.

Thereafter, he was never off the leaderboard, but what topped it all was the second

Montpelier run, where the car saw off all of the four-wheel drive contingent to post his first ever fastest stage time on the event. Even allowing for the fact that Higgins knows his native island like the back of his hand, it was an amazing performance.

Predictably, the team was

over the proverbial moon afterwards. "The potential of this thing is just... well, I don't know!", gushed Mark. "With a bit of development it would be a fantastic little car." It makes you wonder, though, what an all-singing, all-dancing Gp A Civic would be capable of...

hold a top 10 placing, but a typically aggressive drive ended when his Metro's centre diff exploded as he flew across Abbeylands.

And he wasn't alone, for as the rally moved nearer to the end of its 120 stage miles, the casualties began to mount up. Tim and Steve Jones ended a thoroughly miserable day in their Formula Cars Escort Cosworth when a rear caliper came apart on Glascoe 2, to be joined by Paul Kirtley, who parked his Sierra Cosworth after the

28th, not too far behind the erstwhile F2 leader. On course for 11th overall, Jones's Astra hit a rock and punctured near the start of Kella 2, and Geoff and Rhydian Welson incurred a stage maximum as they changed it, plummeting down to 21st. This left local men Pat Bettridge/Norman Quayle in the F2 driving seat, and their dependable Golf GTi notched up its second consecutive class success in 13th spot, right on the tail of Gary Midwinter's FABRICA

when Brian Hughes accidentally ingested a fly on Druidale! Gwyn Thomas, meanwhile, did well to fight back into the top 20 after blowing his Sierra's turbo on the first Montpelier run, while Roger Duckworth headed them both in his Sierra XR4x4 until finding the same rock that hobbled Price - with fairly similar results, although he survived his double puncture to limp home 22nd.

Back at the front, though,

## THE CLASSES

### N1

DAVE BODEN and Andy Parkhurst were the only starters in the smallest class, but hung on to score their second Mintex success of the season on their first visit to the island. Their faithful Nova SR was 62nd overall.

### N2

CHRIS POPE'S swansong outing in his Bill Down Racing Metro GTi resulted in class victory, with 41st into the bargain. He and Pete had a largely troublefree run, although he did admit to spending money on tyres during an event for the first time ever!

Local pairing Juan Howland/Richard Hulme were second in their Peugeot 205 GTi, but both they and Pope had to give best initially to Kevin Vondy/Paul Sayers until they put their Nova GSi off in a big way on Montpelier 1. Although the stage was stopped while the pair were ferried to hospital, they were released later in the weekend.

### N3

NIGEL and Michaela Cannell wheeled out their ex-Jim Russell Astra GSi for a shakedown on home ground, and came away with a highly impressive class victory, despite a front-end rearranging brush with the scenery during the morning.

Likewise, last year's Mintex F2 runners-up Roger Davies/Tim Hobbs made quite a splash on their seasonal debut with another ex-JRRDS GSi, taking second even though they set the ride height wrongly in the morning and running on secondhand tyres from last year.

A bitterly disappointed Steven Quine/John Skinner held the initial lead in their Astra GTE,

### A7

LOCAL men followed the F2 leaders home, with the Golf of David Craine taking 26th and third in class by just 12s from Peter Christian, armed with a new ex-Escort Challenge RS2000.

Stephanie and Rachael Simmonite's enviable Mintex Ladies Cup record was threatened early on by a broken throttle spindle in their Stoplock 205 GTi, but sterling work by Chris Birkbeck's crew saw the car re-fettled and on its way to 48th. Guy Woodcock's Astra GTE left the fray when a wheel sheared off on Kella 2, while Dave Cooling/Graham Morris crashed their Brooklyn RS2000 on Brack-A-Broom.

### B9

MANXMEN Adrian Kermodé/Andy McClements were comfortable class winners and 36th overall in their Mini Cooper S. Their only problem was running over a particularly pungent pile of manure, which subsequently created an overpowering stench in the cockpit as it burned on the hot exhaust!

