

LNCMC Newsletter November 2025

Chairman at Full Chat

Club chairman Simon Riddle reports from behind the scenes at the Tamar Trial

Planning for this year's Tamar Trial started back in the Spring with our first sub-committee meeting. We decided to stick with a similar road route to last year's, which worked really well, but trimmed the mileage slightly and incorporated some different sections.

Our start at the **Proper Ansome Café** was under new stewardship this year, but they were more than happy to continue looking after us despite the very early start! The **Wilsey Down Hotel** once again provided a great finish venue, with thanks also to **Kivells** for use of the cattle-market car park for trailer parking, and to **DS Smith** for accommodating the smaller vans.

In an ideal world we'd have start and finish at the same venue, but logistics make that tricky. Our lunch stop was once again the **Fox & Grapes, Tinhay**, with **Vic's Catering** kindly providing much-needed refreshments this year.

An initial drive-through during the summer gave us a rough plan of the sections, which was finalised in the second drive-through in September. By then, landowners were all signed up, and we knew what we wanted to do – the biggest threat now being the weather!

A final plan for the sections came together about 2–3 weeks before the event, with one very late change after a mini-digger conveniently graded some of the track at the **Trax & Trails** venue, giving us a better option than the one we had previously planned.

The weeks leading up to the trial were very dry – a blessing for setting out poles, but a worry for the day itself. Would the dry conditions lead to an over-abundance of competitors' clean sheets? Minimum tyre pressure limits for competitors on the various sections were set (over a pint at the Fox & Grapes), and we hoped for the best.

As always, the pre-event nerves creep in, but once at the start line I tend to relax a little – by that point, much of the running of the day is left to the lap of the gods. Our aim remains the same: to give everyone a fair chance of seeing the top of the hills, while still challenging the most competitive riders and drivers.

The bikes saw a wide range of scores from 0 to well over a ton, while in the cars, six different classes were represented in the top ten. The winning score was 13, and every section was climbed by someone – quite an achievement!

All was wrapped up by 6 pm, leaving time to relax and reflect on another successful Tamar in the pub.

A huge thank you goes to all on the organising team and those that helped in any capacity - if I named everyone it would be a very long list. We are lucky to have some many we can call on to help with the mammoth number of tasks preparing for the trial.

Finally, thank you to our **fantastic landowners and marshals**, who are absolutely invaluable to the trialling community, and of course to the **competitors** – once again making us the largest subscribed one-day trial for the second year running. We hope you enjoyed it, and please, tell your friends to join us next year as we look ahead to the **79th running of the Tamar in 2026**.

Arkely-MG takes on the Tamar

Bob Blackman finds his luck has turned on the Tamar Trial

So far, 2025 has seen a great deal of activity with the Arkley-MG but not much actual action. After a Did Not Finish on the Exeter and the Edinburgh and a Did Not Start on the Land's End (I share your pain – Ed), I thought I might try a little drive in the country with Sally: notably The 78th Tamar Trial. The event, run by the Launceston & North Cornwall Motor Club in memory of Peter Cooper, started from Maunders Yard in Launceston on a glorious autumn morning.

In recognition of this Indian summer, the L&NCCM had raised everybody's minimum tyre pressures on almost every hill. For instance, the first hill, Petherwin Old Hill, had a minimum tyre pressure of 18psi for us in Class 7 and a restart on a sneaky deviation but we didn't have any problem getting away. Only a couple of hills had no limit so we knew the organising team were on the case when it came to conserving precious metals and trophy silver.

After a series of reliability issues with the car, I was happy just to make the start. After replacing the clutch cable and rear dampers, fitting a new cambelt and having the rear axle straightened and strengthened by Adrian Booth, my brave little car had been dogged by an intermittent and impossible to anticipate failure to start. In the weeks preceding the Tamar, I chased down and cleaned all the earths I could find, and the Arkley-MG began to respond to treatment. Another minor issue went away, too. The tell-tale lamp on the dash indicating when I engaged reverse gear also began operating again. I took this as a good sign that starting could now be relied upon.

