

The Chairman at full chat

Simon Riddle reflects on the Land's End Trial



The Crackington crew awaits the arrival of their first victim.

This is the first post-AGM newsletter, and the status quo continues in terms of committee membership and roles, so thanks to all who will continue in their posts for 2026 into 2027. We are, of course, always looking for 'new blood', so if anyone is keen to get involved in the club on the committee side, please never hesitate to reach out to us. It doesn't have to involve a ton of commitment — just bring a few ideas along and you'd be more than welcome.

The Land's End Trial over the Easter weekend: as traditional as grassroots motorsport gets and long may it continue; dominated the month. A few historic achievements this year, with Crackington and Blue Hills celebrating their 90th years as hills on the event, with two of our committee as section chiefs this year: Nigel Cowling on his local at Crackington, and Andrew Rippon also on his local at the final and most iconic section Blue Hills 2.

Club member Rob Holden was also chief on Cutcliffe and, although I'm not privy to any results yet, I believe the two of those hills were the main stoppers this year. I can

vouch for Crackington — marshalling there, it's back to being in its traditional form...I wonder why...which had deserted the hill for a number of years.

A trip down to Blue Hills once we'd packed up and closed followed, where we seemed to be caught in the slowest convoy of traffic possible, but still arrived in time to see 90% of the cars, and with the marshals in their bucket hats as a fitting tribute to Martyn Harry. Thanks to Mr R for keeping us a pasty back — 'twas very welcome.

Things are a little quieter on the club front now, although a gang of us will be either marshalling or competing on the Torbay Trial on the 19th.

Our next event is the BTRDA round of the Sporting Trials Championship, the Northgate on 16th May at Ashleigh, Lifton, which will kick off our busy summer events programme. As ever, marshals and entrants are most welcome.

All for now
Simon R

Blue Hills 2: remembering Martyn Harry

Andrew Rippon's emotions are stirred as he takes over running the Land's End Trial's most iconic section

Last year at the close of Blue Hills 2 Chief Marshal Martyn Harry asked if I would take on his role at the hill next year, my reply was not to be silly as he had undertaken this role for numerous years but he was adamant he wanted to step down. I agreed to do it but only for a year and that he would return as Chief for the following year.

Sadly, as most will now be aware, Martyn passed away in February after a short illness, which came as a great shock to all.

The MCC contacted me to ask if I was prepared to take over the role, it was an upsetting decision to make but I was assured by many that it was Martyn's wish for me to take over. So I decided to do the boy proud, with support from Martyn's wife Julia and two daughters, Annabelle and Philippa.

The team Martyn had running the hill for numerous years all agreed they would come. I could not have done without them: now we were ready for the day.

Anyone who knew Martyn will fondly remember him wearing a blue bucket hat, so as a mark of respect we agreed it would be a fitting tribute to him to all wear these on the day, this was supported by the MCC who kindly provided the headgear: these I'm sure will be worn for many of years to come on Easter Saturday.

The team came together bright and early on the day, so the hill was set up in no time at all. Before the course opener arrived, I said a few words in memory of Martyn, and we all shed tears: yes even grown men; followed by a minute's silence.

Bikes started arriving about 20 minutes early in a steady stream without too many gaps, but unfortunately most of the bikes stopped on the wrong restart.

Once the first cars attempted the hill, we soon realised it was going to be too easy compared to previous years. Maybe with the badgers on holiday and no doctoring permitted, the hill was less challenging and spectators said it was tame.

The main failures were mechanical issues and not due to loss of traction.

With four new stop boards in position and very visible we still had competitors not stopping: one in particular, flew out the section with excessive speed causing a danger to all.

This year the winch crew were only needed seven times, needless to say they were bored.

On the arrival of the course closer we packed up and got home at 7.30pm: 12 hours after leaving home, and that's the earliest for many years.

Thank you to all who helped and supported me on Blue Hills 2, I couldn't have done it without you, hope we didn't let you down Martyn.

Would I do it all again?

Yes, most definitely!

Andrew Rippon

That's the way it Rolls!

Simon Oates has some strange Land's End Trial encounters on the way to Blue Hills



Here comes the bride!



