Chairman at full chat

A busy little period through late September and into October, with our two biggest events of the year taking place over the space of a few weeks. We now look forward to a quieter period on the calendar over the next few months.

Many thanks to Jon and Calvin Moores for clerking the David Ayers Trial, which was held in completely contrasting weather conditions to 2025. I think all would agree that it was an enjoyable day.

Planning for the Tamar Trial, followed by the event itself, then dominated the weeks that followed. We had a near-full entry this year, with a drop-off in bike numbers being the only thing preventing us from achieving a full entry for the third year in succession.

The very dry conditions made it difficult to take significant points, with several hills that have proved to be stoppers in previous years being climbed by the majority of classes.

A huge thank you to all the landowners and the many marshals who gave up their time to help us run the 79th edition of the event. It certainly won't be long before we turn our attention to planning what promises to be a very special occasion – our 80th anniversary Tamar Trial!

Simon Riddle

Chairman

Three wheels on my wagon

Simon Oates reports from September's Kyrle Trial

The second half of the trialling season had started with the Taw & Torridge two weeks before this event but instead, we had attended the Liege Club's Tour of the Wye Valley based at Symonds Yat and the Old Court Hotel. A great weekend with fantastic people in a cracking hotel and wonderful lanes to explore.

It was also an opportunity to give the newly-acquired (see Garage Chat) Blue Liege a shake down before the Edinburgh at the beginning of October. Two weeks after the tour, the Kyrle Trial started 200m further up the road in familiar
surroundings.

The green Liege hadn't been used properly for five or six weeks weeks but now boasted a refreshed rear-axle shell and cleaned-up brakes. I've now started using the original 16" Liege alloy wheels with Geolandar tyres. They are about 5 mm thicker than the previously used 15" steel items but I felt that they should be used and hopefully not too abused on the car. One consequence is that the wheel nuts don't go so far on to the wheel studs, surely four full threads should be enough? After all that's all you need for a MOT.

The weather started fine with rain forecast around lunch time but actually beginning an hour into the trial. The first special devious test proved a challenge in a lush wet grass field where reversing up the field back through gate B proved impossible for a few competitors. After this game we had three rough lanes with restarts on 15 psi which we scrabbled and shook through. At the start of the third lane the brake pedal didn't feel quite right but there wasn't time to investigate because it was my time to attack the hill. All shook well to the top, dentures had been vibrated free but man boob bra straps had been tightened to great effect.

Once through the section was the second special timed test towards the end of the lane. Again at the start the brakes were reluctant to stop the car on the starting ‘A’ line. Bugger it, it’ll be fine until it wasn’t. We arrived at the ‘B’ line with a bit of spirit and I pushed the brake as hard as I dare only to overshoot the line by 10m, reverse back and gingerly astride the ‘C’ finish line. No record time there then!! On inspection I found the wiring loom had fallen down from the dash in front of the brake pedal. Every time I tried to brake I was stretching the loom near to its peak of breakyness. It was soon sorted with lashings of gaffer tape and held up out of the way. I think everything electrical is still working and I’d obviously not replaced one or several of the zip ties when I’d pulled it apart when respraying the car in the summer. These senior moment are getting ever so regular now, don’t worry, the best is yet to come!

A couple more rough lanes on 15psi plus restarts before moving on to the first of the Subdivided (12 – 0) sections which threw me a little with light yellow wood coloured poles that weren’t easy to see and numbers on the right. Whatever happened to red on the right and yellow on the left? I cocked up the first one. The second was going Ok until the restart at an angle where I kept straight up the hill, got off the line, dragged left and attempted to miss a marshal standing on my line and then clipped a left pole. This trialling can be so exciting.

Mixed results on the next two subdivided sections and on to Pillbox. None of the Class 8 cars had got off the restart so I thought ‘go in slow’ and pick my spot, which I was doing but I saw no restart flag (we’d misread the instructions) so quickly shoved my right foot to the floor and hung on to the 3 marker. A very slow reverse down the hill with engine off and clutch control plus the hydraulic handbrake saved the day.

By now I had discovered that the refurbished rear axle and brakes in particular were not holding the car properly on the restarts as usual (new rear brake shoes have been ordered and will be fitted before the end of the week). If I felt it was too dangerous I would have retired despite the car’s brilliant reliability record so far.

