



MOTORSPORT WALES

JUST A BIT OF FUN

As the Pirelli MSA Welsh Forest Rally Championship moved into the second half of the season, one man dominated the drivers' side of the championship tables. Rhuddlan's Luke Francis headed not only the overall championship standings but also the Group N and under-25 categories in his Mitsubishi Evo.



Photo: kmjphotography@hotmail.co.uk

Luke spoke to Motorsport Wales just after he and co-driver John H Roberts finished fourth overall on the Severn Valley Stages and it seems that a motorsport career was inevitable for the North Walian, "We were cars orientated in the family; I had my first grass track car when I was 10. My granddad and my dad were always rallying and I came through the ranks really and into the sport."

After his initial grass tracking adventures, Luke moved into rallying at the age of 18, "In 2008 I had a Fiesta ST and I did quite a few of the Welsh rounds and quite a few of the Fiesta Sporting Trophy events. I had that car for two years and then I had the four wheel drive Mitsubishi and I carried on from there."

The last five years have seen Luke stick with a Group N machine and he doesn't believe that the car has really held him back, "The power is there, there's just a slight lag in the corners and you have an H pattern gearbox whereas some of the lads have a sequential box but we hold our own on some of the events. But our knowledge of the events and the notes play a massive part in it. It's not just about power."

As he targets the BTRDA Gold Star as well as the Pirelli MSA Championship this year, however, local knowledge is not always something that the team can rely on, "I am just doing events now that I don't really know. This event today [The Severn Valley Stages] is one I don't know particularly well. We've put some good times in

Welcome to the second edition of "Motorsport Wales", the WAMC newsletter. Along with the latest news for each of the association's championships we have an interview with a rising Welsh rallying talent who has his feet firmly on the ground and we find out about the manoeuvring that goes on to secure military venues for rallying

As ever, we want your motorsport news to include in future editions. Just e-mail it to phmr@btinternet.com

Enjoy the read and don't forget you can see the latest Championship standings and lots more at www.wamc.org.uk

In this issue:

We talk to a young gun aiming for the top in the Pirelli MSA Welsh Forest Rally Championship.

What's involved in being a Liaison Officer?

All the latest WAMC Championship news

Upcoming Events:

*Bill Gwynne Rallyschool
Coracle Stages July 21st*

*BARC (Wales) Llandow
Sprint July 27th*

*Harry Flatters
Rally July 28th*

*Llys y Fran Hill
Climb July 28th*

Pirelli MSA Welsh Forest Rally Championship

Interest in the championship continues to rise with registrations up by over 60% on the previous three years. Registrations are now closed for 2013 revealing that all the categories are well supported. Production class (Group N) stands at 23, Two wheel drive 49 and the U25 has 20 junior contenders.

North Wales Junior Luke Francis and co-driver John Roberts have led the championship since Round 2 in their Group N Mitsubishi Evo 9 from the Subaru WRC of Connor McCloskey and Francis Regan, however a heavy roll for the Irish duo on the Nicky Grist Stages has given Alex Allingham in his Subaru N10 a glimpse of a third championship title. Alex with Co-driver Chris Williams is now 2nd.

Luke though remains in a very strong position in the U25's

David L Roberts holds a slender lead over the similar Mark 2 Escort of Rob Dennis in the 2WD battle.

The championship was decided on the last stage in 2011 and it could go the same way again as drop scores will now come into play. The excitement is building as we enter the last part of the season.

As part of our on-going programme for Juniors, a recent trip to Prodrive was very well supported and received. A further trip is planned for late September. There will also be a day out at Sweet Lamb where organisers have called on some Welsh rally legends to offer up some advice for the Juniors.

In Car Services Welsh Clubmans 2wd Forest Rally

Maximum points on the first two rounds see Dylan Davies continuing to lead from Terry Brown with Len Jones in third place.

The next round, The Coracle Stages takes place on July 21st.

and held our own against B13 cars and World Rally Cars. There is a handicap [competing in a group N car] but not as much as people think really."

Luke is keen for success in both the championships that he has targeted this year but the Welsh title has special significance for him, "Being from North Wales, I've always wanted to win the championship but the past couple of years it's been beyond our reach, and the Group N honours even, with a lot of quicker lads in it but this year we've picked up our pace again and we thought we'd have a crack at it and the BTRDA championship and so far we're not doing badly in it."

Luke doesn't expect success to come easily for the remainder of the season, however, "I'm hoping that I can keep going but it depends on Alex Allingham and Conor McCluskey, they are pushing me hard and I'm struggling to keep up with them. But hopefully, if we get a bit more confidence, we can get a few more good results

"I've missed a round of the BTRDA championship but we're still in contention for Group N and I don't think Gold Star is much out of our reach but that's more World Rally Car territory really so we're looking more Group N on that one."

Beyond this season, Luke ambitions in rallying remain modest, despite the success that he is currently enjoying, "I just want to improve on what I'm doing now. I'm never going to be a world rally driver and I'm never going to bother doing the British rally championship. The events I am doing now in the Welsh Rally Championship and the BTRDA are far better value for money. We have a good laugh with all the lads and I just want to keep on improving and win more rallies."