Liege doubles as a tow-car to recover an errant Vincent

The forecast wasn't brilliant for the Land's End Trial but as it turned out, we mostly skirted around any rain and really only had some mist on the high ground towards Exmoor. I did however put the roof up on the way up to the start at Bridgwater Rugby Club which just keeps the chill away.

The roof was down for the start. As we were in the last 20 cars of the main trial we had the pleasure of the company of 20 odd class O and 20 odd Class R cars that would follow on different routes behind the main trial. This included a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow in Class R endowed with a wedding party of four, including a cross-dressed bride sporting a beard. There were no offers to carry the bride over any thresholds that I saw, Crocodile Dundee springs to mind but I guess it takes all sorts to make a trial!

We made steady progress to the handbrake test on a slope (we could have done with more mileages in the route-book) and a queue to the first section **Felons Oak**. Dr Mazola may have visited the restart which was cleverly placed with a small box to stop in. We spoke to Rob Haworth in his Liege while in the queue: he reported that a minibus had forced its way past him, whacked the front driver's side wheel and mudguard and then drove off. It was looking very Marty Feldman and was difficult to drive with the front tyres getting very hot.

He cleared Felons Oak and we stopped to readjust the tracking with a bit of toe-in instead of massive toe-out but we couldn't adjust the wheel to make it more upright. I had my doubts about how long he could continue, but continue he did, right to the end!

It didn't take long to find Classes O and R ahead and around us which culminated in a miscalculation by a Vincent Sports Trial car as the driver missed a downhill corner

that cambered away and panic braked into a gorse bush with a sheer drop a little further on. I don't think the occupants realised how lucky they were!

We immediately stopped to check the occupants, and then Steve Moir (my wingman) went back up the hill to warn approaching cars of the predicament. A few nearly ploughed into us! I attached my tow strap to my new front tow loop and the other end to the Vincent. Reversing up the hill, we managed to pull the dead weight back on to the road. The smoke from my clutch nearly started another global disaster but the little beauty pulled well above her weight. The Vincent had an immobiliser on the key fob which was stopping it starting but once Nick Symons had worked this out the car was running again only to go on to do similar again, I believe.

We'd only done a handbrake test and one section and were already well behind the main trial, but no sign of Rex Ward in the closing car yet, at least that was good news.

Barbrook came and went with no queue on **Beggars Roost** and still in the dark. We managed to reach **Riverton** still in the dark, completed the **Yollacombe** special test with the lights still on and it wasn't until the queue at **Sutcombe** that dawn broke and the birds in the woods gave their vocal chords a bit of freedom, it was bledy glorious!! There was a restart that was catching a few out and a compulsory STOP in a box at the end or penalty points.

A welcome cup of tea from the magnificent ladies of Sutcombe also hit the spot and then on for fuel at Wicketts of Bradworthy. A dozen or more cars in front at **Darracott** and an easy romp up the hill. The hour-long queue at **Cutliffe Lane** was shorter than expected considering how many cars were failing the hill. The marshals were so well organised and kept everything moving. We didn't see many go up so knew it was a challenge with a higher start line as well. I gave it everything, heard some alloy wheel scrapes, and suffered some backbone realignment and a cricked neck but we got up.

Only three cars ahead at **Crackington**, so not long to wait and great to see the hill in form again with a local geological phenomenon appearing at Easter with a perfect gloopy consistency (don't lose that recipe) to stop cars on the restart, but not us.

Breakfast at **Wilsey Down** was devoured during the hour comfort stop and away to the harder half of the trial. Unfortunately we restarted with Class R in front including the Wedding Party Rolls-Royce which followed the same route until Warleggan. A Special Test en-route at **Ruses Mill** was tough for us as the tarmac hill had now become very slippery on the bends and it was hard to get the grip and speed for a good time. Indeed we had listened for a long time to the Roller spinning its tyres trying to get up the hill. I doubt many RRs have tried it before, so maybe the MCC will provide a Stifficut to confirm their passage up the hill?

Eventually we got to **Warleggan** and another potential stopper. Tyre pressure limit at 10psi and a restart which went well with a few more fillings being shaken loose on the way up. From the edge of Bodmin Moor to the sea (well Wadebridge-ish) and **Eddy's Branch line 1** which was made easier with better start line positioning than previous years. **Eddy's Branch Line 2** had a restart for 7 & 8 which luckily wasn't too rutted or wet when we got there.

