

# **PC Prevails on Peking to Paris**

(On the Silk Route with help from the General Dynamics GD6000 fully-rugged notebook)

***14,000 adventure-filled kilometres from Asia to Europe, via Turkmenistan, in an open-topped car from 1928. Life on the road doesn't get tougher than this!***

The Peking to Paris endurance rally could be the ultimate driving adventure, involving some 14,000 kilometres battling through extremes of cold, rain and blazing sunshine, unpredictable terrain and untold hazards on the roads. And all in cars dating back to 1907 – the year this pioneering trans-continental rally first took place along the historic Silk Route from Asia to Europe.

The competitors may be mad, but they are certainly tough; and so is their kit, including the modern technology essential to ensure their safety and help them keep in touch with followers back home. GPS tracking enables the event organisers to locate any vehicles that may be in trouble, and crews carry a variety of communications equipment – not least to report their progress and share their experiences with family and other followers such as charity donors.

Among the competitors aiming to raise money for good causes, Simon Mackenzie-Smith, Chairman of UK for Bank of America Merrill Lynch, completed the 2010 event driving an open-top 1928 Ford Model A with friend Rupert Marks. Simon is raising money for Debra, the children's skin disease charity, while Rupert – entrepreneur, boat builder and designated car fixer for the journey – supports the Pioneer Sailing Trust, the Essex-based sail training ship for young people which he set up in 1999.

## **Standing Up to Extremes**

During the journey the pair kept their followers informed with the help of a notebook PC, which travelled with them on every leg to act as a mobile office and communications centre. But not just any notebook PC.

14,000 harsh and dusty kilometres in a far-from-watertight car, at temperatures reaching as low as -12°C to as high as +40°C, and with a high probability of suffering some serious

bumps and scrapes, is no environment for an ordinary domestic computer. So Steatite lent them a General Dynamics GD6000; the only [rugged laptop](#) in the world optimised for vehicle deployments.

The GD6000 meets fully-rugged standards including MIL-STD-810F for temperature range, vibration and humidity and the incredibly high IP5x rating for dust ingress protection. The unit is enclosed in a robust and lightweight magnesium-alloy housing and sports a shock-mounted hard disk drive (HDD) and display. Tough inside and out, the PC will survive a fall from 30 inches directly onto a hard surface. And yet it is fully compatible with Windows applications, including web browsing, email and office software.

Since many field-based workers must manage long periods between opportunities to recharge, the GD6000 includes features such as Power Saver power-management software. For Simon and Rupert, tackling daily stages often exceeding 700km between overnight stops, this provided vital extra battery life; after all, the Model A's 1928 electrical system was not designed for charging portables on the go.

"Reliable contact with home is vital on an event like this," explains Simon. "The daily blog, which we kept going even in the Gobi Desert, enabled our generous sponsors to stay close to the action, and also helped to keep us going. Writing helped to make light of some tough situations, and to appreciate the incredible camaraderie that develops between the teams."

A picture says a thousand words, as they say, and Simon and Rupert were able to illustrate each day's events liberally, using the GD6000 as a digital image bank. "The laptop provided reliable storage, and the means to upload selected pictures to our website," says Simon. "It wasn't simply a case of stashing the notebook safely during the day and using it only in a comfortable hotel in the evenings. We were often driving late into the night, and had to complete many tasks on the go."

### **Completing the Mission**

As well as being tough enough to stand up to life on the road, the GD6000 is equipped with a robust touchscreen display featuring General Dynamics' proprietary Dynavue technology for

outstanding outdoor readability. This allowed Simon and Rupert to work in conditions where an ordinary notebook would become unusable. “Like under 40°C sunshine crossing the Kharkhorum desert in Turkmenistan,” quips Simon.

The computer stood up to numerous other hazards, including arid, dusty conditions in Mongolia and Kazakhstan, a crash with a local vehicle in Uzbekistan, and 665km driving through pouring rain in Turkey. “Every time we hit a puddle, a blast of water shot into the car, going up the driver’s leg! Other teams had worse – Poor Karen Ayres fell out of her Itala when the car spun on a mountain trail.”

After entering Greece and crossing to Italy, the conditions became progressively more “normal”. But the going felt just as tough as the weary crews, with their now battered cars having been brought back to life on numerous occasions, soldiered the final few hundred kilometres to the finish and a reunion with families and friends in Paris’ Place Vendome.

“Rupert was undeniably the star of our team, repeatedly putting our Model A “Noddy car” back together again after various bits fell victim to the terrain or simply wore out,” adds Simon. “His genius carried that car to Paris, but neither of us knows computers, so the PC just had to handle the stress without flinching. Happily, it was more than up to the task. We are both grateful to Steatite for their support on what was a hugely enjoyable, but also eventful, journey.

“It was also very successful; with the money kindly donated, and some generous corporate pledges, we have raised close to £100,000 for Debra and the Pioneer Sailing Trust!”

– Ends –

## **About Steatite**

Steatite Limited is a group company of Solid State PLC. Steatite is divided into product divisions: Wordsworth Technology, Steatite Rugged, Steatite Battery and Steatite Embedded, together offering a range of complementary products and systems that range from, industrial computer equipment, batteries, components, timing and frequency products, embedded solutions, and a full range of rugged notebook computers and PDAs.

In addition, Steatite has specialist industry skills in Oil and Gas, Oceanography, Satellite systems, Telecommunications, Medical, Government, Security and Military applications. Dedicated in-house teams support customers by designing, building and supplying the most advanced range of components and systems tailored to their application needs supported by the reassurance of first class quality standards. Based in Redditch, Worcestershire, UK, Steatite employs over 50 people. For more information visit the Steatite web site at: [www.steatite.co.uk](http://www.steatite.co.uk)

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**January 2011**

**Ref. STE/040A**