

Diary Notes on the World Cup Rally October 4- 15 2002

After our exploits in the 2001 World Cup Rally we decided to try again and in January of 2002 we entered the 2002 World Cup Rally.

I spent the winter planning the modifications and work needed on the car (Zippy). I started by removing and changing both rear suspension arms and fitting brand new suspension spring tubes. I also installed an auxiliary electric fuel pump, which would both provide back up in case of failure of the engine driven pump and transfer fuel from my auxiliary fuel tank fitted in the car. New front wheel bearings were fitted and all new STANDARD shock absorbers. Extra front brake cooling was provided by an air intake on the left wing feeding cooling air to the brake callipers.

On the tyre front we couldn't find any more Michelin M+S so fitted 4 new Firestone tyres and took 2 M+S tyres left over from last year. Had them treated with a puncture sealant called Ultraseal which we have used to great effect on motorcycles.

On the engine front I only changed the electronic ignition for the 123 unit and fitted a Dyane type intake cowl and air filter assembly.

Last year we formed a team called the "Size doesn't matter" team made up of the 3 smallest cars on the event. This year we were more selective as part of a more planned strategy and made a team called "Team size does matter this time!" consisting of us, the Daewoo Matiz and a 1.3 litre Nissan Micra- Probably more to do with friendship than strategy if we are honest!

4 October Exeter to Oxford

Drive from home near Exeter to the National Bus museum near Oxford for scrutineering at 12-00. After leaving the M4 motorway we approach a roundabout and have to stop very quickly-engine stops and won't restart! Not a very good start to our adventure. Eventually Zippy starts and away we go. No problems at scrutineering and we are then sent off to Parc Ferme at our overnight hotel. Because there was major uproar last year over illegal support and servicing this year the organisers have decided to enforce "Parc Ferme" rules on most nights. This means that you have a limited time to fix your car and you can't remove your car to have it fixed. If you need to have it fixed somewhere else then you must do that before you check into the Time Control (TC), which invariably means you will be late and attract a penalty.

We are car number 18 this year, which means we start tomorrow at 08.30 plus 18 minutes. We spend evening in bar reminiscing and meeting other competitors. Meet Peter Coates who with his wife is driving a 1967 Lotus Elan. He says that he thought about doing this Rally after reading about last years in a friend's copy of the 2CVGB magazine! Didn't realise we'd be foolish enough to do it again and wondered if they were more foolish driving the Lotus.

5th October-750kms Blenheim Palace to Metz, France

Up early not too much sleep. Down to the car for a 15-minute drive to Blenheim Palace. We park up there for some photographs and meet some spectators. Of course there were those that laughed at Zippy and those that had a 2CV and were fascinated. At this point we are given the route for this

mornings tests so not very long to study. We queued for the start, which is over a start ramp for quick interview. We pull over too far to the left to do my interview and nearly put the right front wheel down the gap between the ramps. They very kindly direct me to the correct position! We are counted down and proceed about 100 metres from the start to be confronted by rows of traffic cones. I drive buy and ignore every instruction Liz gives me. We have a shout at each other and I stop. I then decide to drive off in a big huff-all this in front of the only large group of spectators of the whole Rally. When we get going and I apologise to Liz who as ever was completely right I realise that I was supposed to go right around the cones! This was not a good start. We proceed on the next tests without any problem and actually have some fun on the Ridgeway tracks around Newbury. After the last test we proceed off to Dover to catch a 1.45pm ferry. We stop en route near Maidstone for a training TC. We see David Hind and Co from the C.A.R.S 2CV group who give us a lovely send off. No time to stop so off to Dover and catch the 1.15 ferry after being subjected to a random security check. Pleasant crossing then off into France at 4pm local time. Then the start of a long boring motorway trek to Metz. Good weather with lovely sunset bodes well for tomorrow. We get to the hotel at 9.15 and have a meal and into bed at 12. We have to be up at 4.30 to have any chance of making the next TC at 3.48pm.

6th October –800kms Metz to Grobming, Austria

Up at 4.30 for a 4.45 departure and its dark, windy and raining very heavily-so much for that sunset! We progress on the French roads to the German border and the infamous Autobahn where we can go as fast as we like. We actually go as fast as we can which is about 60 mph against the elements and the weather does not abate until about 2pm. The levels of traffic going north around Munich create what appeared to be a 50-mile jam-thank goodness we are going south.

We reach Grobming at 3pm and check into the hotel. Then it's off to the TC before the closed road hill climb. We queue with the others and wait for our start time. Its damp cloudy and a bit grim. We start and try to make fast progress up **this 1 in 5 hill which means 1st gear at about 15 miles** per hour for 16 min. The maximum time allowed is 15 minutes so all that strain on the car has got us maximum penalties-very disappointing. At the top we are in cloud so not much to see. We eat up there and make slow progress down the hill And into the hotel for drinks and rest. Lovely old fashioned wooden hotel. The competitors are staying all over the village in these lovely wooden hostels. I am depressed about the hill climb and Zippy's inability to get up in less than the maximum time. I suggest to the Team members that maybe we shouldn't even attempt it but we agree to do the climb but take it easy and save the car.

