

Radio Mutterings – April 2025.

Altratech SMC Stages Sunday 13th April 2025.

It's a fine early morning as I set out heading for the Island of Anglesey and the Stockport 061 Motor Club Altratech SMC Stages. I arrive at the circuit about 07:20 and meet up with Ian & Helen Winterburn in Rally Control at the top of the circuit tower complex. It's early and already there is a queue of radio crews waiting to sign on !. Ian has the 81 and management channel radios already set up, so I set about organizing the radio crews, whilst Helen hands out the much-appreciated meal tickets and safety plans.



By 08:30 everyone is in position and the radio checks are all complete, as the organizing team and Stewards check the stage layout in anticipation of a 9 o'clock start. With checks all completed SS1 starts on schedule at 09:00. With clearing skies we are fortunate to have some spectacular views from the second floor of the tower looking down on the action. Silk 24 at Junction 21 is first to call Control as Car 7 stops briefly in the dead leg area opposite the junction, but eventually resumes. Car 18 over at Junction 2 with Sport 2 isn't so lucky and stops with a reported "driveshaft issue". A short while later there is a shout up from Crossrigg 1 at the Start who reports Car 29 stopped yards after the Start Line with "no drive". The final demise of this first stage is reserved for Car 59 who stop around Junction 17 with GEM 59 and a "gearbox" issue, making for a total of 80 cars out through the Stop Line and past Oak 8.

With the CoCs permission, Maverick 31 on the Start Line soon has SS2 underway at 09:53, once again with the ultra fast Car 1. This second run really shows an increase in tempo as the competitors get used to the circuit layout and it's many challenges. The twists and turns, merges and splits really does mean that crews need to be on their 'A' game at all times. With clearing blue skies, the Anglesey Circuit is shown off to it's very best. Although there are one or two close shaves out on circuit the only real drama of this second run involves Car 25 who pull off with Quinton 5 at Junction 14 with an apparent "gearbox issue". A very creditable 79 cars finish this second run and the organizing teams set about stage changes, whilst I get Crossrigg 1 & 2 working on recoveries and searching for the lost front valance belonging to Car 6 out on the circuit !.

By 11:17 we get the third stage of the day underway and it proves to be quite a busy stage. Several Judge of Fact calls come in as multiple cars seem to struggle with the revised stage layout ?. Acorn 11 calls in a slow Car 12 and then Car 6 over at Junction 14. More seriously Car 26 stops at the end of the pit garage complex and is pushed off the circuit and into the Paddock, just in time to avoid too serious a stage blockage. Next, Sport 2 calls in Car 40 with a “steering rack” issue over at Junction 2 and we add them to the recovery log. Oak 8 then reports a significant oil spill on the approach to the Stop Line and the deployment of multiple spill kits. We inform the CoC of this spill and arrange for additional resources to be taken to the scene from the circuit staff. Keeping Oak 8 busy, Tom next reports a “small fire” with Car 64 which is quickly extinguished. Not wanting to be left out, Teifi 5 at Junction 4 calls in Car 72 travelling slowly on the grass, who make it as far as Junction 6 and stop with Kay 26, another “gearbox” kaput. We next get a rather unusual call from Stoke Rescue who report they are treating an injured Marshal and moments later a second call as they have a second casualty (who it turns out is an injury from the previous rally track day !). This third stage certainly offers something for everyone and eventually we get 76 runners clear at the Stop Line.



There is short delay of a few minutes to the start of the next stage whilst we wait for the Paramedic to finish up with their second casualty so we have full rescue coverage before the start of the fourth stage. At 12:14 we get the action back underway as we get towards the halfway point in the rally. Despite the previous ‘sighting’ run, a couple

of Judge of Fact reports flow into Control, more for the organizing team to digest. A shout up from Teifi 5 at Junction 4, reports in that Car 18 has stopped and is eventually pushed on the grass towards the Stop Line, thankfully out of the way of other competitors. Our only other loss of this stage is Car 67 over at Junction 2 with Sport 2 and another “driveshaft” issue. By 13:00 the final car is clear of the Stop Line and once again the Crossrigg team gets into action and the change around teams set about their work.

For the second half of the rally we have a change of stage direction and the action restarts with SS5 at 13:47. This fifth run is quiet to begin with, with only a few slowing cars reported before Sport 2 calls in that Car 54 has pulled off from the stage route and has exited the stage via the previous ‘old’ Stop Line. Oak 8 then reports that a competitor has “taken out” the beam at the FF and we get the Chief Timekeeper mobilized to the site to assist. Other than this, 71 cars complete the run.

With effective Arrival time planning, it’s not too long before we have cars ready at 14:35 to start SS6. Teifi 5 seems to have the monopoly today in reporting slow cars, as Car 15 passes them very slowly but at least moving. The car continues it’s ‘stop / start’ progress around the stage, dragging a broken drive shaft beneath the car. Looking across from the Tower, there are several ‘heart in mouth’ moments as fast cars come up against the crawling Car 15, although to be fair they do give way. They eventually however stop in one of the worst locations they could, just before the narrow pit lane entrance !. With Rob CoC in the Tower with us he watches the scene and is soon down the stairs and out along the pit lane to have words with the crew, making sure the OK Board / triangle are out and that the stage is passable. It might be just about passable, but from our view looking down on the scene there are too many close shaves for my liking, but thankfully they get away with their parking efforts !. We next get another ‘lost & found department’ request to ask radios to look out for a missing headlamp assembly from Car 6, the proverbial ‘needle in a haystack request’ !. Just as things settle down Car 50 stops out between Junctions 12 & 13 with an apparent “throttle” problem, although they eventually jerry rig some sort of repair and make it through to the finish to make 70 cars out.

As the change around crews enter the stage we mobilise the Crossrigg Teams to Car 15, but just as they arrive on scene the car is pushed back into the Paddock, to their obvious frustration. However this is to our benefit as Helen in Crossrigg 2 comes up into the Tower with some home baked goodies !. With tummies full , we get the Clerks go ahead to start the penultimate stage, SS7 at 15:40, with who else but the ultra reliable Car 1. The driveshaft gremlins next hit Car 27, as Caron 1 calls in with them stopped at Junction 14. Crossrigg 1 next calls in that a very rough sounding Car 62 is stopped around Junction 8 and they set off on foot to investigate further. A short while later an update comes in that the car has a “broken manifold” but the crew intend to self-recover at the end of the stage. With time moving on Ian W calls Rob to discuss the issue and it’s decided that Car 62 will have to stay where they are to the end of the event, as we need to get the final stage underway on time. Crossrigg is asked to pass on this ‘bad news’ to the competitors.

SS7 finishes at 16:24 with a total of 67 cars out and less than two minutes later we have the eighth and final stage of the day underway. This time around we see 65 cars in and the only loss of the stage is reported in by Teifi 5, a slow moving Car 24. A quick 'relevant' call from Sport 2 reports that the car has exited the stage out through the old Stop Line and by 17:07 we can stand radio crews and marshals down and let Crossrigg 1 complete the final recovery of the day. Once the latter is completed we set about derigging the radios and I'm soon on the way home to Liverpool after a thoroughly successful and enjoyable event. Next time for me it's up the M6 north, for the Easter Sunday NHMC Warcop Stages Rally.

Ian Davies

Gem 23 & MSUK Radio Controller.