

## Flying Scotsman Rally, 2009

Last autumn, some 7 years since James and I last rallied together, I mentioned that a Railton was entered to the London to Edinburgh 'Flying Scotsman' rally for pre-war cars. Would he be interested? You bet he would. His new job in Canada involved working alternate weeks, so with a little juggling, he could get the right three weeks off work costing just a week of vacation. So we duly entered the Brough Superior into a challenging, long-distance rally which was mostly on minor and B-roads (I think the rally used about 10 miles of motorway and a few dozen miles of A-road in about 500 miles of route.)

To start with, we drove down to stay with some friends, Roger and Lili, who live, rather conveniently, about 10 miles from Brooklands Museum, where the rally started on the Friday morning. The rally started with three driving tests around the museum: an ascent of the test hill, which we completed in a very commendable 13 seconds, a gravity run down onto the banking, (which no-one completed in under the maximum time allowed), and a lap of the Mercedes-Benz test track.

We then had a very nice route out of London, which was actually quite free of traffic, despite being a Friday afternoon, and included the aforementioned 10 miles of motorway, to get us via a Time Control in Reading services out into the upper Thames area, and then to the Cotswolds. (A Time Control is where you have to get your time card signed by a marshal, and you get penalised if you are earlier or later than your allotted minute).

Our first Jogularity section was at Bradfield. This is where you have to drive at a constant speed set by the organisers, and you get penalised *per second* you are early or late at controls. The problem is that you don't know where they are! In the middle of this was a ford, which we took just a little too briskly for its 6 or 7 inch depth, getting the electrics wet, and coming to a stand. Not wanting to get my feet wet, I moved the car on using the starter motor, and then got WD40 on it, and off we went. However, in the excitement, James had knocked the 'freeze' switch on the electronic tripmeter, and as a result, thought we were lost (when we were, in fact, on the right road). That cost us 8 minutes of penalty.

The next control was at Bourton-on-the-Water, followed by a driving test on the Shakespeare Speedway. This was a high-speed drive on a mixture of tarmac, gravel and grass, as fast as you can against the clock, and was seriously good fun. On the final run to Warwick for the Friday night stop, we pulled up at a junction, and the engine cut out. A quick check – there *was* petrol, but no spark, and at that point, the rally mechanical backup team pulled up, and out jumped two mechanics, both well versed in the peculiarities of making vintage machinery work. How lucky was that? Between us, we quickly established that the ignition fuse was blown, and we were on our way to the hotel (with another ten minutes of penalty), in time for a bit of fettling. For us, it included the usual cleaning the brake drums, and for the Railton (which was conveniently parked next to us) a quick adjustment of clutch/gearbox interlocking to try to stop it jumping out of second gear (in exchange for a couple of bottles of beer!)

The next morning was a mixture of sunny spells, overcast greyness, with the odd (mercifully short) rain or hail shower. We quickly realised that the car keys were missing, so hot-wired it, with a new ignition switch under the bonnet. The route tiptoed between Birmingham and Coventry, with the only clue to our proximity being a sign, 'National Motorcycle Museum, 2 miles'. We then shot up the A446 to Litchfield to get on with the serious business of driving tests, this time a thrash round the Curborough Sprint circuit. More A-road took us to Ashbourne, and following the Tissington Trail we emerged at Rowsley, and to Chatsworth for lunch. Luckily, we put the hood up while we parked, as it rained the whole time we were in the restaurant! The scenery started to get more wild and hilly, as we came within a few miles of Sheffield at Owl Bar, and bypassed Hathersage by taking the Ringinglow road, past the Ladybower Reservoir, and on to a navigation section on the steep hilly little lanes just south of Stocksbridge, eventually emerging at Langsett. A navigation section involves a fairly difficult route, but with a number of Time Controls where you have to arrive within your allotted minute. We were on time at all of them, but unfortunately we made one small error that cost us dear in terms of penalties. We waited for the correct minute, and handed our card to the marshal. In chatting, he forgot to sign it, and we didn't notice till we were 10 miles down the

road! That cost us a maximum penalty of 30 minutes. At the next jogularity, we were just a few seconds out.