7th October – Grobming to Rijeka, Croatia

Not allowed into Parc Ferme until 10 minutes before-All so alien to us. Timed away again to a countdown. Onto main road to first off road test. Realised after a time we do not know where we are. Grim realisation that following a roadbook and using an electronic tripmeter requires total concentration and ignore the Map. Maps are just for recovering your steps if you are lost.

Anyway we recover ourselves after me blaming Liz and make the Time control Ok although Liz is in the Fuel Station shop at the control as we are due to go through the control. Time controls have to be arrived at the minute given to you in your time book. You cannot be early or late as each carry a penalty.

We are through the time control and then queue for a timed off road section. Real stress inducing stuff-countdown from 10 secs and satellite controlled and linked clocks all around the circuit. We just follow the dust from the other cars as they drive along the chalky tracks through the fields. Bumpy track with high central ridge. We take several wrong turns much to the amusement of the Marshall's but not amusing for me. We chase and are baulked by the Smart Car as he has no ground clearance and we are being pushed by the Renault 4. We finish not really knowing what's going on. We then continue to another circuit and forget that we are no longer racing and start pushing a Vauxhall Corsa through some woods. Along the way I forget that my lights are not on so put them on. The Corsa thinks that I am flashing to overtake! We do the next circuit without event. We enjoy a coffee break whilst we wait for our departure time. French TV are there and take particular interest in the 2CV and Renault 4. The interviewer says that 2CV's are rare and getting more valuable in France.

We then repeat the 2 circuits completed earlier enjoying ourselves more and with the route book really beginning to click. We are really pushing the Smart car now so he gets out of the way.

Onto time control at Angouleme where we are all as high as kites talking about the off road experience of the morning. No repairs needed except the adjusting knob has come loose on one of the shock absorbers. We then set off for an 800 km drive to Madrid.

The car is becoming hotter and hotter so we bung up the heater outlets with rags which is quite effective.

Passes without event except the constant cat and mouse antics with the HGV's-we overtake downhill and they overtake uphill. Never knew there were such hills in central Spain. We arrive at hotel at about 23-45 zonked out.

2 October -820 kms Madrid to Marbella

Up at 06-00, no breakfast onto road and set off for Marbella. We have to be there by 15-00. The car trundles on and on. We are overtaken by everyone again and again. We make Marbella on time. Lunch by beach at 16-00 and then back to prepare the car for tomorrow's adventures at the "Gun Club" A marshall wandering around the car park tells me that the test tomorrow is very rough and that he felt it was too rough for amateurs. Very re-assuring! I raise the ride height as much as possible and take as many spares out as possible and leave them in our room. Other competitors think our car looks like a moon buggy with all that lovely ground clearance!

3 October -200 kms Marbella to Marbella

Up at 6-30 for a 7-30 departure to the Gun Club. We arrive at the Gun Club late as the road book road number does not agree with the road sign. The approach to the Gun Club is a ridiculously steep concrete 1.5km track. The car skips up the concrete in first gear and at the top the oil pressure light is coming on at idle. We await our departure time on the first stage of the test. We start to fold back the roof and are advised by a Marshall that this would not be a good idea. Why- we find out soon enough. The cars are counted

down at 1 minute intervals down a very steep shale track with 90 degree bends over washaways and then up the other side. We are actually chasing a Peugeot 205! At the end of the test we realise that we and the car's interior are a nice shade of dirt. Anyway onto the next test which has a much longer target test time. We race there with the other competitors and find that on the bendy roads we can almost keep up. The start for the next test is a very steep hill start with the first 1 km on tarmac. We make the hill start after queuing for our place and crawl up the hill in first gear. At the top we bear right onto a forest track which is mainly rock and again with sharp bend's and occasional uphill hairpin bend. The going is very fast for the conditions and we are constantly moving over to let the much faster cars through but we do overtake some cars which in the main are either in the ditch or have gone over the edge and awaiting rescue. This does make you drive with a little more care for a few hundred metres then you are off again. The 2CV is good here as you have to drive with your foot to the floor in second gear and just steer it-you are not going to get into too much trouble with 33bhp and the Michelin M+S tyres are fantastic in this sort of terrain. One of the alternative tracks that should have been taped off has the tape down. We waste time deciding which way to go as we have neglected the tripmeter! We wait for the next car and follow him to the conclusion some 40 minutes later. What next? We realise we have to do both courses again! The first is better- we know what to expect. We queue for the second and off we go. But half way through I realise that the left hand headlight is on and pointing at me and then the right does the same. I gamble that we can make the finish by just doing the attach nuts up hand tight. Wrong! The left falls off some 3kms further on and is bouncing off the wing. We stop where it is safe and I attempt to tape the left light to the light bar. We restart and the tape soon lets go but I decide to continue and re attach the light after the finish. We finish still faster than the first time so would have been a lot quicker had it not been for the lights. I attach the light with one of the nuts for the front wing and continue back to the time control at the hotel. We check in on time and I set about what was to become a regular routine-repairs after the days events. I re-attach the light properly and remarkably even the bulb still works. But the alignment? Guesswork as the sun is still shining. Have lost 1 heat exchanger dump tube and 1 of the 3 bolts holding on the forward right hand shock absorber attachment plate. No problem I'll just go and get another from the sweep vans. Nope. No one has a 9mm bolt – special Citroen size? I bodge it up with an 8mm bolt with a self-locking nut on the inside. The first of many realisations that you cannot walk in anywhere and buy a part for a 2CV.

