

York to Silverstone by Classic Car

Brod Purdy: Navigator, 1966 Porsche 912 SWB Coupé, No. 638

On 14 October 2007 the original organising team, sponsored again by Norwich Union, revived the popular and highly successful Norwich Union / MSA Classic event format but limited entries to 600 starters from five different start venues: Silverstone; Bath; Norwich; Epsom and York and to cars built before 31 December 1986. And to the surprise, and delight, of the organisers, all 600 places had been filled within three weeks of the regulations being published.

Unable to take part in the original versions (no car, out of country...various excuses) my wife, Carolyn, and I decided that this year we would take part in our 1966 Porsche 912 SWB Coupé that had already completed the 2007 Cape to Cape Tour. York being the closest start venue, an early morning start from south of the Humber Bridge was planned to ensure prompt arrival. After documentation and a cup of coffee at the National Railway Museum we were flagged off to drive through York city limits where a suicidal peacock almost caused an accident when Carolyn stopped suddenly...but the driver of the Alpine that should have been two minutes behind us, had slower reactions and tested his brakes even more harshly. Still, the peacock survived, but nerves were slightly frayed inside the 912. The weather had not improved and was still damp and misty as we drove southwards through Yorkshire's minor roads, although we did cross into North Lincolnshire for a short while, with a slight showing of sun, towards the first 'rest halt' at Clumber Park 75 miles from the start line.

A short 'comfort break' near Howden put us behind a number of participants, but on classic runs this was not a problem...there was no timing, just opening and closing times at the rest halts. This lack of timing allows for either gentle meandering, or hectic motoring, whichever suits the crew. With Carolyn driving, we tend towards the former, but it means she can look out of the windscreen at the scenery whilst I decipher the Road Book and pass route instructions to her. Just before the turn onto the A1 and the formal route we were directed along an amended route owing to road works on the A1. At Clumber we were directed to a cordoned off parking area where a rather smart Ferrari seemed to have a problem with a pile of leaves...oil from its sump was dripping into the leaves, probably as

a result of *troppo brio* along a very straight road marked as bumpy between Sandford and the B1396.

After Clumber Park, where most seemed to take advantage of the stop for refreshments and a leg stretch, the route headed generally south towards Southwell, Radcliffe on Trent to finish at Dennington GP Museum. By now the weather had improved and the sun was shining...but that brought out those modern, air-conditioned versions of our classics, occupants nicely sealed and deaf to the musical sounds of our engines. We drove through small Nottinghamshire villages and were greatly heartened by the inhabitants of one, Edingley, who were obviously opposed to having those dreadfully noisy and inefficient windmills spoiling their wonderful views. The countryside around these delightful villages was stunning and made us wish we could afford to live there. But ever on, followed by and following a myriad of classic cars across scenery already changing to its autumnal clothing.

We arrived at Donington in time for lunch...self-prepared, self-grown lettuce and baked nutty brown bread with real Lincolnshire haslet, as we had already been warned that there would be no refreshments available here. The large car park already had a smattering of Porsches (all 911s of various models), a V8 4 litre engined Morris Minor, a Triumph Italia and the usual gallimaufry of British made classics with the odd smattering of German, Italian and 'other' makes. Neither of us was interested in visiting the museum (no rally cars) so we enjoyed the sunshine and ducked whenever Easyjet's B737s flew overhead from the nearby Castle Donington airfield. (We know one of its Captains...)

After lunch we progressed even further south, heading for the Heritage Centre at Gaydon, a spot well known to us through TR Register meetings and HRCR Open Days. We decided not to dally, but check in and out and head for Silverstone. But that plan was to change... We continued southwards through Warwickshire and the National Forest, enjoying the scenery as we went...well the driver was, the navigator was keeping his eyes well down on the pages of the excellently produced Road Book. Charnwood Forest,

Thornton Reservoir and on towards the almost arrow straight and classic road, the Fosse Way; a road very well known to us as we use it frequently on our trips to Gloucestershire and Somerset to visit family members in those remote parts of England. The Porsche purred happily on...but the driver began to feel the need for a leg stretch and a stop was made in the very picturesque village of Brinklow...and a decision to take tea at Gaydon was also made.

Hence we parked at Gaydon for a quick cup of tea for Carolyn and something else for me...and therefore joined a never-ending queue being served by a single assistant desperately trying to keep up with demand. All for an exorbitantly priced tea bag in a pot of hot water and a cup of chocolate, both from a machine. Then away to Silverstone and, we hoped, a little more substantial fodder. The last section, all of 29 miles, took crews through some delightfully named Buckinghamshire villages: Temple Herdewyke; Fenny Compton; Wormleighton; Aston le Walls; Culworth (site of battle in 1429); Weedon Lois; Wappenham and ultimately, Silverstone, where the driver felt great disappointment to see a certain Bentley T2 driving away as we arrived. (Sorry, James, but you may just have lost a fan...).

After 211 miles of excellent roads, superb scenery and delightful weather, we had arrived. We drove through the pneumatic arch to pick up our finishers' awards and the usual yellow Norwich Union 'goody bag'...and then on to the circuit...Well, not quite. A couple of photographs for the album and a driver swap for the obligatory two lap 'cruise' – not above 70 mph. I still wonder how drivers of single seat cars manage to find their way around a circuit without a navigator...But now I can add Silverstone to Macau, the Nurburgring and 'Rest and be Thankful'...oh, lest I forget, Nakuru circuit in Kenya where my obsession with motor sport began.

And that was that...no substantial fodder was on offer and all seemed very flat at the end...but the cars still kept on coming in. Most seemed to have finished, although we did spot one just outside Silverstone beside an RAC van...but pointing away from the circuit,

so presumably was a finisher. For those who missed out this year...get your entries in early (but not before me) and worry not about following the route. The road book was 1/10th mile perfect and very easy to read and follow; maps definitely not required. Descriptions of junctions were allied to names of shops and petrol stations to ease the job of the navigator...and orange arrows pointed out the way to go where the organizers felt that there could be some difficulty identifying the correct road.

What a great way to enjoy one's classic...but we continued further south and ended up in France for a couple of day's rest. Nice to drive the Porsche on the right side of the road...

