

The Preston 2017

2nd – 3rd December 2017

I ended up cable-tying 2 inspection lights with red film to the back of the trailer! Mathew Smalley was to be my navigator again. Even after the retirement last year and the issues on the targa this year he came back for more.

We had a great many KLDMC people out on the Preston this time. 11 crews in all, as well as several brave marshals (thanks for being there). I thought we weren't that quick on the first leg as we had a couple of overshoots. One took a while to recover from as we had to reverse uphill and it was very muddy. Unfortunately, Rob Kitchen did the same thing, but he did it before us and pulled the tape down at the junction. Rob couldn't reverse so had to go further down to turn around, losing about 1 minute 20s. Fairly quick out of the blocks were Neil Kerry & Rob Palmer, seeded at 63 they were 18th quickest on the first section! Also were Sam & Tim Grant, seeded at 64th, they were 25th on section 1. At first petrol we were surprised to be third. Jonathon Stimpson & Brian Cammack were ninth with Rob Kitchen & Ed Rutherford and Craig Bellworthy & David Smalley in joint 11th.

The next leg had some great sections including Feltwell and Methwold Warren. Feltwell is a very fast section on some yellows, farm track whites and Methwold airfield. Jonathan & Brian were 3rd and we were 4th. Unfortunately, I saw that Neil Kerry & Rob Palmer dropped 10 minutes here somehow. Methwold Warren is one of my favourites and I drove it pretty hard. It is a particularly rough section and gives the car a pounding, and the navigator apparently, but we got through unscathed, even though we had a near miss with a gatepost, but still second quickest by just 2 seconds. Rob Kitchen was pulled up after this with a front top mount trying to leave the car, but he (wisely) decided to carry on.



We then headed north with sections through Ickburgh, Foulden and Cockley Cley. The first two were mainly forestry, but Cockley Cley was mostly yellows and short whites. The forest ones were good, being second on Ickburgh, but only 9th on Foulden after overshooting a board. I think they got stuck but Sam & Tim Grant lost nearly 4 minutes in Ickburgh. Jonathon & Brian had a good run and were quickest on Foulden, while car 47, Andrew Scott & Tony Hewitt, took the Mazda MX5 to 10th. Cockley Cley was only put into the route after losing some land for other sections so was very straightforward, with 75% of the crews cleaning it.

It was then on to the second petrol stop. Here the results were getting interesting. I was up to second, 39 seconds behind Jamie Turner. Also up the leaderboard were Craig & David, Rob & Ed and Jonathan & Brian in 6th, 7th & 8th respectively. After petrol 2 we were into some new sections, starting with Thompson, a mix of stubble fields and farm tracks. We started ok but half dropped into a ditch in some woods and I thought we weren't coming out, but I kept my foot in and we clawed our way out. Then we missed a slot on Peddars Way and had to turn back, so unfortunately we dropped over a minute here. Rob & Ed managed 2nd and Craig and David 3rd. Great Plantation was next and we were warned this might be muddy across the fields. We kept out of the sticky stuff, but a few suffered. Poor John Peterson & David Bell lost over 20 minutes here. Other KLDMC folk did pretty well here, I was 3rd, Rob 4th, Craig & David 5th, Jonathan 7th, also Sam & Tim, and Mick Beauchamp & Len Fletcher set their fastest times here. After this one the next few sections were pretty uneventful for us, but John & David suffered again on the next two, getting a load of penalties for dropping two sections 😞. Also Andrew & Tony lost over 15 minutes on the Bridgham section. The last section before petrol was Croxton, a proper forest section, and everyone's favourite. We cocked up a bit and overshot a codeboard on the slippery service and had to reverse back. Quickest here were Craig & David. Mark Peterson & Simon Bartholomew missed the whole of this third quarter and picked up several hours of penalties 😞 We were all then onto petrol for the final time.