A spirited drive down to Perranporth and then on to **Blue Hills** where again there were only ten cars in front and virtually no hold ups. **BH1** had loads of grip and the muddy pool before the restart was dry, so an opportunity missed to make it more slippery and difficult. All cleared and we stopped in the box at the end. **BH2** also had plenty of grip and I didn't notice any craters at the restart to hinder progress. This year I managed to stop at the end (unlike last year) in the well-marked and fantastically marshalled finish.

The Blue Hills marshals were beautifully turned out with pink tabards and bucket hats in memory of the legend, Martyn Harry who sadly recently passed away. A few moments at the top to catch up with a few people and then off to the finish and sign off. We entered a team of three with myself, Nick & Ben Symons in their Subaru-engined Singer Chamois, and Rob & Elizabeth Haworth in their Liege.

We entered as The Kernow Mavericks. Rob had been fighting the previously mentioned damage most of the trial and the brakes had started to drag on the sections which eventually sapped the power on the last section. How he'd done so well up to that point, I'll never know. It was great to see many of the sections / hills in such challenging form throughout the event. The marshals were exemplary with many on section for 12+ hours and many also prepping the hills during the previous 24 hours. None of this would happen without the many South-West motor clubs and their members that put so much into the trial. A big thank you Pete Hart as Clerk of the Course for letting us choose tyre pressure for most of the day. Cracking!

It'll be oil-tight on the night!

Before the trial is run, it is lost and won in the workshop, as Simon Oates recounts



“Must’ve been the dog, dear!” Simon contemplates the origins of the latest puddle on the garage floor

Every picture tells a story which brings us to the tale of an oil leak and associated woes. In truth the rear axle has been leaving its mark in the garage for most of the season since early October. A few attempts to rectify the problem with the welder underneath the petrol tank (don't copy me please) weren't successful so the next attempts were with good old J B Weld and a bit of body filler. The flow of oil wasn't too bad and constant checks of the oil level in the axle revealed it only required minimal topping up. It'll do for a few more trials...until it won't.

Eventually, the week before the Land's End, I found time to remove the axle and was shocked that there was hardly any oil left and rather than falling with gravity to earth (picture) the majority had gone at 90 degrees up under the back of the car!

Hours were spent taking off the emergency patching I had been doing for three months in an attempt to get the metal clean enough to weld properly. This will probably be the last time it's welded up as now there's more weld than original axle casing. The abuse to the axle (62 Trials) during my ownership in the last four years

was showing with twisting torque marks and ripped metal clear to see. Once welded up and painted (to cover my welding?) came the fun of reattaching to the car. You're never sure if it's cured until taking the car for a thrashing to see if it bleeds again. It ran, it didn't leak and life was peachy again.

Two days before the Land's End and it was time for the final checks to the car. All lights – check, oil in axle, gearbox and engine – check, check, check, water including screen wash – check, adjust all brakes, grease where needed (including crevasses I didn't know I had) and a cursory walk around the car to double check again. Where's the front towing eye gone?

It's not in the bleeding oil picture either, must have gone for a walk in the President's Trial I guess. Two hours later I'd made one up and painted it yellow. I tried to replace the Rivnuts, only to find the tool was broken (Rivnut gun, not me) which added another hour added to the job.

All good to go now, but it wasn't checked at Bridgwater scrutineering! However, it was put to use after the first section on Exmoor in the mist around 2.20 am, when a class R car (Vincent Sports) didn't see a downhill opposite camber corner and went straight on into a large gorse bush.

Easter Sunday morning came about and time to remove the car from the garage for a post-trial spruce up. More oil on the garage floor but from the middle of the car. Clear oil, so not the engine or rear axle (red oil) so it must be the gearbox.

Up with the rear first to swap wheels and tyres around only to find splodges of oil on the inside of the alloys. While it's up, I dismantle the rear brakes to see if the axle oil seal is leaking but was relieved that they were dry. All put back together, adjusted and road wheels fitted. Jack up the front and take the engine/gearbox guard off and pressure wash off the gearbox, drop the car down and go for a spirited drive to harass the locals, dry the gearbox off and hopefully see where the oil is bleeding from.

