

Monthly Newsletter October 2025

Sorry!

I know this is late, and missing some of the usual content, but it's been a busy time for those who run the club.

Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Richard Simpson, Editor

Drivers on the storm

A soggy Simon Oates reports from the David Ayers Sporting Trial

This event followed the Sporting Trial hosted the day before by the day before by Camel Vale Motor Club. While being the follow-on event may have boosted entries from 'out of area,' the weather forecast for the day was not good.

The club gazebo was erected on Sunday morning for signing on and every large metal peg available was used to attach it to the ground due to the forecast winds and rain.

Andy Prosser had spent two days planning and fettling the sections; all looked fantastic. We had 18 entrants on the day and could allocate two marshals per section. The plan was to do four sections three times each, and then take a break at mid-day as we had laid on Vic's catering van so all could indulge in its culinary delights.

As we started the trial the weather started to change for the worse. I was on Section Four, and the first few cars made the most of reasonable ground conditions. The first four cars cleared the section, and Nigel Shute and his wife were cock-a-hoop with their clear!

Then the section started to cut up, and the next cars took some inventive lines but most failed to make much progress. As a marshal, it's hard to tell someone who thinks they've got to a five that they have touched the 10 on the way through, but such is trialling.

We altered the section for Round Two but it was persistent rain by now and the sections were getting extreme. Spirits were dropping and everything was trying but still the committed trialists made the best of the conditions and tried different techniques and lines making the most of the changes.

As Round Two went ahead, Andy Prosser and Mike Wevill modified and widened the next set of sections. Once Round Two had been completed it was decided to continue with the afternoon sections without stopping for food. A few disgruntled competitors from other clubs weren't happy with the sections being too narrow and slippery, and said they didn't provide a burger van at their

events and didn't know we had one. *(Sorry, we obviously need to try harder to make the event less demanding and provide poorer facilities – Ed)*

Amazing how people change when they're cold, wet and tired, especially when things don't go their way. Some embraced the conditions and made the most of everything right to the end: it was an absolute pleasure watching how some plan their route and adapt to any changes.

The highlight on the last round was watching Thomas Bricknell plot his route on Section Eight where none of the recent attempts had got higher than Five and his skill and determination got him to the Number One board.

In the end four laps were completed, and then the section markers were picked up ready for a powerwash at a later date. If the weather had been a wash-out on the Saturday and dry on the Sunday I'm sure some people would have felt differently about the event. At the end of the day we have no control of the weather and when it goes bad it needs to be embraced and seriously taken as the ultimate challenge it is.

When I returned to the top field, I found that the gazebo had taken off over the hedge and across the road to be saved by the Fack brothers. They fought with it and managed to dismantle it by the side of the road, the greatest of thanks to them both.

Fourteen of the 18 entrants persisted to the end which was testament to their dedication to the sport. A big 'Thank You' to the land-owner and all marshals and especially to Andy Prosser who did a cracking job but unfortunately the weather had the last word and it was BIBLICAL.

Results are on the website and the next Sporting Trial is the Ron Beer Sporting Trial on Sunday 14th December at Lifton.

PS the gazebo lives and has been repaired for another day, with guy ropes to be bought to strap her down.

Simon Oates

Night and day

Having dried himself off after the David Ayers, the intrepid Mr Oates told everyone he was 'going out for a while and might be some time' before trailering his Liege up to Derbyshire for the Motor Cycling Club's Edinburgh Trial

After 6 ½ hours of travelling up to the Premier Inn at Ripley from Cornwall, I was definitely in need of a bit of sleep. I can confirm that Lenny Henry wasn't in the building and four hours of shut-eye was achieved.

With a bit of thought (rare and unusual) I decided that it would be a good idea to park the tow-car and trailer at the start/finish at Rowsley Station. First came a 40-minute journey to Shireoaks near Worksop to pick up my bouncer, victim and fellow Liege owner Paul Wheatley, and then on to the station: a further 50 minutes journey.