Nigel Minay was a satisfied second first time out in a newly-acquired Nova, with the similar car of fellow Manxman Michael Brew in third.

### B10

BRIAN DAVIES and Hu Kent completed a hat-trick of class wins on the island with a strong run to 46th in the immaculate DK Rallying Cortina GT. Although the car's refusal to charge before the start of the event gave the irrepressible pair cause for con-

reckoned subjectively that his engine was improving with every stage. Once Leece's fightback had ended with steering arm failure on Glascoe 2, the Oxford man enjoyed a comfortable cushion over Grierson, whose measured afternoon run was interrupted only by a neat 360-degree rotation over a crest on Barosee.

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With a new gearbox on board the ex-Wilson Escort, Lyall had moved ahead of Gillanders on Glascoe 2, with the latter content just to finish in one piece. Even though the recovering Fowden pipped him for ninth with three stages remaining, he could still see cause for optimism: "We're higher up than last year, so if we keep on doing this, maybe in two or three years' time we'll win the bloody thing!"

All three profited from poor Tony Davies's misfortunes. The Milton Keynes-based Welshman had recovered from a poor tyre choice on the opening four stages – and a fading intercom which had Brian Hardie shouting himself hoarse in the co-driver's seat – to

Escort Cosworth when a rear caliper came apart on Glascoe 2, to be joined by Paul Kirtley, who parked his Sierra Cosworth after the second Foxdale run and Hendy, whose diff failed on the following stage.

Neither did Petch survive unscathed, as the Impreza's turbo let go five miles from the end of the final test. While he had time to limp out, nearest rivals Sean and Adrian Farrell were over a minute behind in their brand new WARS Escort Cosworth and Steve duly stitched up his first major success in the Impreza to round off a good weekend for Subaru.

The chastened Easson, meanwhile, could climb no higher than

fairly similar results, and they survived his double puncture to limp home 22nd.

Back at the front, though, nothing could deflate Moore: although he ceded three seconds to the flying Doughty on the second Foxdale test, setting fastest times on the final brace of stages was the best possible way to cement a thoroughly-deserved victory. As usual, the genial Yorkshireman seemed almost bemused by his evident superiority, but even he was modestly prepared to admit that this was his best performance yet, and one that he'll remember for a long, long time. It's unlikely his rivals will forget it in a hurry, either.

Two places further back, Steve Smith never recovered from stopping to change a rear puncture on his HF Integrale halfway through Brack-A-Broom 1, and his afternoon fightback was jeopardised

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R.J.A.

## Stage times

### SS1 Barroose 1 (3.30 miles):

Richard Moore/Alun Cook (Subaru Impreza 555) 2m 50s; Pete Doughty/Jerry Freeman (Ford Sierra Cosworth 4x4) 2m 53s; Nigel Worswick/Clive Molyneux (Ford Sierra Cosworth 4x4) 2m 55s; John Price/Bill Sturrock (MG Metro 6R4), Stephen Price/Paul Cook (MG Metro 6R4) 2m 56s; Chris Mellors/Brian Goff (Ford Escort RS Cosworth), Mark Higgins/Cliff Simmons (Honda Civic VTI) 2m 58s.

### SS2 Glascoe 1 (5.48 miles):

Price/Cook 4m 46s; Doughty/Freeman 4m 47s; Mellors/Goff, Moore/Cook 4m 48s; Price/Sturrock 4m 51s; Murray Grierson/Stewart Merry (Subaru Legacy RS), Higgins/Simmons 4m 52s.

### SS3 Kella 1 (11.30 miles):

Mellors/Goff 10m 26s; Doughty/Freeman 10m 29s; Price/Sturrock 10m 30s; Moore/Cook 10m 33s; Price/Cook 10m 41s; Steve Hill/Stella Boyles (Mitsubishi Galant VR-4) 10m 44s.