With the car now hot, I jack up again and can clearly see the oil is coming from the middle of the gearbox at the bottom. Ream five bolts up b...dy tight in the hope this will stop the leak and save me taking the gearbox out and splitting it only to re-seal the join in the middle. Off for another drive to get it hot again to find that tightening the bolts has done the trick for now. Back on with the guard, top up gearbox oil and note to self to keep an eye out for another leak. Where does all the time disappear to?

A broken man at breakfast

Yet another trial, and yet another DNF for the Editor



A ferry nice day: KTM Liz and Beta brother Ben enjoy the luxurious facilities on the ferry



Two kindly marshals get editor Simpson the right way up so he can wobble off to breakfast and retirement.

With the benefit of hindsight, I really did set myself up to fail on the Land's End Trial. Last Spring, my brothers and I had a wonderful two days of trail-riding in South Devon with Rob and Liz, my two old friends from Cambridgeshire TRF days now relocated in the West Country. We all promised we would do it again next year...the week after the clocks change we said.

Silly me, didn't check the diary...and it turned out we would be doing two days of riding Monday and Tuesday, then I would be turning the bike around and prepping it before setting out to ride the Land's End on Friday.

With the X-Trainer out of action, I had no option other than to do it all on the GasGas ES700: a bike better suited to the wide-open spaces of Salisbury Plain than the rocky lanes of South Devon, let alone trials sections. Still, I had at least got to the end of the March Hare Trail on it the previous month, so it shouldn't be impossible. Plus my smaller front sprocket finally arrived, lowering the gearing a fair bit.

Rob couldn't help but snigger when I rolled into his yard on Sunday night, and he helpfully pointed out that the ES700 was even heavier than brother Mike's Honda XR600. Brother Ben was riding a far lighter Beta 450, and Rob and Liz were both sensibly mounted on lighter still KTM 350 EXCs.

Never mind, I was confident that the dinner I cooked that night: fillet steaks from Warrens; would see us all through the following days.

Rob and Liz know every lane and byway in Devon, and we must have ridden about half of them on Monday: Newton Abbot to Dartmouth and back across the ferry to loop around to Newton Abbot again. Huge hills, big rocks and more. I started off badly, got considerably better, then became exhausted, and Liz had to help disentangle me from a tree!

Day two was hopeless: the ES700 has quite hard handlebar grips, and I was hanging onto the thing a bit too tight. On the second lane, I had pins and needles so bad I could barely work the controls. Overshot a hairpin bend because I couldn't find the front brake. Time to go home.

The intervening couple of days saw me throw a new tyre on the back of the ES700 and give it a general clean and check over. I also fitted a new headlamp bulb, which promised a 100% increase in light output. Noticing it was 'Made in China' and branded Lucas I carefully packed the standard bulb to use as a spare, but it wasn't needed. All seemed well, and trying to ignore the lingering aches and pains from earlier in the week, I set off on Friday night for the delights of Bridgwater Rugby Club.

Got there in plenty of time and caught up with a few people, including Chris 'Bikeworld' Northover and his wife Kirsty, who must be two of the nicest people in motorcycling.

Kirsty was riding a CG125 Honda fitted with a BSA Bantam petrol tank to confuse old people, while Chris was riding...a barn-find ex-WD BSA B40! This is a man who could have the pick of any bike from any of the importers thanks to his YouTube channel, but no, he likes doing things the hard way. And hard they certainly were going to be on the old Army Beezer.

My hour came around at last, and riding number 123, I set out into the night towards the back of the bike field. I was very pleased to encounter an unannounced 'number check' being made on motorcycles at the car handbrake test...I'm sure I'm not the only rider to have been surprised by the way some contestants mysteriously make their way unseen up the running order to section one in the past.

Unfortunately and foolishly, I overshot the turn off the main road to the first section, which put me right at the back of the motorcycles, but the plus side was I cleaned Felons Oak, which was an improvement on last year. And no restart for me on a Class C!

The weather was also an improvement on last year, with clear skies and a lovely moon. I had a bit of irresponsible fun climbing Porlock Hill with as much power on as

I dared to unleash though a squashy set of trials tyres (fun fact: the GasGas 700 single is actually more powerful than the Yamaha Tenere 700 twin!). A fuel and food stop at Barbrook was followed by Beggar's Roost. No queues, but a restart, which the GasGas managed without difficulty: 70 bhp+ and off-road traction control is a bit of a cheat code in these circumstances.