For the first Observed Test, we had to start from line A and stop at line B in thirty seconds without any artificial aids. Last year, with Graham Beddoe, I'd adopted the "elephant" technique from Gregory's Girl and that had worked well. This year, Joe Caudle on the stop-watch, said our thirty elephants equated to thirty-one seconds. That meant we incurred a one second addition for whatever our time on Observed Test two might be. Maybe we'll try Indian and not African elephants next time. At the other end of the scale, Adrian and Michael in Ade's TR2 got over-excited and completed OT1 in just 17 seconds. They didn't get 17 seconds taken off their time for

OT2, however. They got it added on. It was any difference from the standard time – more or less – that incurred any penalty.

In Combedown Woods near Horsebridge, we had a series of tight sections and with no less than 16psi permitted on Starsky. I took some air out of the front tyres in a bid to improve our chances of steering. Team Robson were officiating here and were probably as surprised and delighted as I was with a getaway from the restart as the Arkley-MG dug in and found its way out as if it remembered it from last year. A minor problem was that we later discovered we'd gone wrong on the way out but that did not diminish our good cheer. The Twister was another matter, however. That sharp right-angle bend was where I stopped last year, but on The Firs, my little car dug in again and valiantly climbed to the top after the loop around the trees at the bottom, becoming airborne at one stage, much to Sally's delight.

Unfortunately, the Simon Whiley's green Reliant Scimitar retired here with a lot of negative camber on the offside rear wheel and Norton Selwood's beautifully prepared orange Beetle developed a chronic oil leak. We saw him later marshalling on New Langleys like the real enthusiast he is and heard that his bash plate had bashed his sump.

Near Liddaton, we had another series of three in a steep wood. There was a delay before Cory Climb here as Stuart Highwood in another Reliant had problems, and we had to shuffle around them on the approach track. In the queue, I had a chat with Nick Symons about his Singer Chamois. This has a non-turbo Subaru engine and is a definite candidate as a future Vintage Thing.

Ahead of us, newlyweds Mr & Mrs Shaw ascended with no problems in their MX5 – complete with wedding ribbon – but Adrian and Michael in the TR2 went off ploughing and had to be towed out by a V8 Land Rover which sounded gorgeous. After a slippery lower section, Cory Climb curved up to the right before bearing left and blasting up to Nigel Cowling at the top. We got there but, in all the excitement, became a little disorientated about our way down again.

On OS 7 we were fine until we tried to follow the sharp right – just like The Twister before – and on Little Cory restarts for earlier classes had been scratched because – lo! – the LNCMC had found some mud. In fact, they found so much they'd given up on the restart for earlier cars. Running as No. 76, we were the first Class 7 for the higher restart and couldn't get away. In fact, we needed progressively longer run ups at it and a lot more beans to get out of the section.

On Lee Quarry, the car just bogged down before we even got in sight of the deviation for Classes 7 & 8 and I think we might have scored 11. I was aware that there was a slight hesitancy on the road and sometimes the car was reluctant to idle. Also, probably because of the warm weather, the orange warning lamp indicating that the electric fan had cut in was on much more often.

OS 10 was Angel Steps with a tyre pressure limit of 16 psi so I didn't hold out much hope. In charge of car control, we found Gareth White, who checked our tyre pressures. We watched Danny and Sam Gamble come back down after trying it in their Reliant-powered Liege and I told Gareth we'd also see him "dreckly" again. He

eschewed such a defeatist attitude. I was pleased to reach the restart this year, which hasn't happened that often, but, after smoking the tyres, failed to proceed any further. Gareth took off his cap and respectfully held it over his heart when we saw him again as we followed the failure route.

At the rest stop at The Fox & Grapes pub in Tinhay, I took the opportunity to check the water in the car. I switch the cooling fan on anyway when we're in the forests but it was operating even on the open road sections. Normally the airflow above 20mph is sufficient but twice recently, the radiator fan wouldn't switch off at all. Uncle Adrian suspected a sticky relay. He was also getting a little warm, himself, and kept the hood up on the TR2 for some shade. Those of us with less hair and more face applied sunblock. The water level was fine so we assumed it was just warm ambient air. At least it was switching off as well as on.

Once Sally and I were fed and watered we proceeded onto Park Impossible for our best climb ever on this section, managing to get to the restart and beyond on 14psi.