4th October 406 kms Marbella to Fes

Up early, no breakfast as we go to Algeciras to catch the boat to Tangiers. We soon realise that the headlight alignment is not ideal as everyone approaching flashes us. A local overtakes brakes pulls in and then comes up behind us with full beam headlights! We stop and adjust as much as possible and then carry on. We go round and round the port and cannot find the meeting point. We can find the check in but we need to get a stamp from the meeting point. Eventually we follow someone else. We go into a barrier controlled car park and await our departure time. Its here-we get into the car and are the last to leave and the barrier won't lift. We try and try but to no avail. We call over the attendant who try's our card again without success and then he operates the

override and we are out. Phew! Into the check in and another wait. Onto the ship and an uneventful crossing except for the interminable queues for document checks by the Moroccan authorities. There is a quick presentation by the marshalls who will not return to the UK with us as they mainly live in Spain and France. They award a prize for most pleasant crew to our Team Members Andy and Charlotte in their Matiz.

Off the boat into another queue for more paperwork checks. We clear that eventually but are then parked outside the port. Why? So that the Police could escort us in convoy through Tangiers. Off we go and the convoy breaks up. We are into the open country on our way without time control to Fes. At all major junctions Police were directing us and stopping all other traffic. We felt very important! We wound our way to Fes without much incident except that in the Riff Mountain area we were frequently stoned by young children. We still don't know why. Arrived at Fes at around 17-30 and proceed to carry out checks on car. No problems. The Renault 4 team have had an incident during the day whilst following another competitor. The lead car threw pens to a group of roadside children who then ran into the road in front of the Renault 4. The car hit a boy with the door mirror and then swerved into the ditch. The boy ran away but appeared OK. We spent the next couple of hours carrying out repairs and adjustments to the Renault after buying parts. I was becoming paranoid about parts. The Renault 4 boys could virtually buy anything they wanted for their car in the corner shop. I couldn't get a 9mm bolt in any shop!

5th October 571 kms Fes to Marrakech

Up and off for a tarmac road test in the hills to the south west of Fes. As we are so far down the field the road is covered in loose gravel when we begin our test. We start and drive within our limits and come upon a VW Polo upside down in a ditch incredibly with the "OK" sign visible (we all had to quickly display our status when stopping for whatever reason). We get to the end of the test and there is another VW Polo with its cylinder head being removed. They are starting to fall and mentally I think, that's another 2 places up the ladder for us! Competition breeds this heartless attitude! We then start the next stage which is a very scenic route with outstanding twists and curves. However we realise that we are going to find it impossible to make the allotted time. We drive as fast as Zippy will allow but are some 40 minutes behind the time. We arrive at the next time control to find a long queue of cars parked up-why? I throw Liz out of the car to go and get checked in and she starts talking to the crew in front. I shout out of the window that she hasn't got time to chat. I get out of the car and wait for Liz to come back and start to talk to the crew in front who should only be 2 minutes ahead of us but haven't checked in yet but we think we are 40 minutes late. Whats going on? Liz comes back-she can't check in as she has left the Time Card in the car. Car in front says you can't check in yet or you'll get a penalty. Turns out the time card should have been amended. Navigators should have changed time but my navigator had forgotten. Anger and relief at the same time.

We await the start of the next test which is a hill climb over a road which should be closed but the police have failed to turn up. One competitor turns up with all his windows smashed. Children had attacked his car with stones and having halted him by breaking his windscreen proceeded to break his other windows. Part of the never-ending welcome from the Moroccan children.

We are endlessly harassed by children as we await our start time. "Donnez moi un stylo" again and again. No please, no thank you. I confuse them by telling them to ask in English. They try to steal things from inside the car, undo all the doors and try to pull things off the car. I seriously lose my cool and chase one or two. Best to stand by car and they leave you alone.

We start the hill climb and are regularly overtaken after we have pulled off the road. Another strange trait with Zippy was that I was getting brake fade uphill as well as downhill! Why? I guessed that the engine bay was getting so hot on slow full throttle hill climbs that the fluid was overheating. I didn't cure this until a day later when I introduced a cut out into the fitch panel which I guessed would suck out the hot air from the fluid reservoir area. Unbelievably it worked and I never again had any brake fade.

Time trial finishes and we saunter down a very good tarmac road towards Marrakech. Good road and then suddenly dirt and gravel for mile upon mile. Then we meet the road crew throwing down tar and gravel-incredible noise from under car with sticky gravel hitting car. We arrive at hotel on time and proceed to remove sticky gravel from all over car. Liz gets a taxi with one of the other competitors to find the Citroen garage and get the infamous 9mm bolts. She returns with a handful of bolts, none of which are 9mm. We have 3 nights in Marrakech so decide to remove unnecessary kit from car. Tomorrow is the main challenge of the whole Rally-allegedly!!! So much so that competitors are given the option of not completing the main course and taking maximum penalties. We decide that we have come here to do it all and so we shall. The Smart car is encouraged not to do the course because it is so rough but very nobly he decides to complete it.