Luke is busy with his "day job" as a lift supervisor with the family business, Bob Francis Crane Hire Ltd with much of their work currently involving the erection of wind farms so for him rallying is a way of relaxing after a hectic working week, "It's just a hobby for me; I'm not looking to make a career out of it. We just come and have a good laugh with the lads. My grandfather loves it, my family love it, it's just a hobby."

It may be just a hobby but that doesn't mean his rallying exploits haven't been without their highs and lows, "A major high for me was winning my local rally, the Cambrian. A major low was having a massive accident on the Coracle Stages. I don't normally have little accidents they are normally pretty major ones. So far I've had three major ones and no little ones."

Having enjoyed such success without major sponsorship and preparing their own car, Luke's advice to would be rally competitors is certainly worth listening to, "You've got to work hard sorting a budget out and work hard finding sponsors. I do all the work on my car myself and sometimes it's an uphill struggle but you've just got to get through it. I never thought I'd be in a position to win any rallies when I first started out but I've shocked myself with a bit of hard work and persistence and everything seems to work out in the end. If you're not sure if you've got it you've just got to go out and try it."

Luke went out there and tried it, and while he competes for fun he has enjoyed some serious success.

THE GO BETWEEN

When it comes to rallying, the Association has a quartet of liaison officers looking after both forestry and tarmac venues. In the case of the Epynt and Caerwent MOD facilities that role is carried out by Phil Jones.

**Brian Dennis Motorsport
Welsh Historic Rally
Championship**

With five rounds completed, Ken Davies leads by a single point from Roger Matthews with Rikki Proffitt in third place. Each leads their respective class.

The next round, the Harry Flatters Rally, takes place on July 28th.

**Steve Harkness Competition
Tyres Welsh Tarmacadam
Rally Championship**

The last round of the Championship, Caerwent's Midsummer Stages, saw Bob Fowden close to within seven points of Championship leader Richard Merriman. Ian Kenwin is currently in third place.

Dales Clatworthy leads the under 25 Category while Jenny Evans heads the standings for the Ladies award.

The next round, the Harry Flatters Rally, takes place on July 28th.

**Road Rally Championship
supported by The Basic
Roamer Company**

After six of the ten rounds, Ian 'Dude' Roberts leads from Mark 'GT' Roberts. William Mains is leading semi-expert while Andrew Lane is best of the novices.

The navigators' categories are headed by Gwawr Hughes, Cadog Davies and Jason Murphy respectively.

The next round of the Championship is the Breidden Rally on 24/25 August.

**Trident Engineering Welsh
Speed and Hillclimb
Championship**

Andrew Meek leads the Championship from Roger Turner with Elen Worthington in third place.

The next rounds of the Championship are at Llandow on July 28th and Llys y Fran on July 29th.



Motorsport Wales spoke to Phil recently to find out exactly what his job entails. "It involves speaking to, in my case, the army at Sennybridge and making sure that the events that have applied for dates can have the dates they want." He explained, adding, "We are very lucky with Sennybridge that they like the dates to have been submitted before they decide on live firing so consequently they will fit their live firing in around the dates that events want.

"We are lucky as a sport that we have got personnel at Sennybridge,

who bend over backwards to help us particularly the commandant, and the assistant commandant at Caerwent. That's Ed Mahoney and Peter Davies."

But, as he explained, there is another facet to his job as well, "The other part of the liaison role is on events making sure that units that are up there, with the army liaison officer we make sure that they can move around safely and don't interfere too much with the event that is going on."

That part of the job can provide some interesting experiences, "I remember on the Mewla quite a few years ago we had a live mortar shell found at Piccadilly. Luckily it was a phosphorus mortar shell but we had to get the bomb squad in to carry out a controlled explosion to diffuse it. The then commander was there and he was quite happy with the way that we dealt with it."

It's not all quite so exciting however and Phil says the job has one particularly tricky facet, "It's negotiating what the clubs want with the army, if they want the centre road open longer or if there needs to be a diversion put in. It's about what the army are willing to accept and what the clubs want."

Of course, that bane of every rally organiser's life, PR, also rears its ugly head, "As you are probably aware we have got one particular PR problem over to the East of the ranges that we started dealing with but it went to the MSA and they are now dealing with it. I spoke to the solicitor at the MSA who wants to keep things fairly confidential at the moment but I am hoping to have an update fairly shortly about what the situation is. It hasn't caused too many problems so far.

"Apart from that there's the occasional complaint from residents about road closures but it's an army road that they allow the public to use."

Phil says there are things that we can all do to make his life easier, "I think the most important thing to maintain the ranges as a motorsport venue is that people drive sensibly on the ranges themselves and on and off the ranges and don't cause local residents inconvenience and upset."

"Caerwent is slightly different, in that it is not a spectator venue and is much closer to residential properties and thus noise tends to be more of

Welsh Club Championship

2010 winners Teifi Valley currently lead the Championship on 250 points ahead of the Welsh Border Car Club on 186 points and Lampeter and District on 178 points.