The route passed along Woodhead pass, and over Holme Moss (with a control at the top), through Meltham and Slaithwaite, into West Yorkshire and Hebden Bridge. Then past Haworth, round Keighley, over Blubberhouses Moor, and the back way into Harrogate. Despite the showers and hail, we had the hood up for just 5 miles. We had a lovely evening at The Old Swan Hotel, where Agatha Christie stayed when she wanted to hide from the world for a couple of weeks.

Of course, the clocks going forward fell on the weekend of the Rally, so last thing at night, we advanced the time on our mobiles, which also doubled as alarm clocks. Now my mobile is too clever by half, and decided to go forward again all by itself, waking us up at 6am, not 7am!

Sunday morning dawned beautifully sunny, but very cold – there was a frost on the ground, and as we travelled in the morning, we passed numerous frozen puddles. Another car was having trouble starting, and eventually we heard one of the rally mechanics saying in a loudish voice, “I won't tell anyone that it wouldn't start because the battery master switch was turned off...” Our car was running well, and the scenery was lovely. The organisers had said that the best roads were coming up today. Just a few miles out from Harrogate was our first regularity section of the day – this is like jogularity, but there is less information to go on, so you have to use the trip meter more carefully if you are to run to time. We were five seconds early at the first control, and five seconds late at the second! A great piece of driving and navigating, even though we say it ourselves. The route turned North, and straight into the Yorkshire Dales. We passed the pretty little villages of Grassington and Kettlewell, to the next control at the cafe by Aysgarth Falls. The rules allowed you to arrive early, but depart on time, which meant that, provided you did in fact arrive early, you could have a cup of tea.

A few miles earlier, I thought it would be nice to stop off the road to take a photo of the nice cars coming up behind us, so I pulled into the entrance of a lane, just as James was trying to tell me to turn down it. One of the cars behind flew by us, missing the turn. Oops! When that car pulled into the control ten minutes later, we thought we had better make ourselves scarce.

The route continued to Askrigg, where the James Herriott series were filmed, and up over Askrigg Common and Summer Lodge Moor. It started with a very steep bit, and there was a bit of a clatter, which seemed to be the car jumping out of second gear (which it has never done before). The clutch felt a little odd, but we carried on up the hill, in second gear. At the top, I tried changing gear, to see if everything was OK, but no, just more clatter. Once out of gear, engaging any gear and letting the clutch up produced no drive whatsoever. We decided that we had to give up there, so watched the remaining cars go by, and handed our time card in to the course closing car, and then started to get in touch with the RAC. It was just as well we had broken down in a very pretty spot with nice sunshine, a few bars of chocolate and a packet of Pringles, because we were there a very long time. We *could* have freewheeled all the way to Reeth, about three miles away, but I wouldn't have fancied my chances of avoiding all the walls and trees! Although we would have got to a very nice Theakstons pub which James used to frequent in his Morris dancing days.

In accordance with new RAC policy, they have to send out a patrol before recovery, so a patrolman came from Richmond to check that it really was broken, and a truck came from Carlisle to take us home. So we wend for a walk down a lovely stretch of the old road, which went down to the pretty Summer Lodge, now a B&B. Eventually the truck arrived, and we had an uneventful journey home, arriving at about the same time that the first cars were arriving in Edinburgh.

David and Catriona Rings in the Railton came 11<sup>th</sup> out of 46 in the post-1925 category with a total of 18mins 28 seconds penalty, and won the Concours d'Elegance.

*David Moore*

You can see the photos on: [www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=98782&id=543266662&l=ba7275452c](http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=98782&id=543266662&l=ba7275452c)

This article and the photos will be posted on [www.railton.org](http://www.railton.org)

The rally was organised by [www.endurorally.com](http://www.endurorally.com)