The next section Goldsmiths was cleared and then on to Goldsmiths 2. It was all going so well and up to the restart and some freshly graded steep ground. As I let the clutch fully out the driver-side rear wheel fell off!

What can I say; clearly four threads isn’t enough for trialling!! Within milliseconds, Dave Middleditch was on the scene along with Emma Wall and family. Out with the jack, up with the axle. A beautifully shaped log materialized to put under the brake drum while re jacking the back axle higher. Paul Bunn sat in the car pushing the brakes as hard as he could (it was steep) so that the car didn’t slip backwards. I belted the bent wheel studs straighter with a proper hammer without drawing blood and eventually the wheel nuts went on the studs (three were sitting there on the restart) , removed a 10mm spacer and I probably cross threaded the nuts back on enough to hold the wheel tight.

Brilliant teamwork and thanks to all those heroes for getting us out of that embarrassing situation. We hopped back into the car and drove to the top of the section. At the top I also removed the other spacer from the passenger side to make sure the wheel nuts were secure on the rear for the rest of the trial. Five more sections to the end which were completed on 10 and 12 psi with little to report. Personal performance on the day was a three out of 10 at best but a great day’s sport was enjoyed. Note to self – Must try harder and concentrate more!!

The Edinburgh and Tamar Trials

It’s two more trials on the bounce for Simon Oates

A trip up to Derbyshire and stay in Ripley's best Premier Inn plus a day in the passenger seat was a dream come true!! Simon Riddle and Nigel Cowling were attacking the Edinburgh in my Blue Liege's first trial in my ownership. The week before I had attempted to put it on the rolling road only to be told the SU needle (AAU) was too rich and it needed replacing with the standard (AAT) needle.

After a few sections, Simon R said the car didn't quite have enough power, so when we stopped for breakfast, we swapped the front 15-inch wheels to the back and put the rear 16-inch to the front. The idea was to reduce the gearing and help the power issue. It wasn't until I got home that I also realised that the SU carburettor had been wound up to make it as lean as possible with the AAU needle – not ideal! Simon and Nigel survived the trial and only failed the last hill to get a Silver medal.

My day in the wingman's seat didn't quite go to plan either. The continuing problem with the rear brakes, or lack of, was to cause several problems. Paul Wheatley was driving the Green Liege and was warned about the brakes which was bad enough, but the driver's seat adjustment wasn't quite enough for his (how do I put this?), vertically challenged dimensions.

Paul was game and gave his all, unlike my directions which culminated in a wrong call on Excelsior where class 7 was off the Red restart. Trialling is sooo funny as our class is always off yellow restarts and class 8 off red. Route instructions for the hill were on two separate pages and I looked at the wrong second page which related to the previous section. Rookie mistake and total embarrassment for me.

We also stuttered on the last section as Paul stretched as far as he could with his clutch leg while pulling the barely working hydraulic handbrake and trying to synchronise the restart. This resulted with the engine dying just enough for a minute pause in forward motion!
Bugger!!

Bronze it was then. I felt I had let the side down and then got completely lost trying to follow the newest instructions issued back to the finish. It is gratifying to see that Oliver Hicks in his Liege was the overall winner of the trial this year. I managed it a few years ago but Oliver has just converted his car from a Reliant engine to a Suzuki one, TWO days before the event, now that take some beating!

A few pointers for the future of MCC events?

Please, please get your instructions sorted, especially at night. If you're going to put direction signs out at night, make sure they are visible (hi vis reflective?) especially in the Q zones and sensitive areas. MCC are the main "overnight" trial organisation and need to protect their reputation. That said, what an enjoyable trial it was apart from a bit of fog. Great company in and out of the car, both cars survived the challenge, marshals continue to do fantastic jobs and donate their weekends to the cause.

A week of checking both cars before the Tamar and trying to get the rear brakes working properly on the green car were frustrating at best. I was pretty confident the Blue car was good to go after adjusting the clutch and having another go at the SU carb. The rear brakes in the other one were still frustrating me and not up to normal standard even with new shoes. Did I mention the rear brakes?

Millie Carter was driving the Blue car with Nick Ponting doing his 'Tigger' impersonation as wingman. After a nervous start in a car she didn't know, all was going well until the throttle cable broke. Luckily, Calvin found the spare one in the car and threaded it back through the outer sheath and attached it to the pedal. He must be a bit of a Houdini as there's hardly any room around the pedal box. Off again until Section 6, Stans Steep where the engine made a horrendous noise and eventually stopped altogether – bugger!