6th October- 570 kms Marrakech to Marrakech

Up early for a nice breakfast and making a roll for lunch as we are really going into the wild. We have found that with our lack of speed we never get time to eat when other people eat so sandwiches are the order of the Rally for the 2CV crew.

We start off the day and 200metres from the hotel come upon a Toyota Corolla imbedded in the side of a water tanker. We stop as have several other competitors but the crew are dazed but physically OK. We carry on and enjoy a lovely climb up into the mountains. Everyone has overtaken us and when we hit the plateau on top we experience strong headwinds. The wind is so strong we cannot pull top gear so labour along at 80kph in 3rd gear. Because of this wind we are 15 minutes late at the time control. We are the last to start the main event! We set off across the 'classic Moroccan piste' and quickly catch the Smart car which must have started at least 12 minutes ahead of us. We trail in his dust trail and he pulls over. We've overtaken someone and this landscape is spectacular-like a movie landscape with stupendous colours. The going gets rougher and rougher with more rocks and more hairpin bends. We round one and come across the Suzuki jeep from New Zealand going very slowly. We stop and check they are OK-just bent their front axle so nothing too serious! That's 2 down and we're still rolling. We see a car in the distance and we seem to be catching it. He turns left and Liz says turn right-classic question -is Liz right. Always follow your navigator! We turn right and the Mazda turns round and follows us. 3 down! We come across hundreds of kids who try and entice you to go the wrong way. They build stone walls across the road on bends. Some kids have got hold of a broken windscreen

and strewn it across the track. They jump out in front of you-they are ruining the event for me as I am worried I will hit one. We get more into the wilds and leave the kids behind. We come to a very rough downhill rocky section where we push one of the Saab 96's. I am freewheeling while I wait for an opportunity to overtake and the engine stops. Starting a 2CV when the engines very hot-lots of fun! Eventually get going and overtake the Saab. Start to rise up again and see another car in the distance-we catch him and it's a 4 wheel drive Subaru. We take him uphill! We really pat Zippy at this stage. Then the Matiz is in our sight and yes we take them uphill. Race for the finish and we make it in under 2 hours. We did not know at the time but this performance was the making of our overall standing as we were very competitive and for the first time we overtook people! We race for the next time control and make it slightly late but not as late as a lot of others. The time control is in a petrol station so Liz checks in while I fill up with fuel. I do a walk round and check underneath. The forward left hand shock absorber attachment plate is cracked. I convince myself and Liz that it wont get any bigger. We proceed to the start of the Tiz-n-Test mountain climb to be told that the timed trial is cancelled as the Police again failed to close the road. We proceed up the mountain and have a fabulous view and difficult drive against the German camper vans coming down the other way. It's a very very long drive down the other side and it goes on forever. We make the time control around about the right time. We are pretty elated about the days performance and proceed to drive Zippy flat out to Marrakech and overtake the Subaru again but on tarmac! The car is going well and seems to enjoy the abuse. It drives a little indirectly but OK. We get back to the hotel and everyone is as high as a kite. We finished! We get beers and proceed to look around car. The cracked plate is completely sheared so I remove it to get it welded. The hotel has a maintenance department and they very kindly weld up the plate. Upon my return I decide to look at the right hand side of the car. Not quite right? Front right hand side attachment plate is cracked and the shock absorber is in 2 pieces! What about the rear? The rear shock absorber is in one piece but the piston rod is bent to almost 90 degrees. Both shock absorbers have bent and pushed up the floor above them. In retrospect we were wrong to fit the Dampertech Gaz adjustable shock absorbers as they were just too fragile for this purpose and caused endless problems with the attachments. Tomorrow is a day off so we went to bed prepared to go shopping for shock absorbers tomorrow. Our damage is nothing compared to others and we can at least still drive the car.

7th October – 0kms Phew!

Up for a late breakfast and a trip out to the Citroen dealer. Although Liz went there in a taxi on Friday night and thought she knew where it was after an hour we admit defeat and return to the hotel for directions. This was after waving down a French registered 2CV who directed us somewhere that we never did find. Although this is Sunday we are assured that all things are open in a non-Christian society. Wroooooong! The dealer was shut, as were most garages. Mr Speedy the quick fit outlet was open but after putting the car on the ramp said they couldn't find anything similar to fit. We drive around and find a few back street motor factors who come out with various non useable bits including Citroen hydraulic spheres! After 3 hours we give up and return to hotel. I have many other repairs and servicing to carry out. I start to strip

wings etc from the car and William, another competitor, tells us he has found somewhere open to get anything! So he takes Liz off with the broken shock absorbers. I carry on repairs and 1.5 hours later Liz returns brandishing 2 second hand shock absorbers. After trying the shop who didn't have anything, they were taken in a taxi to a scrap yard. They picked the best looking car and asked for one front and one rear shock absorber to be removed. They watched while they did it and paid £20 and came back triumphant. I was so pleased I immediately went to fit them. One on the front-no problem and then one on the back-not long enough! Somehow a front shock absorber had been fitted to both front and rear! So I now have 2 different front shock absorbers and 1 rear! That's all I can do so leave the car for the day. One of the Renault 4 guys has a birthday so we go into the old town and have a Moroccan Taghade meal overlooking the market. Fantastic atmosphere even though we hear that the bombing of Afghanistan has started.