### SS4 Montpelier 1 (10.01 miles):

Moore/Cook 9m 13s; Price/Cook 9m 14s; Trevor Smith/Roger Jones, Higgins/Simmons 9m 18s; Doughty/Freeman 9m 20s; Mellors/Goff 9m 23s.

### SS5 The Lion 1 (10.23 miles):

Mellors/Goff 8m 23s; Doughty/Freeman, Price/Sturrock 8m 28s; Moore/Cook 8m 32s; Price/Cook 8m 33s; Gary Leece/Roy Sweetman (Ford Sierra Cosworth 4x4), Grierson/Merry, Smith/Jones 8m 36s.

### SS6 Brack A Broom 1 (8.64 miles):

Moore/Cook 8m 06s; Doughty/Freeman, Leece/Sweetman 8m 12s; Price/Sturrock 8m 14s; Mellors/Goff 8m 15s; Hill/Boyles 8m 16s.

### SS7 Round Table 1 (13.84 miles):

Leece/Sweetman 11m 36s; Moore/Cook 11m 39s; Doughty/Freeman 11m 41s; Price/Sturrock 11m 48s; Mellors/Goff, Grierson/Merry 11m 49s.

### SS8 Barroose 2 (3.30 miles):

Moore/Cook 2m 54s; Tony Davies/Brian Hardie (MG Metro 6R4), Higgins/Simmons 2m 55s; Price/Cook 2m 56s; Leece/Sweetman, Hill/Boyles 2m 57s.

### SS9 Glascoe 2 (5.48 miles):

Moore/Cook 4m 33s; Price/Sturrock 4m 36s; Price/Cook 4m 37s; Doughty/Freeman, Mellors/Goff 4m 38s; Higgins/Simmons 4m 39s.

### SS10 Kella 2 (11.30 miles):

Moore/Cook, Price/Sturrock 10m 13s; Doughty/Freeman 10m 16s; Mellors/Goff 10m 18s; Brian Lyall/Neil Ewing (Ford Escort Cosworth) 10m 25s; Davies/Hardie 10m 26s.

### SS11 Montpelier 2 (10.01 miles):

Higgins/Simmons 9m 07s; Price/Sturrock 9m 09s; Moore/Cook 9m 10s; Price/Cook 9m 12s; Mellors/Goff 9m 15s; Doughty/Freeman 9m 19s.

### SS12 The Lion 2 (10.23 miles):

Mellors/Goff 8m 40s; Doughty/Freeman 8m 41s; Moore/Cook 8m 44s; Grierson/Merry 8m 45s; Price/Cook 8m 46s; Higgins/Simmons 8m 52s.

### SS13 Brack A Broom 2 (8.64 miles):

Moore/Cook 8m 00s; Doughty/Freeman 8m 02s; Mellors/Goff 8m 04s; Lyall/Ewing 8m 10s; Higgins/Simmons 8m 14s; Grierson/Merry 8m 15s.

### SS14 Round Table 2 (13.84 miles):

Moore/Cook 11m 39s; Doughty/Freeman 11m 42s; Mellors/Goff 11m 43s; Grierson/Merry 11m 47s; Higgins/Simmons 11m 54s; Price/Cook, Lyall/Ewing 11m 57s.

## Manx National Rally results

- 1, Richard Moore/Alun Cook (Subaru Impreza 555) ..... 110m 54s;
- 2, Pete Doughty/Jerry Freeman (Ford Sierra Cosworth) ..... 111m 26s;
- 3, Chris Mellors/Brian Goff (Ford Escort Cosworth) ..... 111m 40s;
- 4, Stephen Price/Paul Cook (MG Metro 6R4) ..... 112m 40s;
- 5, Mark Higgins/Cliff Simmons (Honda Civic VTI) ..... 113m 29s;
- 6, Steve Hill/Stella Boyles (Mitsubishi Galant VR-4) ..... 113m 51s;
- 7, Murray Grierson/Stewart Merry (Subaru Legacy RS) ..... 114m 15s;
- 8, Brian Lyall/Neil Ewing (Ford Escort Cosworth) ..... 115m 28s;
- 9, Bob Fowden/Jerry Hynes (Ford Escort Cosworth) ..... 115m 58s;
- 10, David Gillanders/John Bennie (Ford Escort Cosworth) .... 116m 05s.