The car was recovered and returned to me on Tuesday, all nice and clean and started for a few seconds in the morning. A few little tests and the compressions were OK. Valve clearances were spot on and then I noticed the top radiator hose was at a jaunty angle. The front engine mounts had disintegrated so that the engine was on the sump guard and the front engine pulley was resting on the chassis. On looking at the paperwork that came with the car, they had been changed in 2022 and less than 500 miles had been put on the car in that time. At least it was a cheap fix and all is sounding fantastic again and ready for another trial.

The Green car was also running well but the driver wasn't on form at all. After two overall wins in the first two trials of 2026, the performances have plummeted since the autumn resumption. Now that I'm three score and ten years old, I guess my expectations should be curbed a little. My concentration when approaching some restarts has been poor and I haven't been scanning what's ahead or which direction the section goes, all pretty basic things to do. The Tamar Trial must have been one of the best trials this year despite the dry conditions and was so clearly marked throughout the day (take note MCC) also with some new sections to catch people out. Results show a massive spread of classes in the top 10 which is a result in itself and a lot of big-name competitors having an off day.

Joining the LNCMC posse at the Edinburgh Trial

Simon Riddle gets a drive in Simon O's second Liege in the Edinburgh Trial

A team of us headed up to Derbyshire for the Edinburgh, consisting of Nick and Ben Symons, Simon Oates (passenger in his own car, with his friend Paul Wheatley, who lives near the start, doing the driving), and myself and Nigel Cowling in Mr O's birthday present!

We set off initially to collect an adapter for the trailer lights from Newport industrial estate, before meeting Nick and Ben out on the A30. I'd managed to dislodge the trailer's number plate somewhere around Sourton Cross and, despite Simon's valiant attempt, it couldn't be rescued. A bit of improvisation followed with the number plate taken off the van and cable-tied to the blue Liege on the trailer! The rest of the journey was fairly uneventful, although traffic levels increased as expected the further north we travelled.

Once checked in, we found several other trialling vehicles in the Premier Inn car park. Luckily, despite the Brewers Fayres seemingly all closing down, the adjacent one was open. David and Anna Robinson were also having their meal there, so we joined them before heading off for a bit of shut-eye. I actually managed a couple of hours' sleep before we headed over to the start for our early-hours start time.

Having only driven the Liege in our evening trial during the summer, I was pleasantly surprised by just how quiet it was on the road and how well it drove.

We headed off into the night, with a couple of fairly straightforward sections to begin with, before joining an ever-increasing queue for Hob Hay. The last time I did the Edinburgh, in my old Dutton back in 2023, this hill was tackled in daylight. The Class 7 and 8 deviation caught plenty out then, but I remembered Mr O's advice at the time: "Throw it in and it'll go!" He was right back then, so my intention was to adopt the same approach, particularly with considerably less horsepower available this time around.

However, we were still some two hours away from our turn, with the lower-class route causing most of the delay. The recovery team were towing every vehicle that failed to restart out of the section, taking around eight minutes per vehicle. Eventually, after getting pretty cold standing around in the dead of night, we got our turn. The deviation wasn't too bad this year and we all made it through.

Unfortunately, shortly after we had passed through, David and Anna were being towed and were pulled a little too tight, resulting in a rather scary moment for them both. We saw them later in the day and they were in good spirits, which was a relief.

Cliff Quarry is a funny section, quite nadgery, with different routes for different classes and some seemingly sizeable drop-offs around the section ends. It was daylight by the time we arrived, which certainly made it a little easier to see where everything went!

The rest of the night sections passed without incident and, after an extremely dry breakfast roll, we agreed to swap the wheels around on the Liege to bring the gearing down a touch. Pulling 16-inch Geolanders with a diddy engine was proving to demand every ounce of horsepower available!

Litton Slack came shortly after breakfast. The last time we were here, it had been pouring with rain and grip was at an absolute premium. I was still learning what tyre pressures to run as we went along. I was more concerned about running out of power at the restart and beyond, so didn't let the pressures down too much. I was confident that a bit of speed would get us to the restart, but I certainly didn't want to bog down afterwards.

With plenty of revs and a bit of clutch slipping, we cleaned it! I appreciate Litton is very weather-dependent, but it was a trialling bucket-list tick for me, so whatever else was in store, I was chuffed with that.