8th October- 331 kms Marrakech to Agadir

Up early and set off towards Agadir. The car is quite a handful and the rear left hand shock absorber is now leaking fluid badly. I decide to take it off and drive without any rear shock absorbers. We have a fantastic gravel track race and we are right up behind a Proton but can hardly see due to the dust clouds. We slow down as it is getting dangerous due to the lack of vision. The next time trial is very soon after the first and is more dangerous with very steep ledges and tight bends. We start ahead of the Proton but then let him by. We then catch them up as they have a flat tyre. We progress around the ledges very carefully and finish without further event. We progress to the time control and upon stopping I inspect the suspension. To my horror I find that the spring pot rear attach lugs are cracking away from the rear suspension arms. This could have been caused two days before or could be as a result of driving fast on rough roads without shock absorbers. Our next time trial is a very long tarmac hill climb, which is bad news for us as we amble up in 1st and if we are lucky 2nd gear. We are glad that there is no more rough roads today as the car needs serious attention. Almost like Formula 1 strategy decisions we decide to risk being late into Agadir and have welding repairs done to the car before Agadir. Tonight is Parc Ferme so we would incur greater penalties if we had repairs in Agadir. Starting to get to grips with this whole penalty thing! We arrive in a small town and ask 3 separate garages to do some welding and get passed from one to another. We then see a fabricator who is making some market stall frames. He is able to weld up the rear spring attachment lugs. I have to gee him up a bit but eventually he does an amazing weld repair to both sides, inside and out. His only eye protection from the arc welder is a pair of wrap around sun glasses. I take off the Tank guard as without shock absorbers we have bottomed out on this. I beat it straight and am amazed at the amount of gravel trapped by the guard. We must have been carrying 3kgs of stone! The fabricator also tries to weld the shock absorber rods. We fit one only as we are running tight on time but still have a chance to make the next control. We pay the fabricator but he doesn't want a tip! However his friend tells him to take it. We take pictures of him, which he loves. He then offers me the washing facilities- Daz and a bucket of water! I gladly use these and get into the car. We get strapped in but there is a lot of unrest outside the car so I get out and look at what the problem is. The welded shock absorber has already snapped in half! Lucky it

did or it would have dropped and lifted the back end of the car when we were moving. I remove the offending item and throw it in his bin and off we go. We are now short of fuel so have to fill up. Amazingly we still arrive at the hotel on time and park the car without anymore work being carried out. Whilst we have been driving the boys at Frome have been trying to locate shock absorbers. There are no new ones but the Citroen dealer has found 2 2CV's at the scrap yard. Another part of our strategy was to park up and use a Taxi to take us to the scrap yard. They are cheap and we would probably only get lost. We check in and go straight to the taxi rank. The driver is very chatty and helpful and takes us 20km out of the city where we find the scrap yard. The Moroccan scrap yards are organised by manufacturer, which makes things very easy to find. We find the Citroen breaker and he has a very nice Dyane which he is driving so we agree a price to remove both his rear shock absorbers-£24. I also find a 2CV so that I can remove the infamous 9mm bolt that I have been without for the past few days. The kids at the scrap yard are very helpful and ask what I do. I tell them that I fix aeroplanes (well a long time ago now), which they think is so funny they run and tell the boss. He comes out laughing and asking why I fix aeroplanes and drive a 2CV! Taxi back to the hotel via a beer shop and am starting to feel a bit rough. Take shock absorbers into room and wash them in bath! Next into bath is me but I feel really rough now. Difficult to get out of bath and drink beer! That night was probably one of the most unpleasant I have ever had even with strong doses of Lomotil and Antibiotics.

9th October- 623 kms Agadir to Ouarzazate

Amazingly I still get up- with the pressures of time controls really driving you. Off to Ouarzazate today, which is where they film a lot of Hollywood films-Star Wars, Lawrence of Arabia etc. We await our entry to Parc Ferme (STD less 10 minutes). Liz checks out of the control even though I am still fitting the shock absorbers. This is strategy again. We also start to plan our fuel strategy so as to be as light as possible for the tests. This adds time as the tins takes ages to drain. We are off about 5 minutes later.

A lot of today's route is very scenic but with depressingly dry oasis towns with the greenery fading into brown. Some easy and some hard timing over long distances (difficult with all my enforced stops behind the banks!) Having said that the next test is part of the Paris-Dakar route and is very muddy. This test has lots of different tracks all going in the same direction we guess as a result of its use as a racetrack. These off road tests are really strange as when they start you think with all the stone noise that this is unbearable and then after a minute or two that this is really fun. I enjoy this run but to keep things exciting I see what I think is the oil pressure light flashing so throttle back and declutch to find that the indicator warning light is flashing for some reason. We carry on and a tap on the relay puts out the light. The horn also packs up. Amazingly we actually beat one of the Toyota Yaris's, which are our class leaders on this test. We arrive at the checkpoint and find the horn wire has pulled off the horn so easily fixed. We then proceed to the hotel, which is again Parc Ferme. We are early so check over car and find that the forward shock absorber attachment plate is cracked again. So we venture off to find a welder and don't waste time with a garage. We find a fabricator and for £1.50 he welds up the plate in situ. We are still in time so return to hotel and quickly remove fuel tank guard to remove stones, which get lodged between the tank and the

guard, which could become a hazard. We check in on time and get car into Parc Ferme. Early meal and then in bed by 20-30 after last nights disturbed sleep.