Mintex National Series after three rounds: 1, Mellors 66pts; 2, Grierson 63pts; 3, Gillanders 61pts; 4, Lyall 54pts; 5, Hill 50pts.

EARS/Motoring News National Tarmac Series: 1, Price 102pts; 2 = Doughty, Moore 91pts; 4, Tarr 75pts; 5, Midwinter 70pts.



# Motoring News

## National Tarmac Rally Series

## N4

DON BAILEY/Geraldine McBride re-acclimatised to an Escort Cosworth rebuilt after its massive Stonethrowers accident last year. Exceptionally cautious during the morning, Bailey speeded up during the afternoon to take the Conister Trust-backed machine to third in class.

Mark Pollard came away from the island well pleased with fifth (behind Jeremy Easson), the only interruption to his measured run being his Escort's brief visit to the farmyard on Brack-A-Broom. He finished 30th, two places clear of Garey Ellison's Turbosystems Sierra.

## A5

TREVOR GODWIN and David Wyer were the only starters in their Horiba Mini Cooper 1.3i, and duly notched up their third successive Mintex class triumph. They survived persistent brake problems and a broken damper-securing bolt early on, and completed the first half of the event with no shock absorber.

## A6

ON THEIR second outing in the ex-Geoff Jones Nova GSI, Martin Meadows/Ian Oakey took their first ever Mintex class success by bringing the bizarrely-liveried machine home 34th.

A big effort on the final stage saw them pip young Manxman Robert Watson by four seconds, the latter rueing a two-minute road penalty incurred when his Nova required major gear selector surgery in between stages. He was comfortably clear of third-placed Mark and Paul Kiernan in their 205 GTI and the similar car of Richard and Catherine Phillipson.

ing Cortina GT. Although the car's refusal to charge before the start of the event gave the irrepressible pair cause for concern, their only real worry was "kissing" a bank courtesy of a spot of over-exuberance with the handbrake at the day's end.

They were headed during the morning by the Toyota Corolla GT of Glynn Hemingway, only for the Edenthorpe man to go out with transmission failure on Montpelier 2. This left Nigel Clucas to follow Davies home for second in his Avenger.

Don Kettleborough soon discovered that his ex-National Saloon Car Cup Metro was "terrible" on the bumpy lanes courtesy of its over-stiff suspension, but he retained third ahead of Chris Martin's Avenger.

## B11

FOLLOWING Alister Tough home in 20th were Jon Tarr/Andy Conibear, although their day got off to a bad start when a dodgy fuel regulator saw their Watts Tyres Sunbeam pop and bang its way to a maximum on the opening stage. They retaliated thereafter, though, and maintain their amazing fourth in the EARS/MN standings.

Ian Corkill's Mk1 Escort was third in class, ahead of the Mk2s of fellow Manxmen Stuart Comish and Glen Leece.

## B12

BEHIND the crews mentioned in the main report, Tony Glassey/Darren Corlett were 44th in their Mk2 Escort, 30s up on Jeff Dewitt/Tom Johnston in their newer, Cosworth-engined machine. The latter pair suffered myriad problems, including a broken driveshaft after landing awkwardly off a crest and an engine which lapsed onto three cylinders during the final loop, but Dewitt nevertheless enjoyed his first Manx: "A once-in-a-lifetime experience, I reckon," he smiled.

Jim McEvoy's Mk2 Escort was the third and final class finisher.