At petrol we were still second, but we had a new leader. Jamie Turner had dropped to 8th after a problem on the Thompson section and Andy Smith was now out front. He had been flying and had overtaken me by nearly a minute and a half, from the five second gap at petrol 2. The three musketeers who were just behind me were still running in the same order but were now 4th, 5th and 6th. So we were all looking pretty good.



Somebody had pointed out to me that Craig & David were setting some quick times so I thought I had better up my game a bit to stay in 2nd. Five sections were left and the first was Euston, a long farm track section on the Euston Estate. This was good, very good. We were 26 seconds quicker than the next car. Rob was 4th and Jonathan 5th. Foxpin was next, a famous Preston section. Famous for being rough. The start is now better than it used to be but the finish is bump after bump. I keep my foot down over the rough to take joint fastest time with Jamie Turner. It was in here that leader Andy Turner was to retire. Ingham was next, more farm tracks and stubble fields. This was seriously wet in places with some massive puddles and they were on some fast straights, so you hit the water at speed. We hit some of these hard, but the car never missed a beat. Unfortunately, we came across Rob & Ed limping through the stage having ingested some of this water. We must have done alright as we were quickest by 26 seconds again. Jonathan & Brian were still getting on well, with 5th fastest, and Mark Peterson was back and set his quickest time here, at 18th. The penultimate section was Dukes Ride and was to shake things up a bit. We were going well on the farm track/woodland section and was catching another car. At one corner Owen Turner was off and the car ahead was flagged down to give him a tow. The corner was hard to see, and it could have been us who went off. Craig and David did go off here, and in an effort to regain the track they broke a driveshaft. This was really sad news as they were on for a really good result. But we had a mishap too as at the LWRT I took a wrong slot and we ended up going the wrong side of a strip of woodland for 400 metres, so had to turn around and go back to the triangle. Anyway, we lost about a minute, as did Rob & Ed, who did the same thing. As we approached the finish we hit a massive hole and there was a bang and vibration. At the end of the section the engine was stuck at 3000 rpm. I couldn't find a problem, or a cure, so went into the last section with the intention of going for it. We were this close to our best result I wasn't going to give in now. Dukes Ride was good for others as Sam & Tim were 19th, Andrew & Tony were 8th and Neil Peterson set his fastest time of the night. And finally, Summerpit, farm tracks and narrow woodland tracks. All went well and we ended up with our 4th fastest time out of the last 5 sections. Andrew & Tony had a cracking run too to 4th on this section, and Sam & Tim were 17th. Jonathan & Brian just made it to the finish with a slipping clutch and

As we had breakfast and waited for the results news came through that Andy Smith had retired on Euston, and the realisation was coming through that we may have won. OMG! After a tense hour it was true, we had won. And to top it off Rob & Ed had managed to come home second, with Jonathan & Brian fifth.

Unfortunately, Craig & David had retired but the other KLDMC folk finished. It was one of the best Preston's I've done, but also one of the toughest, rough, so I was proud to come out on top. It's been many years in the making from my first Preston in 2001. I've had 2 second places, 2 fourths, a sixth, a seventh and a ninth, so this is the icing on the cake.

1st Mark Banham/Mathew Smalley - Rover 25 GTi

2nd Rob Kitchen/Ed Rutherford - MGZR

5th Jonathan Stimpson/Brian Cammack - Peugeot 106

18th Andrew Scott/Tony Hewitt - Mazda MX5 - 1st Novice (12 top 20 times)

25th Neil Peterson/Will Brown - Peugeot 205Gti - 3rd Novice

28th Neil Kerry/Rob Palmer - Rover 214 - 5th Novice

30th Sam Grant/Tim Grant - Rover 25 - 7th Novice (10 top 25 times)

33rd Mick Beauchamp/Len Fletcher Rover - 214Si - 8th Novice

34th John Peterson/David Bell - Peugeot 306 GTI - 9th Semi-Expert

38th Mark Peterson/Simon Bartholomew - Mitsubishi Colt (for sale) - 10th Novice

Craig Bellworthy/David Smalley - Ford Puma - Retired