

SOME NOTES FOR GUIDANCE ON ORGANISING TREASURE HUNTS

The Royal Scottish Automobile Club is the authorising body for all motoring events held on the public highway in Scotland, and operates the Motor Vehicles (Competitions & Trials) (Scotland) Regulations 1976 on behalf of the Scottish Executive. A guide to these regulations is set out on sheet SSS/RS2 and copies of the regulations in full are obtainable through HMSO.

Treasure Hunts which have a set route on the public highway will need authorisation through the RSAC unless there are **fewer than 13** competing vehicles. Authorisation will cost £67 for the first 50 miles and an additional £35 for each 50 miles, or part of 50 miles, after that. Most events have a route length of between 30 and 35 miles. Cars competing on treasure hunts generally average about 15 mph, so making the event about two hours in length.

Running a twelve-car treasure hunt to avoid the need for formal authorisation is often just as much fun, with the added bonus for the organiser of not having so many sets of answers to mark!

Navigational Scatter Events are a form of event that are considered automatically authorised under Regulation 4(b) of the legislation, by virtue of the fact that they have no set route and no competition on the public highway. It is important that they are run to the following conditions:

- Places to be visited must be detailed to the participants in the form of points on their own in space (not the standard treasure hunt format of one clue leading to the next).
- Participants should be given a random choice of points to visit, and not be required to visit more than 75% of them.
- The points should be logically placed and participants be free to visit them in any order.
- Participants should be required to leave the car to reach the points. The car becomes an incidental form of transport between the points.
- The event should have no form of timing on the public highway, although a finish time may be specified providing it gives ample time to visit the required number of points.

These events are regularly run by local motor clubs, but may be of little use to members of the general public running an event. The problem is that the obvious way to detail a point in a space is in the form of a detailed map reference with all participants using maps. This may not be practical for a social event. Advice should be sought from the RSAC before undertaking such a venture if you are unsure.

Points to remember when planning your event:

- If you are applying for Authorisation through the RSAC, you must sign a declaration to say that the event will comply with the standard conditions listed in the regulations, (which you should be familiar with before you start), and in particular conditions 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16 and 17 concern treasure-hunt organisers.
- Have an incentive to finish, e.g. a barbecue, or a good country pub. You could include the price of a meal at the finish in the entry fee to stop people who get lost from going home halfway through.

- Issue teams with a sealed emergency envelope giving details of the finish venue and maybe a phone number to ring if they break down; if the envelope is opened, then points can be deducted from the score (at least half-marks).
- Think about where most of the competitors live, before you decide on a finish venue miles out into the countryside from which they will have to drive a long way home afterwards.
- If you are setting a route, a figure-of-eight pattern will enable you to check up on the teams at about halfway, without having to travel too far from the starting point.
- Don't start your teams all together, or at short intervals – you need a good few minutes between each despatch otherwise bunching will occur on the route.
- Don't position clue points
 - in a churchyard anywhere that a service will be disrupted (unless you have permission from the minister);
 - on a busy main road where an accident could be caused by a car stopping suddenly to catch a clue point;
 - anywhere where teams will have to obstruct the passage of other traffic to answer the clue. Think about what would happen if three or four cars all arrive at the location at once;
 - on private land, or anywhere that might cause your teams to trespass
- Don't set the average speed of the event too fast. 15 mph is quite fast enough, any higher and some cars will start breaking speed limits.
- Always emphasise that competition is only allowed within the confines of standard Road Traffic Law.
- Don't leave too long a distance between clues as teams will get bored. On the other hand, the odd longer stretch will cause mild panic in the car if there has been some five minutes or so since the last clue point!
- Try making anagrams or other cryptic clues out of road signs, to give directions at a junction. This is more taxing than just saying "turn left at the traffic lights".
- Marking – you should try and obtain a good selection of easy and hard questions, marked on a scale of 1 to 5 points (say), tailored to give a total out of 100 if possible. For a thirty mile route you would be looking at between 50 and 70 questions, but this largely depends on the features on the area you are running your event in.
- Time penalties – once you have finalised your route, the best idea is to get someone who will not be taking part to run the route beforehand to get some clue as to how long you should expect teams to take. One point per minute late is a common figure, and easily workable. Make sure you always refer to the same timepiece, and have a back-up watch in case of malfunction.
- Teams can be of any size, but obviously a four-man team will have a four-eye advantage over a two-man team. You might wish to consider a handicap of a few points for overmanned teams, but you should make this quite clear to everybody before they enter if you decide to impose this handicap.

- Don't get your clue sheets made up too early, because it is fairly usual for a clue to disappear between the setting and the running of the event. Check the whole route no more than a week beforehand.
- What sort of clues should I have? The majority of treasure hunt questions revolve around extracts from the following list;

Churches

name of minister
times of service
dates on gravestones

National Trust Land

byelaws
any notices thereon

Pubs

name of licensee
opening times
names of beers sold

Farms

name of farmer
price of manure etc

Roadsigns

deciphering anagrams
of places

Post Offices

name of owner
opening time
postbox collection times

Sports Venues

next match
next meeting
cost of entry

Telephone Box Numbers

House

number of chimney pots
colour or door
something unusual about name

Country Houses

opening times
cost of entry

Railway Stations

train times
ticket prices

Rivers and Canals

boat names
depth of/number of locks
bathing restrictions

to name but a few!

- It is important to ensure that your event does not unduly disturb residents living along the route, or disrupt any of their normal daily business. Remember that it is all too easy to provide enjoyment for some at the expense of others' livelihood and peace and quiet. When setting up clue points you should, as a matter of courtesy, ensure that any residents likely to be disturbed are informed of the event and precautions taken to minimise disturbance to them. This is particularly important when such items as house names or garden furniture are used as clues.

*WITH COMPLIMENTS
THE ROYAL SCOTTISH AUTOMOBILE CLUB*