Inter Association Stage Rally Team Event

The Mark Ellis Motor Sport Woodbridge Stages has been chosen to host the competition this year. That's a tarmac rally rather than the more usual gravel event.

The venue is MoD Woodbridge near Ipswich in Suffolk and the event will take place on September 22nd.

If you are interested in representing WAMC on the event contact Ceri Morgan on cerimorgan.1@btinternet.com.

Meeting of Events Using Forest Stages

A meeting was held on June 23rd. Here are some of the key points to emerge from it:

The MSA is proposing that with effect from January 2014 the running order for cars will be based on fastest car first with an exception for Historic category 1 and 2 cars.

For the remainder of 2013 events will have to apply to the MSA for a waiver to this.

From 2015 scrutineers will have a list of permitted tyres and tyre cutting will no longer be allowed.

The MSA would like Championships to recommend these changes for 2014.

The Forestry Commission has reported noticeably less damage to forest roads following the introduction of mud flaps.

an issue. The clubs that organise events at Caerwent have done some excellent work with local residents and Community Councils e.g. starting events later to minimise inconvenience etc."

If the motorsport community looks after the venues, Phil is optimistic about their future but he acknowledges that they are military training venues first and foremost so while they can comfortably accommodate all the events that want to run there at the moment, there is always that possibility of that changing in the future, "I am not sure with more army units coming back from exercise or deployment in Germany or Afghanistan, there may be more call on training ranges that will make it more difficult to accommodate the current number of events in the coming years."

So what if your club is considering running an event? Phil explains, "Initially if a club wanted to run an event at Caerwent or Epynt speak to me first and then we can discuss it at the competition committee and then try to get a date for the event that's acceptable."

In the long term, Phil is optimistic about the future of both venues as far as motorsport is concerned, albeit with the inevitable qualification, "Currently I think both venues are fairly secure but as all organisers on Epynt and Caerwent know, military training takes precedence. For example, there's a situation developing in Syria at the moment, there could be training requirements which will override everything."

WELSH MEMORIAL IN FLANDERS CAMPAIGN

The Welsh Memorial in Flanders campaign aims to erect and dedicate a fitting memorial to all those of Welsh descent who took part in the first world war, worldwide.

The campaign has come about mainly because of the fact that the other nations who fought in Flanders have large memorials and gathering places in the proximity of Passchendaele. These include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, and since 2007 also Scotland. By a series of coincidences, in 2010 Peter Jones, the Campaign Coordinator, met up with Erwin Ureel of the Passchendaele Society who explained that it was the desire of that society to "do something for Wales" who made such huge sacrifices, especially at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge at the beginning of the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917.

The societies of Passchendaele and Langemark have combined to form a committee for the purpose of getting a Welsh memorial. There has been a lot of media support, including a BBC television program, several radio interviews, and many newspaper articles, and the campaign is about to receive charitable status.

The Mayor and Local Authority at Langemark West Flanders have donated a parcel of land on the Pilckem Ridge, very close to where the revered Welsh poet Ellis Humphrey Evans (Hedd Wyn) was killed in 1917. It has

Road Rally Organisers Meeting

A meeting of organisers was held on June 23rd and these are some of the key points to emerge:

John Surridge asked that all event organisers provide with a point of contact for their event during the planning stage. An e-mail is sufficient.

It was pointed out that it is a Welsh Championship requirement that event entry lists clearly identify Championship contenders and a list of actual starters is provided to the co-ordinator as soon as possible after the event.

Event officials travelling the route as well as competitors should comply with the Give Way rule.

It was agreed that the WAMC should introduce a rule requiring all events to implement penalties for competitors not dipping lights and slowing down at advance control boards.

been agreed that the monument is to take the form of a "CROMLECH" also called a "DOLMEN" outside of Wales. It will be surmounted with a large metal dragon painted red and facing where the German front line was situated. It is intended to transport stone from Wales so that the Cromlech can be raised by September this year. The Belgian Local Authority will then (funded by them) create a Welsh Garden of Remembrance around the Cromlech. A Welsh slate pillar will be engraved with the words "In remembrance of all those of Welsh descent who took part in the first world war." and this will be in Welsh, English, and Flemish. The projected date for the completion and dedication of the Memorial is 16th August 2014.

The Welsh Association of Motor Clubs feels that we should support this worthwhile campaign to honour the sacrifice made by so many Welsh soldiers nearly 100 years ago. If your Motor Club would like to support the "Welsh Memorial in Flanders" campaign, you can make a donation up to £200. The Association will also make a donation and we hope that a significant amount of money can be raised to help the campaign.

Cheques may be made payable to The Welsh Association of Motor Clubs or if you wish to make a direct transfer contact Association treasurer Mike Taylor at mike.c.taylor@gmail.com for details.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

If you have any club news that you would like included in future editions of Motorsport Wales please e-mail it to phmr@btinternet.com.

Whether you are competing, marshalling or spectating, enjoy your sport and watch out for the next edition of Motorsport Wales.