The drive out to Corkscrew seemed to take forever, although the scenery certainly helped. An expected long queue awaited us, providing plenty of time for chatting. The section itself was extremely rough, but I was impressed with how steadily the blue car rode the bumps, and we made it through. Nick managed to get some serious air over the steps, cleaning the section, although he would later suffer as a result!

We moved on through the remaining sections towards Dudwood as the day began to draw to a close. Another fairly lengthy queue awaited us, as this is a no-through hill with differing routes, so progress was a little slow. Whilst waiting, we noticed the driver's-side strut on Nick's car was hanging on by a thread. With no obvious solution, they reluctantly decided to retire, which was a massive shame as they had been clean up to that point.

I added some air to the tyres before our attempt at Dudwood, as conditions looked very dry and I wanted to generate some wheelspin. Luckily, it worked and we managed a clear.

The final two sections in the Clough Mine complex were also bone dry, and I was increasingly concerned about our lack of power especially for the steep nip restart on the second hill here. Clough 1 was cleaned without too much trouble, but Clough 2, with its steep nip, proved too much. Despite having 22lbs in the tyres, it still wasn't enough to prevent us from running out of grunt. Paul and Simon unfortunately came unstuck here too.

I wasn't too disappointed, though. My main aim had really been to get round without too many bloopers!

With the daylight now gone, we made the drive back to the Premier Inn following the finish. A bite to eat and a couple of pints rounded off the day nicely.

The drive home the following morning was fine as we set off on our routes back, with thankfully not too much traffic. I had hoped to deliver the birthday present back in one piece, although I did manage to pull the cable handbrake apart along the way!

A huge thank you to Simon and Ali for letting me use the car. We were really pleased to come away having achieved a Silver award, and really enjoyed the experience made better by having a group of us stay and travel around together, despite Nick and Ben's unfortunate retirement.

Much too much

In spite of everything, Richard Simpson enjoys the Edinburgh Trial

After my Beta X-Trainer's engine shat itself at dawn the previous year, I was determined that 2026 would see my best-ever Edinburgh Trial. A dry Summer meant that the sections should not be too challenging (the first time I rode it, Corkscrew was like a waterfall), and my new mount (a four-stroke Beta 350) seemed to promise seamless power while only being a few kg heavier than the old X-Trainer two-stroke.

A few practice runs around seemed to confirm that this was a bike that could compensate for my growing feebleness and never improving lack of ability.

Final prep, and I noticed that only about half of the already titchy back light's LEDs were actually working. Not good enough for a night-time trial. Genuine new ones were 'orribly expensive, but a nice man in Wales had just about legal replacements at a bargain price.

One arrived, but fitting it seemed to introduce a whole tribe of little goblins to the electrics, which stuffed my entry to the Taw & Porridge Trial. I had no confidence that I could get the thing sorted and tested for the Edinburgh. Checking the regs, I saw that this was the last day I could change class, so I swallowed a brave pill and switched from Class B to Class C and the GasGas ES700 (KTM 690 in a red dress). The trials tyres came off the Beta and onto the GasGas, and off I set for Derbyshire in a hired van which, just like the bike, was far too big for the task.

In my heart, I knew that this was probably a bad move, but I figured that the ES700 would at least be fun to ride on the road and easier sections. I stayed overnight before the trial at my mate Lee's near Stafford, and got an enthusiastic greeting from his (now massive, but still growing) Akita dog, Yoshi, who luckily remembered me from last year, took my arm gently in his mouth, and led me to the sofa. The van was so huge there wasn't room to leave it on Lee's drive so it got parked in his neighbour's yard.

The weather was lovely, and I opted to ride from Lee's to the start (which saved having to get changed in the van). Lee accompanied me on the first part of the journey, with his Yoshimura Suzuki 1250cc Bandit doing a good deal of it on the rear wheel. With over 70 bhp from its single-cylinder engine, the GasGas was never too far behind.

Plans for me to run with my Tiger Cub riding mate Rick and his two Triumph-twin mounted team-mates had come to naught, but I found myself not too far on the running order from the unofficial Team Bike Magazine of John (Suzuki DR-Z4S) and Adam (Yamaha XT500) so I was still in good company.