Next section is Riverton, which is mud rather than rock. This time I didn't get lost in the woods on the way in like I did last year (and I know I wasn't the only one) but I unfortunately faulted on the way out (which I didn't last year), the size and weight of the bike proving a little too much for me in my pre-fatigued state.

The Yollocombe special test follows shortly after (last year I missed it the first time, mistaking .2 miles for 2 miles in the roadbook) and I took it very steadily indeed.

This marked the end of the nice weather. A sticky drizzle began to fall. I had a small spray bottle of diluted washing-up liquid and a microfibre cloth in my tankbag to clean my visor with, but a guy riding with me on a Honda CRF was struggling a bit with water on the inside of his glasses and in his route-book, so he tagged on behind me.

The back lanes around Holsworthy are even worse than they were last year: give it a few more years and they will be trials sections! Sutcombe was another triumph for the GasGas: point and shoot up the hill, then stop in the box at the end. "Perfect!" the marshal said.

The GasGas is ridiculously economical, so I didn't join the refuel queue at Bradworthy, seeking to have the bike as light as possible for Darracott and Cutliffe. Darracott is a favourite, with alpine-style hairpins, all of which I negotiated successfully, only to get a bit crossed up on the easier bit towards the top. I may have failed at this point...it all depends on whether anyone saw me put my boot down in the dark!

As far as I'm concerned, the toughest section on the whole trial comes next at Cutliffe Lane: an opinion confirmed by the presence of an A board. We waited on the other side of the lake watching a succession of failures by bikes and Class 7 and 8 cars (the other cars do an easier hill), then it was my turn. All went well until it didn't and I came to a halt, and got speedily turned around by the marshals and left via the 'failure' route. This separated me from my friend on the CRF, who got far enough up to exit from the top.

On via Stoke, a refuel in Bude and then the route check at Widemouth Bay: I pulled in and was sorry to see a couple of riders on step-throughs sail past. All that effort, then such a basic error.

I caught up with them shortly after. They were aware of the mistake, but lacked the energy to go back. And who can blame them?

My thoughts turned to breakfast. Just Crackington to go. This is my local hill, and I've ridden it without issue on both the GasGas and the X-Trainer numerous times through the years, but then it doesn't usually have a lorry load of wet clay at the top.

Just as last year, this proved my undoing. Last year I hit a car rut in the clay that steered me into the bank, this year I resolved to miss the ruts, and fell off instead! Thanks to the guys who picked me up, after everyone (me included) who had a laugh!

On to a very welcome breakfast at Wilsey Down, and I confess I was feeling exhausted: a full English and a cup of tea didn't do much to help. Heading out to the carpark, I saw Chris struggling to start the old BSA. I assisted with a bump start, which proved fruitless, and a quick diagnosis revealed a complete lack of spark. Then, a miracle. Some random bloke wanders up, and suggests flicking the points open to see if there is any energy in the system at all. There isn't. But there is a broken LT wire leading to the coil. How the hell does this happen when the bike is stopped?

Reconnected, the Beezer stats first kick. I had confessed to Chris about my fatigued state, and that I was considering pulling out as I didn't feel safe to continue. He pointed out that the GasGas required a very different technique to the X-Trainer...rather than picking your way up a section you had to choose a line and, well, gas it!

"Whatever you decide will be the right decision," he said. So I rode home.

Was this right?

Should I have just necked a Red Bull, eaten the last of my chocolate peanuts and carried on?

Dunno. I am looking at doing the Edinburgh in the Autumn, but probably not on either the X-Trainer or the GasGas. The Fantic EXF 250 Trail looks like it could combine four-stroke comfort with not much more weight than an X-Trainer. And, it's only £5K brand new!

"Hello, is that Thor Motorcycles?"

Richard Simpson, Editor

Tall tales needed

Motorcycles or cars, garage or trial, your exciting/amusing stories and pictures are needed for the next issue of the Newsletter.

Also, we can handle adverts for trials-related items for sale or wanted.

Email to richardsimpson94@yahoo.co.uk