10th October – 415 kms Ouarzazate to Merzouga

Up early feeling a lot better but Liz isn't so good-More Lomotil and borrowed some from the Brophy's. Set off on time.

We are going through a long sprawling town and the car starts wandering and yes we have a puncture. This is incredible after all the really rough roads that we have covered that we should have a puncture on a street. We proceed towards the next major town and find a tyre shop on the roadside. He mends our puncture with one of our new tubes (we have tubes fitted to all tyres to lessen chance of tyre being dislodged from rim and deflating) and charges very little for an immediate job.

Off we go to the spectacular shear sided Gorges du Todra, which is a real tourist trap with hundreds of buses, and racing cyclists who don't pull over and tell us to get off road! From here we head off for the next off road test and enjoy our first sandstorm. The weather from then on is overcast and grim. This next track is really good fun but there is local traffic coming the other way, which is off putting. At the start there is a steep climb and the Matiz catches and overtakes us but we stay with them down the other side, which is so exciting I am laughing. We stupidly have vent flap and drivers windows open and I get plastered in mud as we progress along the test much to the delight of the film crew. Several cars are immobilised at the side of the road which is not usual. At this point I wish this would go on forever but I know that Zippy is suffering with these worn out scrap yard shock absorbers. She is becoming very difficult to drive hard on the tarmac as the back "skips" out and the front digs into the corners. We approach the garage at the end of this test and find it overflowing with competitors. Most trying to get the cars washed, as they are plastered with very thick mud, which makes vision difficult. We are running out of time so just make do with over spray from the cars being washed. We get to the check in OK and wait for our departure time. Off we go and this is 2 time trials across the desert, which is sand, rocks, and washboard (a compacted, rutted sand road). These are taken fast as too slow and the washboard shakes you and the car to pieces. We complete OK and arrive at the old Foreign Legion fort at Merzouga, which for me should be the highlight of the trip-a night under the clear desert skies in a Berber tent. Well the sky is overcast and grim. The Bedouins pull a little stunt on us and get us to drive into deep sand and then charge us to pull us out. Luckily for our credibility others do the same! Renault 4 boys are towed in. They have broken a connecting rod.

Quick check over of our car, but not much light so do minimum needed which is that light fuse again.

We have a good meal with local music and beer. As we ate the results came out and all those cars on the side of the road mean that we have climbed to 26th place. I am secretly very proud and pleased but cannot show it with our new friends around who have not fared so well. We retire to our tents and do you know it rained and it came through the tent-this is the Sahara! After my earlier elation I am now depressed.

11th October – 512 kms Merzouga to Fes

Up early, its dark and raining. No breakfast. Queue for start and set off immediately on a time trial back across desert. Less dust with the rain but after 15kms loud banging from under car. Stop to find front left hand shock absorber plate broken in two and shock absorber just swinging. Tie it up with wire and continue on. I drop Liz off at the checkpoint and go off to find welder. In the delay we didn't check our arrival time and unfortunately Liz checks in early, which carries a big penalty. I find the Renault 4 and Nissan Micra in a garage and yes they do welding. I remove the plate and the mechanic does a very impressive repair to my plate. I bid the Renault 4 team goodbye and return to the check in to pick up Liz and refit the plate and another scrap yard shock absorber. All the Gaz shock absorbers are now in Moroccan rubbish bins. We restart and venture off in what is now very heavy rain. We have lent all our cash to the Renault 4 team so need cash machine desperately. We go through several towns but can't find Banks. After 1 hour we see a Bank so I pull in and the engine stops. We spend 45 minutes trying to get the engine going again in some of the heaviest rain I have seen. We fail. We have a spark, fuel and compression but it will not start. We use loads of WD40 but all to no avail. I have lost logical thought and reason now with the rain and the cold. The Sweep van passes so we wave him down. Andy spends 15 minutes going over the same things as me. He suggests that we change the spark plugs. I put in a new set and Zippy burst into life! I still don't understand why 2 should go at once. We set off to try and make up the 60 minutes that we have lost which is so difficult because of the heavy rain. We take out the heater bungs for the first time since day 2 to try and warm up.

We are encountering a lot of surface water and some rock falls on the roads which is slowing all the traffic. We are then in a traffic queue in the middle of nowhere. We stop and we get out to see what has happened. There is one of the Marshall's cars in the queue. The road is shut with a 1 metre deep fast flowing torrent across it. The prognosis is that it could be 6 hours before it subsides to a safe level. We ring the Matiz team who are ahead and they tell us that the whole Rally is halted some 50 km's up the route. Consequently all time controls and tests have been cancelled. Relief for us with our 60-minute stop but when would we get going. The back up Land Rover arrives and after 60 minutes they decide that they will tow us through with engine off. This would be for safety reasons as they feel our little car would be washed away! We get out other side and start off under our own steam with the confidence that the Sweep's are behind us. We go through a lot more minor washaways and eventually catch up with rest of the Rally. The stop is in an extremely isolated, windy and cold place with lots of miserable people. The check in that has been hastily organised here to make sure everyone is together are very relieved to see us-someone cares!

