

Dear All,

I'm sorry it's two weeks since the big event and you haven't heard from me until now... As usual I had a very long and exhausting weekend indeed, and didn't get home until 5pm on the Tuesday! Since when I have had a lot to do back in the real world, which for me had almost completely ceased to exist for some time! On the way back from the Preston I suddenly remembered it's nearly Christmas...

Whatever your involvement in The One and Only, I hope you enjoyed it! On the whole it seems to have been pretty well received by all entrants, sincere thanks to all of you who have, one way or another, expressed your satisfaction and / or gratitude. I think that in the end the route was pretty good actually, not the best ever, yes there was some long links and the 'mileage that counts' (!), was not quite as extensive as I would have wished, but what we had was certainly very tough and one hell of a challenge! Let's be honest, it was bloody brutal!! A personal disappointment for me was that Dave T. & I 'retired' after petrol 2, shame!

We had a few problems, but that's always to be expected; one unfortunate incident involved an angry farmer, renowned in his area for being angry, rude and arrogant, being all of those things toward the crew of car 34, and to everyone's mate Mr. Nice-Guy-Top-Photographer, Andy Manston. However, don't worry everyone, in the fullness of time the man in question will be going to Hell. Pity we had to cancel 'Methwold 2', but it was the right thing to do, what with so many cars delayed, and a great shame that we couldn't run the 'top bit' of Berner's Heath but the tracks were too rough & sticky even for the Preston!

This year's entry was of the highest quality - what a field! And shall we say that the, er, 'rivalry between entrants was very high!! But I can hardly believe that yet again we didn't start the maximum of sixty cars... this really disappoints me... How come so many of you drop out in the week before this event? It happens every single year. I think I'll recommend to CMC for the future charging a £500 entry fee, of which £425 gets refunded at the Start, but not if you pull out... how does that sound everyone?!

Thanks to the many of you who came a long way, and to all those who have been Preston regulars year after year. Great to see some new faces, some whom did very well, and some on their first event of this nature... I hope you're alright! So good to some old faces returning, particularly (for me), Pat Tierney & Eddie Scott who came home fourteenth, not bad after so long away from the Preston! As usual there was quite a number of excellent performances all through the field; it seems that a lot of you approach the Preston in a calculated manner, setting yourselves a target, and I'm pleased to learn that a good number of you achieved your aims - in many cases just finishing is all you want! Several crews maintained their excellent Preston records. At the sharp end, where the pace was off the scale, last year's winners Monk & Clode put in some great times early on but it all went wrong for them in Leg 2; they were also the crew to clean a section (bugger!). Commiseration's to all who didn't make the end, congratulations to all who did, especially to all who won awards, and most of all to Martin and Richard who scored a fine victory - very well judged I suspect... The last R. Hage to win this event went on do it again, with the same driver... no pressure guys!

I'm sure that by now you've all seen that full results are on the CMC website, with as usual loads of good analysis, thanks Tony, great job as ever.

As usual the marshalling was second to none! There's something about the marshals on this event isn't there? Just how come they're SO GOOD??!! And where (and how), does Jim Bowie, the greatest living Chief Marshal, find them all? Quite remarkable. Thank you all, thank you Jim! (Jim had to work very hard this year as two marshal crews didn't tun up on the night, very rare on this event, leaving five controls unmanned... yet Jim did a great, though very difficult, juggling act and got it all covered one way or another).

Besides those of us who are named officials of the event ('The Management' !), who may be expected to put in a lot of time and effort into the event (and do!), and some other leading CMC members of whom, to a point, the same might also be expected, there are numerous people who make a tremendous effort for the Preston in terms of time, physical hard work, and in a number of cases, their own money... By that I mean they spend money, mainly on their vehicles and on fuel, for which they don't even try to claim from the event (I speak particularly of the numerous course and rescue vehicle crews here), this is really above and beyond the call of duty, but it must be said that the event couldn't really afford it if everyone claimed for everything... Thank you all so very much.

Special thanks as ever to the man who first called this event 'the one and only', a phrase equally applicable to him: Andy Manston, the best photographer in the game. And I must make particular thanks to Dave Taylor, Geoff Lobb, Chris Holliday and Dave & Liz Rowbottom, who in their different ways, each makes a truly colossal contribution the event; most of you who enter the Preston don't know and cannot imagine just what these people do for the event and therefore for you.

And I must, yet again, offer sincere thanks (and certain apologies!), to 'The Management', past and present, for tolerating that difficult, highly-strung, awful tyrant who has been Clerk of the Course for ten long years. Now that he has finally stood down, I suspect strongly that they are all making great big sighs of relief! However, I'd like to think they've been good years for this great event.

Despite big changes to 'The Management', I'm sure The One & Only Preston will go on, mighty and magnificent, as it has for twenty-eight years now. Chelmsford Motor Club is a strong and highly capable little organisation, and will I am sure see to it that this terrific event continues.

Well, this has been a long message - fancy that now!!!

All t'best, keep it on the island everyone, see you next year.

Adrian Gladwin,
Preston Rally Clerk of the Course, 1997 - 2006.

PS, watch out, cos in a year or two when this thing has been properly handed over to the care of others, DT and I are gonna come out and show y'all how it should be done!!