

Peter Jackson/ Steve Coombes Ford Escort Mk II - Car 2



It was by chance that I phoned Peter on the Wednesday before the event to get an update for our own club rally at Anglesey that he mentioned he had an entry for the Roskirk Stages and was I up for it. Daft question or what?

Roskirk Stages Rally

Usually when rallying with the Jackson's it is very chaotic, but this time it was not the case. I arrived to find the car already on the trailer, van loaded and everyone ready. The only thing we needed was fuel in the Jerry cans, which was purchased on the way. Scrutineering was passed and signing on completed. Before the start Peter mentioned that we might have got there a bit early, but I told him that the relaxed approach and lack on panic meant it only seemed like we'd arrived early.

Drivers briefing done and it was soon 09:50 and time to get in the car for our customary drive around the paddock to warm the brakes. Up to the arrival control, noise done, time card signed, car 1 in stage and us on the line. The lights started to count down and when they turned green we were off. 1st, 2nd, 3rd hairpin left and off to the hammer head. One new thing was multiple splits at 3 sisters. Never seen them there before but they worked well and 2 minutes 14 secs later we were heading into the finish with a surprising 3 second lead over car 1 and 4 seconds up on car 3. Not bad for our first stage together in several months and in a car that had been extensively modified and re-built over the winter.

We made some suspension changes for Stage 2, went a second slower but amazingly set the exact same time as car 1 which maintained our lead. We had intended the day to be a test day so we could trial various suspension settings and shake the car down, but that didn't transpire as by stage 3 we were well into the groove. And stage 3 is when things turned in our favour. Car 1 spun on stage losing 15 seconds and car 3 was parked in the service area having retired. It wasn't without incident for us though as we hit the tyres on the final chicane damaging the steering, but luckily it was right at the end and cost us no time. After some focused work in service we were ready for stage 4, where we again set the same time as car 1 keeping our 18 second lead. Service was again hectic as we had problems getting one of the wheel nuts off a spinning stud. Eventually it was freed and the wheel was changed.

Stage 5 & 6 is where things turned back towards our rivals as we lost 3 seconds on each stage to the Darrian (car 1). Why? Whether it was tyres or a suspension change I'm not sure, but we had no rear end grip. Good for the spectators as the car was sideways everywhere, but not good when you're in a battle for the lead. At that rate our lead wouldn't last long at all. And things didn't improve much on stage 7 although we rode our luck and stayed with the Darrian. Stage 7 was the big change over. Whilst waiting to go into stage Peter unplugged his intercom due to the background noise it generates. Up to the start line and off we went. I was calling the notes and Peter of course was hearing nothing. All of a sudden I heard Peter shouting. I turned to see him driving one handed waving the intercom wire. You can imagine it inside the car as Peter throws the Escort about, me holding pencil and clip board whilst plugging the intercom in and shouting "SPLIT LEFT". Intercom sorted, but that was not the end of the drama because as we passed the finish line we spun. Peter wasn't aware we had already got our time so put the car in reverse. "Stop" I said as loads of marshals appeared to push us back. If Peter had of reversed then we would have crossed the track into the path of another competitor. After all that we dropped a second and our lead was down to 11 seconds.

Stage 8 went 2 seconds quicker as did car 1. We got caught behind a car for about half a lap costing maybe a second and our lead was now 10 seconds with 4 stages to go. As the result was still in the balance we had to go for it on stages 9 & 10. Sideways in 5th as we went over the back shows how hard we were pushing. Quite amazingly on both stages we yet again set the same stage time as the Darrian.

Stage 11 went cleanly and we had a 9 second lead for the final stage. After what happened to us on the Richard Burns last year I wasn't taking anything for granted and that thought wasn't



helped when we hit a kerb on a SqR Right on the first lap of stage 12. Was it punctured or damaged? No and with a bit of show boating on the final few corners we had won by 8 seconds.

Although we had one or two minor problems the car had run smoothly and Peter, Will, Neil and Luke have done a great job in getting the car ready. We had to attack all the way and whilst we possibly threw a couple of seconds' away things would have been really close had car 1 not spun. This is the first stage win for me and hopefully a few more will follow. My report should show both how close the battle was and how much fun we had. Somerset stages in April are next for me.

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1

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