

## Winter Autotest Challenge

Round 2 of the Winter Autotest Challenge hosted jointly by East Ayrshire Car Club and Scottish Sporting Car Club took place on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January at Kames Motorsport Complex.

Sixteen hardy souls braved a biting wind and a shower of sleet to contest eight tests using the paddock areas, parts of the sprint track, infield roads and the start line area. The first test layout was to be run three times with the best two runs counting for the final results.

Making the trip up to Kames from our area were Wullie Keaning, Gordon Clendinning and Trevor Bowden while the furthest travelled competitor was without doubt Archie Simmonds all the way from Chirnside in Berwickshire.

After three runs at the first test layout, Gordon held a slender 2.5 sec lead over Wullie, with Archie hot on their heels in his Classic Rally spec. MG Midget. Trevor Bowden's road going Ford Fiesta ST was swapping times with a certain Ricky Wheeler, who was triple entered in a very standard looking Mk3 Astra with Mark Runciman and Ricky's son Michael.

The rear wheel drive class was well supported which was very encouraging to see. Robert Shankland from Colmonell was trying to get to grips with the welded diff in his BMW 325 and was getting quicker as the day went on.

Melvyn Hartley was using his powerful Gemini kit car which was built for sprints and hillclimbs, while Alan and Ian Brown were entered in the family Mazda MX-5. On further investigation it turns out that the Japanese import MX-5 model comes with a limited slip diff as standard and with these cars regularly changing hands on auction site ebay for well under £1000 they are surely good value and a lot of fun to drive, and you get Japanese reliability into the bargain.

Tests 4, 5 and 6 incorporated the infield roads of the sprint track and Gordon found out to his cost on test 4 that these little tarmac access roads were indeed very slippery, picking up a penalty for whacking a cone during a very sideways moment and very nearly doing the same at the next pair of cones. Wullie steered his venerable Nova to fastest time on test 5 to keep the pressure on for the lead, while Archie was revelling in the precise handling of the Midget and staying within striking distance of the leading Nova's.

Ricky Wheeler was driving like a man possessed and continued to stretch his class lead over Trevor Bowden's Fiesta. By the way, it's been thirteen years since Trevor competed in the Scottish and MSA British Championship driving a Mini Special and you can see that he hasn't forgotten everything that he learned back then. His Fiesta ST doubles as his daily driver to and from work and also gets the occasional thrashing at track days and autotests at the weekend.

The Junior Ecosse Challenge observers were at Kames but only Andrew Struthers was doing the event in his Micra. The format of only two tests counting from three seems to work well for the junior drivers as Andrew's first runs at each test layout were used to learn the test and to get a feel for the grip levels while his second and third runs produced some very consistent and improving times. A name to watch in the future.

The final test layout was restricted to only two runs with only one time counting for the final results. The last test couldn't come quick enough for Gordon as his Nova was now jumping out of reverse frequently. Despite having to hold the gear lever in reverse he set fastest time on the last test to secure the win, however Wullie finished the event in a fine second place and now leads the Winter Autotest Challenge from Archie Simmonds with two rounds still to go.

To sum up, the venue as ever, lends itself to autotesting with some challenging tests, good facilities, plenty of parking, but it can be bloody cold in January!

Next round of the Winter Autotest Challenge is back at Kames on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Spectator Trip to Northern Ireland Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March

Only two seats left on the second minibus, so if your still thinking about it, then you need to get in touch with Gordon Clendinning on 07711 808832 ASAP

## Tarmac Autotest Training

If you would like to learn a bit more about tarmac autotesting or to get “one to one” training, we are hoping to secure a venue for a training/practise day on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. Please contact Gordon Clendinning to register your interest.