For once, I had an early start number, and the MCC's schedule was very generous. With a warning that there was a (black) cow loose on the route we set off. Team Bike set a fairly brisk pace on the road, while mindful of the black cow I was a bit slower on the bends, but the ES700 had no difficulty reeling them back in on the straights.

I footed on the first section, which took the pressure off, and cleaned the next. There was a long queue at section three, Hob Hay, which I was confident of cleaning as I had on previous Edinburghs. But this time there was a deviation, which took me straight into a gorse bush. Brutally, the marshals made me turn around and do the 'ride of shame' on the way out.

I wasn't too happy with this, and the sticky drizzle that started to fall afterwards did nothing to improve my mood. Things looked up at the first refreshment stop (at the start a Canadian contestant had said to me "This is the most British event ever, you have to keep stopping for tea.") when the rain stopped and I was able to clean my glasses and visor and take on some refreshments. Well done to the lovely people running the Blueberry Tea Kiosk at Parsley Hay.

On in a better mood to Cliff Quarry. I had no recollection of this from previous events, and had I known what it would be like I would have been very apprehensive. At first sight it looked like a blast up a hill, similar to Tumbletrees, so I treated it accordingly. A big(ish) handful and up we go…but then there were some orange arrows sending us right into the woods, and a series of arrows nailed to trees which appeared in my headlamp. Swerve right, swerve left, avoid the trees and somehow keep feet up. Then the orange arrows turn to silver, and I'm sure I've gone wrong, but I'm rolling down a bank and into a road where I find Adam trying to restart a slightly bashed and muddied XT500. He assures me he'll be OK, so I set off up the road sure that I haven't managed a clean.

Except, when the results come, I have! Looking back, I didn't dab and I must have followed the route correctly after all. So I'll take that one as a win!

My luck didn't hold. After the traditional small hours refuel at Whites of Calver I set off for the next section: Tumbletrees. This is much less complicated than the previous one, you just ride up a hill through the woods, and the most difficult bit is actually after the section ends where you join the tarmac road. But I find I am fighting for grip…I've never seen this section so dry, it's like talc with large rocks mixed in and I spin to a halt.

Mistake on my part. As it's so dry I've got 19 psi in my tyres…but that's far too much for this fine dust. As soon as I can I drop the rear to four psi, and clean the next three sections. Now we are cooking with gas (GasGas)!

On to Monsal Head. It's getting light, and breakfast is on the menu. I'm on a roll (with an egg and two sausages in it).

Back on the bike, and down into the valley, where the mist has gathered and for the first time on the trial my hands feel cold. No worries…the GasGas has heated grips. As the mist clears I can appreciate the scenery…this is what we came for.

Litton Slack is next. The first time I rode this it was very, very wet and most entrants span to a halt. This year, like last, there is a restart, but the section is much easier than it was in years gone by thanks to drainage work. Only trouble is, I mess the restart. Dabbed the back brake and missed, grabbed the front brake and slid backwards. Idiot!

After a harsh word with myself, I recovered my dignity with a clean at Priestcliff. Then followed the best part of the trial with a nice green lane followed by a most glorious ride past Buxton Raceway and over the Goyt Valley, which the route crossed via the dam wall. Dropping down into the valley we can see right across the Cheshire Plain with the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope glowing white like a giant mushroom in the distance. Life is good!

The next section is arguably the most taxing of the lot: Corkscrew. I've never failed to get up it, but I might have taken a dab or two getting to the top, and I can only hope that the incredible power of the GasGas will compensate for the 50 per cent weight increase over a Beta. There are two restarts on the hill, and as a Class C bike the GasGas will do the early easy Yellow one. Great. Then, in the queue we hear that all bikes now do the Yellow one, which means the hill must be extra rough…grrr, if the Class Bs get the easy restart shouldn't the Cs miss it altogether?

There's the usual nerve-wracking wait before I get called forward and ride to the bottom of the valley. Then, another nerve-wracking wait. The marshal's radio crackles. Can I go now?

"You are clear to go," she says, "but the previous rider lost his breakfast on the hill."

Oh no! I have a vision of vomited bacon and eggs all over the only line with any traction. This is probably going to be disgusting and almost certainly very slippery.

Off I go, do the easy restart and wind the power on. All OK until I see a silver Thermos flask, a Tupperware box and various other picnic items rolling down the hill towards me. Someone's lost breakfast!

I can't help it. I back off and swerve around them losing all momentum. Idiot! I should have flattened the flask and distributed the sandwiches all over the landscape.

