



We were on the verge of putting an entry in during 2010 to celebrate our 25th Wedding anniversary when the **Eyjafjallajökull** volcano decided to erupt and so when it was announced that the event would run in 2015 we immediately put our name down on the “interested list” and then sent in our entry. So the car, full of spares and thick winter coats was delivered to Immingham on the 31st March ready for loading into a container for the crossing to Reykjavik.

A very early flight from Manchester saw us arriving in Reykjavik at breakfast time on Thursday morning so we walked along the sea front and into town as our room wasn't ready. Returning to “The Grand” hotel later we met up with Andrew Twort and Claudine Bloom (team members from the sun run) and Mike & Helen Tanswell to form our new team “Puffin”.

On Friday those of us already in Reykjavik were allowed to collect our cars from the docks a day early, just as well as Maisie started first time out of the container but then decided to “die” 10 minutes later – this was eventually tracked down to a broken rotor arm – luckily we had a spare – but we don't like using spares, just in case we need them later in the week. Later Clive and I set off to explore the city, the imposing Hallgrims-kirkja church, Penis museum (yes that's right but it was closed), Sculpture of a Viking ship, Perlan viewpoint perched on top of the hill above 6 hot water storage silos affords fantastic 360° panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains and also the incoming weather, time for another coffee break.



Iceland covers 103,000 square kms or 40,00 square miles and has a population of approximately 325,700 mainly living around the coast (just like Wales) but almost 65% live in the greater Reykjavik area.

Saturday – scrutineering was held near the hotel where we were presented with a map book, two road books, tests and speed table book, various maps and tourist guides, hat, gloves & scarf (very useful once on the road) and enamel badges. Most of the crews then spent a leisurely afternoon marking up our books etc before the welcome dinner that evening.

Sunday – The ceremonial start at Harpa, an amazing concert hall where the outside walls are made of glass cells like a honeycomb and are lit at night representing the colours of the glaciers, they have even been known to play “space invaders” in lights on the front. After a short test in the adjoining car park we were on our way.



250km to Hamar – travelling east and north we would have glimpses of Mount Hekla, “Elf houses”, visit a 1km wide waterfall along a gorge and see hot springs. Most of the roads are raised up with yellow marker posts and few signs – bends, gradients, narrows for bridges and cattle grids, the surface can suddenly change from smooth tarmac to rough or very rough volcanic gravel and there appeared to be only one set of traffic lights outside of Reykjavik on the whole island!! A little bit of Armco on some of the steepest drops but otherwise no protection so you had to keep your concentration especially with the strong winds, twice we were blown over the white line!



6 Jogularities today, interspersed with tests before a coffee or lunch break – Thorufoss 22.8km with 19 changes of speed and only one change of direction, it was apparent how few roads there are and most of the minor ones only go to farms etc. Hvalfjordur 9.24km – 6 changes of speed, Tunga 25.23 with 3 changes of direction and 14 speed changes, White River 5.51km, Hreppslaug 16.76 and Logalan at 21.25k. Most of the jogularities were on very rough roads and we had a puncture on Hreppslaug – stones had slashed the tyre, fortunately the service crew had an inner tube and so we were back to 2 serviceable spares. A main control at Deildartunga Hot Springs gave us a little leisure time to take in the spectacle and view the start of the pipeline at 74km taking hot water to heat the houses back in Reykjavik. At lunch we were 9th overall but had dropped to 11th by the end of the day, the car felt good so we decided we ought to get out of holiday mode and into the rally.

Monday Day 2– 425kms to Akureyri – the second largest town with a population of 18,100 and an old trading post founded in 1602. Today we would have several long transit sections allowing us to soak up the stunning scenery, only 4 jogularities and 1 regularity but totalling 100k plus 4 tests



Queuing for a test and following the immaculate mini shipped from Australia for the event by Phillip & Lyndy Blunden.

Tuesday Day 3 – 370kms to Egilsstadir – north east Iceland. We had a test just after leaving the hotel, a short transit section, followed by a Jogularity then another test. The coffee stop was at an amazing car museum tucked away in the middle of nowhere. The two main halls were absolutely packed with cars and commercial vehicles only inches separating each one, extremely well stocked stores, cabinets of items of interest including early mobile phones. With as many cars again languishing outside waiting for some TLC it felt as though any car of interest on the island had “retired” to the museum.



Then followed a 31.54k Regularity on speed tables when a little bit of red mist resulted in a 23e penalty for assuming we had passed the last control and getting 20mph mixed up with 20kph!

The afternoon saw us passing through the active volcano region but fortunately/unfortunately we didn't see much action. As we were about to start the test at the Myvatn geothermal baths, a huge larva dust storm blew up from the valley totally obscuring half the cones, Clive was still only 1 second slower than the fastest time! We had a little bit of leisure time now so some competitors had a dip in the baths but the smell of sulphur was too strong for me, instead we chose to walk "on the moon" around the mud pools and fumaroles.



Another coffee halt was at Modrudalur – the highest farm in Iceland and very remote, most of the buildings were enclosed in turf for insulation and with fuel at 15kr per litre it was the most expensive on the island, the church was built single handedly by the farmer in 1949 in memory of his wife.



Checking the car at the end of the day the alternator had worked loose which explained some odd instrument readings during the day and had to be tightened, the split washer had broken and dropped out but more worryingly Clive discovered a lot of play in the front nearside TCA ball joint, a bit worrying with three more days to go and no spare – but we had now moved up to 7th overall.

To be continued...