After about 90 minutes here the cars start to go through. We wait and eventually the Marshall's insist that we, the Smart and Matiz are pulled through for safety reasons. We don't object and this is deeper than the last one. We restart the engine and then proceed on one of the most dreary, miserable and slow journeys ever. Endless stops and queues. Eventually we break through to Midelt where there is a detour around a 2-metre flood. The traffic chaos here was unbelievable. The Police just hid whilst our Marshall's tried to organise some order even for local traffic. We sat in a queue in a desperately poor area of the town and the children were very aggressive and

threatening. After a 2 hour wait Liz said she didn't care if we were carried away by the flood as she could not stand these children any longer! So we ventured into the torrent with high revs in 1st gear and got about 2/3rds of the way across when the engine died! Then the children were our saviours as some were in the river and came and pushed us out of the river (for money of course) We were then on the other side and relieved especially looking back on the chaos behind us. I got out the WD40 and with a quick spray over the Lumention unit Zippy burst into life. For the first time I let Liz have a cigarette in the car. Off we went into an area that was a little drier. Stopped for fuel and were stoned by children whilst in the Garage this time-Morocco is wearing a little thin with us.

That 213 km sector has taken us 8 hours. Only another 255 kms to go. It is now dark and our lights again illuminate the sky very well. I try and adjust them but they are not much better. We soldier on and trail a bus for some time, which is going very fast. Someone who will not overtake is also following us. Eventually we realise that it is a Marshall making sure that we make it home.

We arrive in Fes totally pooped at about 21-00 but others are still behind us. Quick meal and then bed.

12th October 398 kms Fes to Marbella

Today is not competitive. We have to be in Tangiers for a 12-30 boat. We have a very pleasant drive up with quite sunny weather. However when we arrive at the boat we realise that those who were early caught an earlier boat. Much concern and excitement over the cars that were being recovered including the Renault 4. A Renault 5 had been bought in Marbella in readiness to donate an engine to the Renault 4 tomorrow.

Our boat was late. However we get into Marbella at about 18-00 after an uneventful drive from Algeciras. Nice dinner down by the sea and a great relief to be out of Morocco.

13th October 0 kms Pheww!

We had arranged for new shock absorbers and end plates to be in Marbella to greet us. However due those international shippers DHL not realising that there was a Bank Holiday in Spain on the 12th October the parts had not arrived. We were told to go and pick them up from Malaga Airport. I took another team member down as well as he had a parcel coming with DHL. He got his parcel after much hassle but even though I could see mine they would not let me have it. After 2 hours I decided to do without and returned without the parcel. To this day the parts are still Spain as they followed us around!

We did all the necessary to the car for its scrutineering at 12. Only item to fix was that the car apparently needed a wash!!!

Spent another 2 hours carrying out necessary maintenance and then went to help the Renault 4 engine transplant. Those involved all finished late and enjoyed another beachside meal.

14th October – 420 kms Marbella to Badajoz

Left early and reached next time control with plenty of time to spare. Met Spaniard who was a big 2CV fan and built homebuilt aircraft with Visa engines (He has contacted us since!). We then had very pretty and sunny drive up to Badajoz without event.

15th October – 534 kms Badajoz to Villa Real

Lovely scenic drive today up to first test. This test looks more like those rally stages on TV. It is slightly slippery mud and gravel and running through forests. Some of it is very steep so of course we struggle. However it is good fun and we proceed to the next. We are warned that this has very steep cliffs at the edge and is slippery. Some people just don't listen! We pass 3 cars off the edge (1 we don't even see). These mistakes allow us to maintain our position at the end of the day.

We have a winding drive up through the Doura Valley to the Hotel. The extra rear exhaust mount has broken away but we can't find any welding. I strap it up with wire and refix a drive shaft boot.

16th October – 533 kms Villa Real to Leon

Early out of the town in foggy conditions. We have a circuit test at a race track called Lousarda. It is a mixture of sand and tarmac. This event is unusual as we are all there together so we see some of the experts for the first time and they all watch us. We do 2 circuits and thoroughly enjoy ourselves-wished we could do more circuits. Make our way off track to rapturous applause from fellow competitors-they cannot believe the lean angles achieved by Zippy. This is common theme throughout the Rally mainly from people who are behind us on winding roads-how do you stay upright? Of course we say it is all skill but we really know it is the car.

Next time control is very tight on time and through built up areas. We are late. Another gravel test and another late check in. Then onto the infamous Fafe jump, which we are told, should not be taken too slowly or too fast. We take it at about 25 kmh as that is all we can achieve up the slope and Zippy barely extends her suspension arms! We are late at the next control but a car is there that took the jump too fast and pushed his radiator up. We leave and 2 km's down the road Liz realises she has left her Timecard there. We turn in a very narrow road and are approached by the Citroen Van coming the other way with a timecard hanging out of his window. We turn round again and set off on a very long sector to Leon. We venture over some of the Pilgrims ways to make this more interesting and Marshalls are on route to check that no one takes the much faster motorway route.

