

Clitheronian rally report. A 250mile round trip from Wolverhampton to East Lancashire proved worthwhile for Jonty and Nick Bloxham when they claimed their first win on the Clitheronian Road Rally in their GpA spec 106.

The Peugeot pair clinched victory by just 45 seconds from Simon Bentley and Ian Gibbins in their Mivec powered Proton.

Roger Powley and Carl Williamson took the remaining podium place with last year's Illuminations Rally winners John Leckie and Paul Holmberg fourth, both in Proton Gtis

They had been leading after the first card but dropped four minutes over the second section to hand top spot to the Bloxhams.

And top seed Steve Retchless and Iain Tullie could only manage seventh, dropping almost four minutes to the leaders on the second Gisburn forest stage, when the battery broke free on their immaculate RS2000, shorting out against the throttle bodies,

Jointly organised by Clitheroe and district Motor Club and the CSMA North West, clerk-of-the-course Paul Buckel and his team laid out a demanding, but well received, 160-mile route starting and finishing at Blackburn with Darwen M65 Services.

"The rally was a great success from everyone's point of view," said Buckel at the finish.

"I would just like to say a massive thanks to all the organising team for all the hard work they have put in, and all the marshals for their support of the event. "We had all 44 controls fully manned, which is no mean achievement."

Jewel in the crown was two stages through Gisburn Forest, held almost immediately after the start, the tricky gravel roads providing entertainment and enjoyment in equal measure.

The chicane was a surprise for many, not least Geoff Goodwin and Ian Graham, who missed by inches first time round, but did it properly on the second run, slamming into the chicane with the front wheels locked up on their Peugeot 205GTi.

One crew who didn't make it that far was expected front-runners James Tyson and Neil Harrison, who were forced to retire their Mini before the action got into top gear.

Competitors then tackled all the popular road rally routes in Lancashire, including the Bowland Knotts, Trough of Bowland, the infamous Dr Who road, Jeffrey Hill and the whites at Coal Pit Lane, Kit Brow and Dandy Birks.

The ford at Kit Brow, near Galgate, was a watery grave for some crews, including David and Yvonne Wainwright.

"Our Rover decided it couldn't swim and refused to go any further in the middle of the ford," said Wainwright.

"After wading out we were grateful for the help of others to pull us out."

But there was success for several East Lancashire crews with Paul Gray and Marcus Pomfret finishing 15th in their immaculate Mini.

Clitheroe DMC pair Paul Redford and Darren Roberts, out for only the second time this year, finished 18th overall and fourth in class, despite the navigator vomiting for most of the night!

Accrington garage owner Simon Boardman was happy just to get a run to 21st overall, helped by navigator Matthew Broadbent who stepped in on the morning of the rally when regular mapman Ian Raynor was forced to pull out.

The organising team were especially pleased to see more novices and semis-experts out this year.