We arrived with 1 ½ hours grace before the start, to find the only parking was at the far end in a dark, remote and narrow (as wide as the length of my car) part of the site. Sure, there was just enough room for all the trailers, but I think we took the last spot. I unloaded the Liege followed by

unhitching the trailer and turning it around, then the car was reversed 150m before I could turn it around and reverse back to the trailer, all in the pitch black of a railway yard (a major challenge for a grumpy old man).

Signing on and sorting other paperwork was seamless and our numbers were received and attached to the car in all four compass points. We were running as team **Liege Larkins** with three Lieges containing Rob & Elizabeth Haworth (220), John & Natasha Early (218) and Paul Wheatley & myself (219).

Off we went at 1.39am, I didn't really know this particular area but luckily Paul was very familiar with it in cars and motorbikes. Seamlessly on to the first section and a queue whilst a car was recovered. **Hob Hay (1)** caused few problems and the restart wasn't hard. Thirty miles to **Haven Hill (2)** and a small chicane in the middle of the section to try and catch a few out. Once we got to the top we spotted a Marlin in trouble and offered to help.

The clutch pipe (plastic!) had got too close to the exhaust manifold and melted. We eventually bodged a repair but struggled to get all the air out of the pipe. They said that they would try a bit longer but eventually had to retire. The last thing anyone wants to see is an early retirement on one of these events after all the time, effort and money invested (*tell me about it – Ed*).

Off through Brassington (where I normally stay) and to **Ballidon (3)** for a restricted drive up a lane and through some fields which can only be described as a filler. On through Elton and to Cliff Quarry (4) where we found different instructions in the official Printed Route Book to our email version. Only a restart for Class 8 and no problems encountered.

Just up the road was the first **Observed Test at Deadwood**. Downhill to a cone which had to be circled clockwise and a short sprint to stop astride line B. I didn't do this very well and forgot to use the hydraulic handbrake. Once completed we moved on 10 miles for a 'splash and dash' at Whites of Calvers petrol pumps and then up through the woods at **Tumbletrees (5)** where class 8 had a restart.

Keeping to the right on exit we joined the tarmac and cruised on to **Haydale (6)** for a restart and another clear.

As we left the section we spotted our Newsletter Editor, Richard Simpson, broken down on his Beta X-Trainer and waiting for recovery. We carried on as we couldn't do anything for him to **Carlton (7)** which can be tricky on the restart when wet but luckily for most there were few failures.

We were well ahead of time when we arrived at the **Monsal Hotel** just after 9.00am for the breakfast stop. A bacon bap (cold and over-cooked) and a mug of tea at a reasonable price (compared to last year) were consumed before chittering away to anyone that stood still long enough.

We then left in original order at our designated time of 10.39 and made our way to **Litton Slack (8)** where there was a restart for classes 7 & 8. I was expecting an impossible hill but it was quite uneventful (2 years in a row) so expect a stinker next year.

Waterloo (9) was next on the list with an easy restart for all classes. We followed the instructions past the famous 'Cat & Fiddle Pub' for over 2 miles to not see the sign for the Stanley Arms Hotel. We turned back and took another road to eventually find our way to **Corkscrew (10)** and a short queue for the hill. Later another competitor commented about the route instructions were sometimes "Somewhat Fictional" but it's all part of the experience.

Chief Marshal Simon Woodall commented that he only saw 31 of the expected 42 cars, did the Cat & Fiddle Triangle consume them all? We completed the restart on the cobbles at the bottom and shook, rattled and rolled our way to the top.

At the top we shook ourselves off and followed the road back to the start of Corkscrew and continued on to **Booth Farm (12)** for an easy climb through the section. A quick dash on to Hollinsclough Chapel Tearoom for a well-deserved drink and cake or two, with 30 minutes to consume. Feeling a bit bloated, we continued on to **Excelsior (16)** where we went high and right on the restart to clear the section.