When we eventually find the city centre hotel there is underground parking. However the spiral is so tight I have to take several bites of each corner. We realise that our lead over the next car is being seriously eroded so I am depressed. He has a broken engine mount which is strapped in with a ratchet strap. I wish the roads were rougher as it would slow him down.

17th October – 529 kms Leon to Santander

Very early start and I am down trying to manoeuvre car out of car park without holding anyone up. We get lost in Leon. Find right road and have wet drive out to first time control nicely situated in Parador. We are still running a tight fuel strategy and have to pass time control for next fuel station. After we find one we return to the Parador and confuse the lead cars who are now going past us in the opposite direction.

The route to the next control was uneventful (except for high winds) and we actually managed to be there early enough to get a coffee - what a luxury! Next control without much time to spare and then straight into a very twisty tarmac hill climb. This was so much fun but the next car overtook us up the hill and then the Matiz so we knew we were under a lot of pressure. Liz was not

worried as she thought they were all wonderful but I didn't realise how competitive I had become. At the top of the hill it was blowing so much you could hardly get out of the car to check in. The Marshalls at this and many other stages were Chris and Pip who run the 2CV Carhire Company in Cognac in France. Obviously they were always willing us on. Onto next control but late in –the timings seem to be much tighter now. As we went down this hill we realised several very fast cars were chasing us so we pulled over. These were not our own rally but were carrying out a survey for a forthcoming national rally. Of course some of the more adventurous in our own rally were chasing them-kids!

The next leg is one big 50km hill climb through the Picos and we go probably too fast but are still losing time. We get to the top and the road book says there should be a stop sign. Its not there so we carry on and on. We lose confidence and turn round then meet people coming down who say the road book is wrong. We turn round again and charge down the hill all the time thinking about the next car eating into our lead and less about our own safety than I should have been.

We make the control 10 minutes late and very angry. Onto the next check in and we are overtaken by people who keep going the wrong way-particularly the Kiwi's. After next check in we proceed to the last test of the Rally, which of course is another tarmac hill climb. I am resigned to the fact that we have probably lost 2 places. We start the climb with a little boost from the Marshall and enjoy ourselves even though we have to get out of the way of the flyers. After winding our way to the top we finish-yes that's is! I let Liz have another cigarette- the second of the whole Rally that I have allowed in the car-what a tyrant! She thanks me by stubbing the end out on the floor of the Car-Women!

We wend our way down the hill to Santander and I am more relaxed now as there is nothing I can do. We arrive at the hotel and everyone is congratulating everyone else. Looks like it's over then. Thank goodness for that. We check in and have beer, lots of it. After about 2 hours someone brings in the results and we have managed to stay in 26th place by just 9 seconds! Very, very happy. Have boozy meal and party till the small hours. Unbelievably this is the most relaxation we have had in 3 weeks.

18th October – 95 kms Santander to Bilbao

Up late and saunter along to Bilbao for the 12-30 boat to Portsmouth. We arrive with plenty of time into the queue for check in. I stop the engine and Zippy will not restart-She doesn't want to go home! I change the plugs and hey presto she starts. Who said it was over. Then the Royal Navy car arrives being pushed with a fuel pump failure. We park up and walk around and realise that the second place Peugeot has been towed in and has broken a connecting rod. The Rotary Club Ford Focus had burnt out its clutch. It really isn't over. Lovely sleep on the boat then more celebrating. Andy and Charlotte in the Matiz (in our team) are engaged-how romantic a shipboard proposal.

19th October – 90 kms Portsmouth to Brooklands

After a very pleasant crossing we disembark to a damp dark English evening. We are nearly first off. We cruise up the A3 and are diverted to a hotel so that the second place car can catch up- running on 3 cylinders apparently. Still one more than us but no one waits for us!

We then line up for the finish at Brooklands and guess what that headlight fuse fails again. Across the finish and that really is it.

We are in 26th place out of 65 cars. We have beaten Ford Focus's, VW Polo's, VW Golf's, a Mazda 323, a Honda Civic, Peugeot 106's, a Peugeot 206, a Renault Megane, a Subaru Justy, a Suzuki Jimmy, a Suzuki Ignis, Toyota Corolla's, Vauxhall Corsa's and a Vauxhall Astra.

Footnote

Is the 2cv the right car to do this Rally with? With the knowledge we now have and with minor improvements and less weight I believe we could finish in the top 20.

Would we do it again? Yes tomorrow.

Would we recommend it? No as we would lose all sympathy if there were more than 1 2CV! Also you have to mistreat you're car terribly which may be a problem for some. I found this quite difficult to adapt to but the car seemed to respond well to abuse. I will take Zippy again and am already making plans- just haven't decided which Rally!

Does it affect you personally? Yes, it is drug like and in particular I had a great deal of minor depression when it finished. You make so many friends that you rely on so much and the levels of adrenalin generated are enormous. It is difficult to wake up and not see Zippy waiting there, the routine of packing, check out, time controls and yes, the competition.

There is some very odd body language surrounding a 2CV. Those who were trying to be very competitive and who probably had sponsor pressure didn't communicate too much with us when they were placed behind us. When they were in front they loved the 2CV! Can you imagine telling you're sponsor that you're £20,000 professionally prepared brand new car was beaten by a 27 year old Citroen 2CV! This gave me an enormous buzz!