For the 11 miles or so to the next special test, the fan was on a lot. After the test, an MCC style affair with lines A, B and C, we had a new section for me, Avallon Orchard. We caught up with Age and Michael here who had attended a field trial here in the summer. The course was a dried-up marsh at the start and then lush green grass all the way up to a deviation for Class 6, 7 & 8 where we were supposed to turn sharply left. However, the car said nope. Instead of turning, we trickled serenely straight on with front wheels optimistically on full lock, much to the amusement of the Rubys who were marshalling. At least it didn't bog down again, I suppose.

By the time we got to Crackington, the fan was on all the time but I had a funny feeling it was switching on unnecessarily. The orange tell-tale lamp on the dash flickered a couple of times as if trying desperately not to come on. I was disappointed not to get away from the restart on Crackington, even on 12psi and frying the hides.

Two sections at Trehole were only a short distance away but the approach to them was a very steep and slippery hill into the valley. Pat Shaw helpfully signalled to us to come down gingerly. The first one had a Class 7 start line more akin to a restart line. We got up to it but failed to get away on 14psi in the sticky mud. Trehole 2 was a different matter. I went down to 10psi here because we could. Team Robson were in charge again here and the Arkley-MG decided to show off a bit in front of friends. It trickled nicely round the tree and then turned up the hill. We were dazzled by the low sun but the numbered poles were silhouetted up to the skyline. I kept it in and we bounced onwards and upwards until Matt Robson shouted we'd done it. We didn't drive out the top through but turned in by pole 2 and trickled out and down.

We pumped up our tyres with Gill and Pat and then Age and Michael. They had all cleared Crackington and made a better effort on Trehole 1 than we had.

The approach to New Langleys amused Sally. The L&NCCM do a very good job of signposting and we came through several empty fields, empty apart from just the right number of white arrow posts. Finding these remote sections was like being on a treasure hunt run by a secret society.

In wonderful sunshine, we saw Greg Warren make a great climb in his Mk2 Escort. He got around the left hander and lined it up for the final hill but came to a halt. He kept it in long after I'd have given up and his lead-footedness paid off. I think everyone watching was bouncing up and down. Passenger Beth Carter must have been working very hard. When it came to our turn, we got off the restart but couldn't get around the sharp left-hand bend so came up on the winch.

Trevilla can be a sting in the tail, very tight and with a restart on tree roots for us but this time we got away and the Arkley-MG did that chugging thing on tickover round the tight bends so I was very pleased. We watched a few more good climbs after that and Sally pointed out that this was the first event she'd completed. Glad to have done just that, we motored on to the finish at Hallworthy to sign off and have a chinwag with our mud brothers and sisters. The TR2 had a flat – only on the bottom, though – so we used the hydraulic system on the Arkley-MG to get it off the ground properly.

On the way home, the orange tell-tale for the fan was on most of the way and it was doing that announcing flash thing, as if clearing its throat before blowing air over the motor. Unfortunately, there remains a terrific oil leak on the gearbox and to replace that seal the engine will have to come out. I'd also like to get it set up on a rolling road so there's a lot more to do before we try another long-distance classic trial and there will typically be what we used to call in the dockyard "emergent work" emerging.

View from the passenger seat

Simon Oates reports from the left-hand side of his Liege

I enjoyed the Tamar Trail from the passenger seat of my Liege, with Steve Moir taking the helm. His control of the car was impressive and he certainly did as well, if not better than me, in previous years with a second in Class 7. This was despite some mediocre bouncing from me and a few dubious calls of where to stop on a few restarts.

During the Trial a few car issues reared their head which called for investigation in my disorganised garage. A couple of times, the car wouldn't turn over due to a total lack of electrics. On the day a bit of tweaking, pulling and knocking managed to bring power back, but certainly wasn't a long-term solution.

Back in the garage the battery was exposed in the rear of the car and the terminals were cleaned, Vaseline'd and the leads secured back together. The multimeter came out and I checked all leads to the starter motor where after a considerable amount of time I discovered the external cut off switch had an intermittent fault and it was replaced. Hopefully that will sort the issue long term, but who knows?

