

THREE SWANS RALLY

Simply Harrison

MARTIN HARRISON and Mark Wareham set a scorching pace right from the start of the Selby & DMC organised Gladstone Tyres Three Swans Rally on August 20 to record their first win ever and justify their being seeded at number one. They were fastest on every one of the event's eventual six stages in their Harrison Homes Gartrac G3 Escort, winning this North Humberside-based event by 2m 20s.

This event got off to an early start at its base and only service area at Alamein barracks, near Driffield, with other stages in prospect at Leconfield and two stubble stages at Arras and along the old Goodmanham railway line. Two laps of the stages were planned with a third at Alamein to sort out the competitors.

The first stage of the day was six miles of the all tarmac Leconfield, which Harrison took in his Escort by seven seconds from Malcolm Davey/Ian Shardlow in their two litre BDA. Third fastest were John Dixon/Gavin Heseltine in the 4.2 litre MG Metro 8R4, which was giving a hint of the speed it was to show despite overheating problems.

Simon Pilling/Brian Godfrey took the lead of the up to 1600cc class on the first stage in their PC Marine Sports Boats Specialists Sunbeam 1600. However, a hint of a misfire developed at the stage finish which got worse over the next two stages making the crew stop twice. They eventually stopped on SS3 when the radiator was holed by stones thrown up by a passing car.

Other retirements on the first stage included Tony Moss and Graham Hughes in their 1600cc Escort, which broke its engine and Chris Cleghorn and Dominic Murray in the NEP Business Systems Escort RS2100 which put a conrod through the block.

SS2 saw the battle between Harrison and Dixon commence with only five seconds separating the two, with Andrew Moverley and Mark Atkinson the next quickest in their RS2000, 22s adrift. At this point David Beaumont and Chris Wood, in the 1597cc Mazda 323 Turbo, had a narrow escape when

the flywheel exploded and shot into the gearbox. The retirements continued to mount up with Mick Plowman and Nigel Boston retiring their 1600 Escort which had clutch and piston problems rather than do any more damage. Vince Chapman and Vince Thackray, who were running as course car, retired their Sierra with a suspected blown head gasket.

On Arras, a two lap eight mile stubble field, only three seconds separated Harrison and Dixon with Davey just four seconds adrift and that was the order of the leading bunch. Surprisingly, Moverley scored sixth fastest time here having to reverse off a bale which had got stuck underneath his car.

However, the scorching pace of car five, which was lying 13th at the time, really set the event alight on the Goodmanham stage when a gearbox problem lodged Smiler Hutson on top of a heap of straw in one of the stubble fields alongside the disused railway line. Within seconds Hutson's hot exhaust set the straw alight, although thankfully his Peugeot 205GT1 was hauled out of the way by marshals before it got too badly scorched. The fire took hold very rapidly and the stage had to be cancelled. The incident cost the organisers a lot of time because the only way out was the way the competitors had come in down a narrow lane with the last car having to peel off first.

After regrouping at Alamein barracks, the competitors got on their way again with the prospect of only three more stages. By now word had got back about dust blowing from the Arras stage across the main road. In the interests of safety this stage was

also cancelled as there had been a fatal accident on that stretch of road the previous Friday.

SS5 on Alamein saw the top five fastest times reflect the top five places with Harrison on a total of 27m 22s, second was Dixon on 27m 44s, third was Davey on 28m 21s and fourth was David Blythe in a Manta 2.4. However, as the cars set out from service the leader board changed when Davey's car backfired loudly and refused to restart. Upon investigation it came to light that the cam carrier had broken and the exhaust cam had broken in four places.

The second run over Leconfield was to sort out the results even more. As Dixon came round the sweeping right-hander into the flying finish of the stage, his Metro 8R4 burst into flames. His fireeater dealt with the blaze fairly promptly, but the leader board was in chaos. Moverley had to retire from sixth place with a big end failure. Meanwhile, Clive Smith found the only pothole on Leconfield and broke the Magard sumpguard on his Escort.

The new order was Harrison, Blythe, Dykes, Powell and Ian Jemison/Dean Kellett who were starting to fly in the rear-engined Avon (Nova) with Astra GTE power. Following testing at Wombleston airfield Jemison had chosen a race tyre for the looser stages of this event.

Harrison naturally maintained his run of fastest times on the last stage and he recorded a fine win. His car, prepared by Pete Slights and using a Roy Millington engine, never missed a beat. Blythe had a last minute panic when the gearlever broke but luckily he had a spare to use on the last stage.

Russell Dykes had a problem free day, catching Harrison on Arras with only one moment, when he found that advice about the Goodmanham section being flat was untrue!

R.J.

1, Martin Harrison/Mark Wareham (Escort 2.0) 40m 51s; 2, David Blythe/John Haigh (Opel Manta 2.4) 42m 11s; 3, Russell Dykes/Alistair Richardson (Escort 2.0) 43m 28s; 4, Ian Jemison/Dean Kellett (Avon 1.8 GTE) 45m 5s; 5, Alan Powell/Peter Robinson (Escort 2.0) 44m 04s; 6, Gavin Ruler/Lorraine Nixon (Escort 1.3) 44m 39s; 7, S. Towers/I. Towers (Sunbeam 1.6) 44m 50s; 8, Clive Smith/Kevin Glover (Escort 2.0) 44m 54s; 9, Dave Lomas/Nick Middleton (Manta) 44m 55s; 10, Julie Stephenson/Steve Bannister (Escort RS1000) 45m 04s.