

My First Event – in a Metro 6R4!

More than a few years ago, I wrote a newsletter report titled “My First Year”. At the time, I saw the title as a one-off but now I find myself able to write the sequel – “My First Event – in a Metro 6R4!”

After many happy years collecting trophies in our class-winning Nova GTE, Chris Dillow and I took the brave decision to buy an MG Metro 6R4 – brave for Chris as these cars don’t exactly come cheap, and brave for me as I am now sat next to him with over 300bhp driving all the wheels!

Chris doesn’t tend to do things by halves so rather than just buy any old Metro, Chris negotiated to buy Steve Furzeland’s awesome car. Steve and Yvonne have won almost everything in this 2.5 litre animal and they are a hard act to follow.

What better event to debut the car than the Tour of Cornwall – an event that has proved elusive to the Furzelds and one with limited servicing, in which to correct any damage we might inflict on the car.

Anyway, after a few evenings of the usual preparation tasks, I found myself sat alone in a caravan at Hendra Tourist Park on the Friday night before the rally. The car had passed scrutineering (and I had survived a barrage of comments about Chris only buying the car to carry my belly around the stages!) and the lads had returned to the workshop to load the vans. I was surrounded by maps, highlighter pens and heaps of stickers and road-books for the service crews. Chris and the other lads thought I had taken advantage of the quiet spell to mark up the maps ready for the next morning when in actual fact, I was enjoying the opportunity to have a shower without a queue to get in!

Saturday morning started well with the start in Camborne College and me wandering around with two top lady competitors trying to find them a suitably secluded bush as the student union bar (and the toilets!) were closed! Having successfully completed my first navigation task for the day, I was soon strapped in the confines of the Metro and preparing to start a special stage through the grounds of the college.

What a slippery start to our first event in the car, we plodded through the tight and twisty stage and took no chances. Off to Portreath and the first chance to see how well the car (and Chris!) can go! The Metro is awesome and seems to convert what used to be long straights in the Nova to a short blast now! By the end of the two long stages, we were starting to carry some decent speed through the corners and we both had huge smiles as we left the airbase for another service back at the college.

Predannack was the next venue and the car behaved perfectly on the road down to the Lizard. However, as soon as we accelerated down the first straight, it became painfully obvious that we had a serious problem with our new toy. There was an horrendous vibration and it got so bad at high speed that both Chris and I were seeing double – great fun when driving or reading maps at over 100mph! We contemplated retirement after the first run at Predannack but after some frantic discussions over the intercom and mobile phone interface (a Peltor system - how posh is that?!) we

decided to continue and hope the problem wasn't going to get worse / more expensive.

Back in service after two teeth-chattering stages, a loose prop-shaft joint was found and duly attacked with some big tools! Back on the road, we made return visits to Cornwall College and Portreath. By now, we were starting to find our groove, getting a little more used to the car and were delighted to be running just outside the top ten. After a final service in Predannack, we were off to Carclew, Penhale and Hendra. Chris and I came very close to a massive accident in Carclew last year when a driveshaft snapped as we left the crest of Dead Man's Drop, so when the rain started to come down heavily on the way from the Lizard, you could have cut the atmosphere in the car with a knife!

Cautious runs through an extremely slippery Carclew saw us safely through the stage and we headed for Penhale via a petrol stop at the Lanes site. The last stages went smoothly although they were very wet and it was a lovely feeling to be on wet stages with four-wheel drive for the first time! We ended Saturday in 13th spot and were 3rd in class – a very good end to what had felt like a first day back at school!

Sunday started dry for the first time in many years and we were looking forward to some dry runs down through Penhale. Sadly it wasn't to be after terrible crashes by both John Indri and Steve Furzeland forced the stages to be cancelled – fortunately all four crew members weren't hurt, but driving past the two badly damaged cars was a thought-provoking moment.

Two stages through Hendra went really well although we nearly came to grief after the end of the second run. As we left the stage finish control, Chris saw someone he knew in the crowd and was so busy waving to them (her!), he nearly put us into the hedge! A quick comment (almost polite!) from his friendly (not posing!) navigator and we were back on the road the easy way – through the gap in the wall, rather than over it!

Service in the college grounds for the last time, then we headed back into Portreath for the two final stages. These two stages went really well and we set two stage times that were well inside the top ten. We left Portreath and drove to the control at Bridge Garage. On the road back to Hendra, a grouse flew up from the hedgerow and smashed into the front of the car! We were left with a bent wiper linkage and a pile of feathers stuck in the edge of the windscreen – the only comment we got from the service crew was that we should have collected the bird for tea!

We returned to Hendra with a fabulous result of 9th overall and 2nd in class – behind John Price no less! Given it was our first event with the Metro and some problems along the way, we are delighted with the result and are very keen to get back out onto the track.

Big thanks to our crew – Paul, Duncan, Doug, Kevin, Eggy and Mike and another big thank-you to our sponsors. Our attention now turns to the CAR-nival Stages, Abingdon, early June and you can follow our exploits at www.rally-6r4.com.

Adrian Tregunna.