With enough fuel there was no need to fill up before **Dudwood (17)** where we queued before attacking our section. Dry conditions made the sections easily cleared unlike previous years and there seemed to be a swarm of marshals on and around the two sections.

A second **Observed Test** was done on leaving the section which I think I couldn't have improved on much. Following this we made our way on to **Clough Wood (18)** for another dry section up Ramp A and Exit A to clear the section.

The final section **Clough Mine (19)** was also dry and the restart had plenty of grip. We finished a little ahead of our scheduled time and took a deep breath and relaxed. Paul had done a cracking job next to me and had been clear and concise with his instructions. A thoroughly grand day out by all in the Liege Larkins team and I hope everyone else enjoyed the day.

We could have asked for wetter conditions for the sections to make them more difficult but at the end of the day next year we may get more water than we want and that won't be right!! Our thanks is never enough but a Heartfelt thanks to all that set it all up and made it happen.

Thanks also to Paul Whitley for your company, banter and experience, my love for the sport (waning a bit for the last nine months) has now been reinvigorated so maybe see you all next year?

Simon Oates

How I didn't win a Triple

Richard Simpson clocks up two DNFs and a DNS

What grand plans we make, only to find them dashed by fate?

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Use the Holsworthy Motor Club's Taw & Torridge Trial as a gentle warm-up, travel up to Derbyshire for the Edinburgh Trial, then home to Cornwall to take part in our own club's Tamar Trial. What could possibly go wrong?

I should have known, having done that first event in the illustrious company of John Turner a few years previously, that it could rain!

We finished a heroic last that year after cascading down the running order and finding John's Citroen 2CV just a little out of its depth in the mudbaths left behind by previous competitors. The event was chiefly remembered for the puddles on the roads being so deep that water rushed up the hot-air ducts that run from the engine bay to the windscreen on a 2CV to act as demisters, and coated the inside of the screen with muddy slime. Were internal wipers ever on the Citroen option list?

By the time we got to the end there was about an inch of what looked like tea washing around in the footwell, and the entire outside of the car was clagged beyond belief. In my head, I Christened the event the Tea and Porridge.

It couldn't be that bad this year, could it?

Yes, it could. The forecast wasn't great, but I wore exactly the same rig that had kept me warm and dry on the Land's End during the very wet event last Easter. The route for the Taw was excellent,

with the bikes going on a green lane circuit prior to the first section as a warm-up. There was also an acceleration and braking test on a disused road before the first section. Organisers of other events please note: the marshals on Section One held back the cars (which had a more direct route without the green lanes) until all the bikes were through. This really does seem the fairest way of doing things, as cars can drastically impact on the sections and not for the better.

Cleaned the first section in spite of getting to the 90 degree bend half-way up a little quicker than was comfortable, but from that point on it all went downhill as the rain fell. When I saw one marshal fall over and another loose his welly in the mire, and having cracked my numberplate I made the executive decision to retire at lunchtime. The wet-weather gear that had worked so well on the Land's End failed completely on this event, but then I didn't fall off in a river on the Land's End!

With the bike to wash and service, the next two weeks sped by and it was time to load up the hire van and depart for Derbyshire, picking up my running-mate Rick and his Triumph Tiger Cub on the way through Gloucestershire.

The weather for this year's Edinburgh could not have been better, and we were really looking forward to a great event as we set off into the night. All went well on the first four sections and special test: I footed a couple of times but was still enjoying the event. Then there was a mysterious error in the route book: instructions to turn up an unmarked stone lane were followed, and led us to the middle of a field. We clearly should not have been there, and decide that absence of body was better than presence of mind. Retracing our steps with picked up a gaggle of similarly-confused motorcyclists and then some cars, all looking for this mysterious stone track which apparently was both 'there' and 'not there'.

