

Hockridge takes Manx podium on tarmac debut.

Pwllheli based rallying ace Andrew Hockridge was more than satisfied after his first ever competitive outing on the Isle of Man, returning home with yet more silverware after finishing on the class podium on the tarmac debut of his GRH Foods supported Citroen C2R2.

Andrew, who is co-driven by fellow Welshman Tony Derrick in the Geoff Jones Motorsport prepared Citroen, was contesting the none championship RBS Manx International Rally as a warm up for the third round of the British Rally Championship, the International Rally Isle of Man, which takes place in July. As such the pair were focusing more on perfecting the setup of the car and gaining tarmac experience in the little pocket rocket.

This said the pair set a string of top three times all weekend and were more than happy to have the measure of the far more powerful Super 1600 machinery around them.

The weekend began with five night stages on Friday night. Immediately comfortable with the setup Andrew hustled the little Gino's Pizza Cheese backed car around the narrow Manx lanes to lie second in class half way through the evening, beaten only by a local Manx lad in a more powerful car! However a puncture early in the penultimate stage of the evening, the 10 mile long *Ellan* stage, left the pair with no option to stop and change the offending wheel mid stage. This cost them over five minutes and dropped them down the order.

Saturday morning dawned misty but remarkably dry. Although Andrew claimed to be taking it easy, as he played around with the suspension and brakes, the little Camsport assisted C2R2 was still rapid enough to catch and pass three cars in one stage! The very next stage, Garey, Andrew and Tony caught a further two cars. Despite spinning at a hairpin trying to pass an Evo, right in front of his team principal, Geoff Jones, Andrew was still storming back up the leader board. After ending the opening leg down in 92nd position Andrew returned to Douglas after 14 high speed stages back up in 55th position overall.

Brilliant. What an island. I've spectated over here before and have been looking forward to this weekend so much. We played around with the setup all weekend and I'm really pleased with the handling. I must say a big mention to Geoff Jones, who assisted me with setup advice all weekend. I'm really impressed with the amount of grip we had, and the speed opened my eyes. Had we not had the puncture we would have finished second in class, and considering the other cars in our class are sophisticated Super 1600's, I'm more than happy with our result.

Andrew and Tony will now begin preparations for the second round of the Citroen C2R2cup, a championship they currently lead, and which resumes on the tarmac based Jim Clark Rally in Scotland. Although their recent tarmac experience will help, the characteristics of the two rallies are completely different. The Jim Clark Rally starts on Friday 23rd May in Kelso.

For more on Andrew please visit www.andrew-hockridge.co.uk