The hydraulic handbrake needed quite a bit of effort to hold the car at the restarts so I decided to alter the pivot point so that less effort would be needed as I get older. Off with the handle (old Elora shifting bar) and I welded up the old pivot hole and drilled another one lower and neared the hydraulic cylinder. Once it was painted I replaced it, and what a difference half-an-inch makes, matron!

The rear brakes were then serviced with help from Charlie my 2½ year old grandson on the spanners. I don't know why I got in trouble for that as it was Charlie that got in the mess and why didn't he bring a change of clothes? At least now he knows what Swarfega Orange is.

The Liege's MOT is due by 16th December so a further check of everything will be done before that and hopefully it will be fully ready for the Camel Classic on Sunday 7th December, followed by the Exeter Trial in the New Year.

Has anyone else got any contributions to the newsletter, after all it's about your experiences and pain that everyone else can share and reminisce about and maybe even have a laugh? We want to know what happens in your garage. Give it a go and send to richardsimpson94@yahoo.co.uk

Tales from the Ed's bike shed

Richard Simpson reports that it's all been a bit up and down this month.

I spent a lot of time on the phone talking to various dealers and workshops about having the Beta's blown engine rebuilt, and eventually settled on a one-man band in the West Midlands. I can only describe Acme Motorcycles as being like a petrolhead's version of Narnia.

Turn off through a hole in the hedge beside a nondescript main road in Cradley, and suddenly the world of car washes and cheap supermarkets is left behind. You drop down a steep narrow track that would make a good trials section and find yourself outside a premises that could be in the heart of rural Britain. There's a cottage straight out of a Gothic novel, and a workshop that contains every different type of bike you could imagine: ever seen a Rex, a Lilac, two Bridgestones, two Rokons (including one with two-wheel drive and flotation wheels), a Ner-a-Car and a DMW in full police spec?

Then there's all the more 'usual' stuff, ranging from BSA Bantams to Suzuki Super Sixes!

After I'd passed Roy the proprietor's Motorcycle Mastermind quiz, with what he said was the highest-ever recorded score (I dropped a point by identifying one bike as a German-built Victoria Bergmeister, but it was actually a Japanese Marusho Lilac...but won a bonus for knowing that the DMW was built in Dudley and the Ner-a-Car in Sheffield), he agreed to rebuild my engine. He had another Beta engine in: from the full-fat 300 Enduro model and would do the two side-by-side.

Two weeks later, the job was done. Roy diagnosed the problem as being caused by a main-bearing cage breaking and splitting the adjacent oil seal. I collected the engine from a subdued Roy and was greeted by only one dog, not the two from my previous visit, and it turned out he'd had to have one put down.

Shortly after, we had to make the sad decision to have our own much-loved Lurcher put down (thank you Castle Vets for your kindness)...and I didn't even feel like trying to piece the bike back together for a while.

Eventually I got around to it...like most modern dirtbikes the Beta X-trainer has an engine which is very much a 'built-in' component, with the swingarm pivot in the crankcase so I took the opportunity to clean and grease everything that needed cleaning and greasing.

Finally completed the task last week, started the engine and it revved much too high. Shut it down after less than a second, put the choke off, but exactly the same thing happened when I restarted again. I must now investigate two possibilities: we either have an air-leak in the induction tract or a trapped throttle cable. The throttle has full travel and a good 'snap', so I doubt it is the latter, especially as shining a light down the airbox reveals the throttle slide appears to be moving as normal.

Tip-top tip tip

If you are dreading negotiating the council's on-line booking system to get that festering garden/workshop rubbish down to the Launceston recycling centre, and there's more than a car-load to go anyway, and you don't want it in your car, then here is some really good news!

Hire a van from AAA Hire in Launceston, and it comes with a free pass for the 'tip'! Kate and I hired a long-wheelbase Renault Master for £60 (8am – 8am), loaded it to the roof with assorted rubbish (much dating back to the previous owner of our property) and dumped (sorry, recycled) the lot, no questions asked. Total cost £70, including diesel. Try getting a skip for that!

And Finally...

We want your hints, tips, pics, and tall tales for the next newsletter:
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