Eventually one of the car crews opted to drive directly to the 'What Three Words' location of the next section using sat nav, and we rather stupidly followed. Needless to say, the WWW location was for the exit from the section onto the road, and nowhere near the entrance to the section, which was on another road altogether!

At this point, someone pointed out that my exhaust was pouring out what looked like steam in the darkness, but as dawn broke turned out to be oil. Clearly, this wasn't something I could fix with an adjustable spanner and a cable tie. Rick heroically offered to pull out of the trial, ride back to the start, and get the van, but I decided to wait for the trial to pass, then call for a recovery truck (my breakdown insurance doesn't cover trials, but I figured that if I handed my numbers into the course closing car, then I wouldn't be in the trial). I asked to be recovered back to the start. Incidentally, Rick went on to finish 4th and won a Silver medal, so I'm really glad that he carried on.

As it turned out, I needn't have worried. It took four hours for the harassed driver of the breakdown truck to find me (in spite of me repeatedly giving my WWW location, saying what road I was on and more) and then the poor chap scraped the front spoiler on his brand-new MAN trying to turn around. He then told me that he mysteriously "Had another breakdown who wants to go to the same place that you do." I navigated him to some godforsaken spot on the moors where we eventually found the second casualty. It was, of course, a trials car (a Reliant Scimitar that had filled its exhaust with petrol, then blown up). We got back to the start ahead of the end of the trial, and that was that. Probably the nicest conditions there have ever been or ever will be for the Edinburgh, and my event was over before the dawn. Perhaps, if I hadn't entered the Taw & Torridge, the Beta's engine might have lasted the rest of the Edinburgh?

Which brings us to event three. No way I was going to get the Beta fixed for the Tamar. I briefly contemplated entering on the GasGas ES700, but it would have needed new tyres and other tweaks, so I volunteered to marshal at Crackington instead.

This had been marked up to be much shorter and easier than it was for the Lands End Trial, plus there was no clay dumped at the top. The GasGas climbed it easily, more than once. I briefly wished I

had entered the event proper, but the thought of throwing the GasGas up Angel Steps changed my mind again.

Crackington only stopped a couple of bikes on the restart, and most of the cars cleaned it also. Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun, but I noticed one lad, aged about 11, glued to his Playstation in the back of a VW Beetle as it roared up the hill. How times change...when I was 11 I've have almost wet myself with excitement at the thought of a day climbing steep hills in a modified car.

Tales from the Ed's Bike Shed

I pulled the engine out of the X-Trainer, and drained 300cc or thereabouts of gearbox oil out of the exhaust system. It's now off being rebuilt, and that will be a tale for next time, but I can reveal that the crankshaft seal failed because part of the cage of the main bearing behind it came loose and shredded it.

Other news one: I've always avoided supermarket petrol, but had to fill the KTM Adventure up with Tesco Momentum 99 a few weeks back. A remarkable thing has happened since: the ethanol-induced bubbles in the tank graphics have gone. Could it be an ethanol-free fuel?

Other news two: The Aprilia Mille been a bit grumpy: not what you want from a 1000cc V-twin superbike. The grumpiness reached a new height the other week, when it refused to run at under 3000 rpm. Oh, what fun riding home on our local lanes! I filed this under 'sort it later' and more-or-less forgot it. Then I remembered another vehicle I once owned behaving in exactly the same way: a Ford Escort van, no less! I had cured the Ford with a new set of HT leads. Blow me if the same cure didn't work for the Mille. It now runs as sweet as a nut, but given the turn in the weather, I probably won't use it again this year. I wonder what grumpiness it will develop over Winter? One thing I will do is fill it with Tesco Momentum 99 before I put it away...it may shrink the ethanol-swollen plastic fuel-tank back to its normal size...here's hoping.

Till next time

Richard

PS: Don't be shy. Let's hear about your events and projects. Triumphs and disasters both, but remember, the disasters are funnier! richardsimpson94@yahoo.co.uk