As I grind to a halt I am rescued by Richard Griffin (of KTM 950 fame) and his wife Claire who are running the section. I don't remind them that I only started entering this event because they told me it would be fun, and I don't think they recognised me anyway.

By the time I get to the top I'm knackered. I'm cheered by the knowledge that the next section is easy, and it's a lovely ride back to Booth Farm via the Cat & Fiddle. The route takes us along a very rough and rocky green lane. A nasty clang of rock on rim reminds me I'm running very low trye pressures and I back right off, deciding to follow a slow rider in front who is picking his line very carefully. He has to…he's riding a rigid-frame BSA Bantam! Some enduro-mounted riding gods blast past us. When we get to the end of the lane, they are predictably stopped and busy removing punctured wheels.

I know the route so well that I don't pay full attention to the roadbook, which means I turn up a wrong road and miss Booth Farm, then I drop the bike turning around, and realise I'm still knackered. Some kind souls help me pick it up. This is not good.

Finally, I get to Booth Farm and realise I am now mixed up with the cars. For the first time ever I foot on Booth Farm, which frankly is the kind of section you should be able to drive a golf cart up.

Reality check. I'm here on my own, I've got to get the van back for Monday, and I'm a hazard to myself in this condition. A quick review of the route book. Next is the rest stop at Hollinsclough Tea Room, then there's a few more sections and the trial will conclude with the very steep and treacherous Clough Mine sections where, in my current state, I'm likely to spanner myself. This is not an option.

Time to quit. Ride to Hollinsclough, enjoy tea and cake but not the stench from the septic tank, hand my numbers to the MCC institution that is Celia, and navigate back to Lee's place using my mobile phone.

The end!

Organising the Tamar Trial

Andrew Rippon takes us behind the scenes

I am very honoured to be one of four people to be involved in organising the Tamar Trial.
Simon Riddle, Nigel Cowling and I start planning the trial early in the year. With a draft route we then go on a drive though to see if it will work.
This year we were fortunate to have some new land offered to us to lay out some fresh sections on, but of course we still use some of the long-standing ones. With a few tweaks to the route another drive-though a few months later was required to check mileages and timings.
Trial Secretary Jan Cooper is given the route and can then start her seemingly endless paperwork.
Various meetings followed and on a later route check we found some trees had fallen and some sections needed clearing. With the help of a small working party we carried this out two weeks before the trial, many thanks to those who helped us.
On the Thursday and Friday before the trial there were two very long days marking out the route and sections but by Friday evening all sections were marked out and ready to go. Simon just had a couple of sections to check on the Saturday morning.
An early start on Sunday morning saw us four with the help of Lorraine ready to receive competitors for signing on.
As I was the course opener, once Mike Wevill had arrived and handed me the marshals paperwork I duly set off at 7.30am with my side kick for the day Dick Bolt.
On our way to the first section we saw some kind soul had taken it upon themselves to turn an arrow to point in the wrong direction, this would of course have sent the competitors all off route.
We found a few arrows missing on route but reinstated them and carried on our merry way. (Note to organisers of future events, don't use arrows as road markers, use Red Blue and White marker-boards as the general public don't know what they are there for).
As course openers we were then free to marshal on the last two sections. With some last-minute tyre pressure limits these two sections changed the result of the trial.
Then it was back to Wilsey Down for a well-earned pint and a meal.
At the finish we had some very positive feedback from competitors which makes all the hard work and effort worthwhile.
We are already planning next year's Tamar, but the Launceston Trial comes first.
Many thanks to all competitors for entering, plus the marshals and landowners. Also Wilsey Down for the start and finish venue, and Proper 'Ansum for hosting the lunch break.

Marshalling the Tamar Trial

Richard Simpson's turn to clutch the clipboard

Soon after my return from the Edinburgh Trial I got an email from Nigel Cowling inviting me to volunteer as a marshal for the Tarmar if I wasn't going to enter it.

So, being easily led, I did. I got another email giving a W3W reference (lunch/noise/concluded, which seemed somehow apt), the name of the section 'Higher Lee' and a rendezvous time. W3W led me to a carpark by the side of a wood, where I hung around for a while and tried not to look like a dogger. I then spotted an orange arrow far away up a track, jumped back on my GasGas, and followed the arrow trail until I encountered a small group of blokes who told me I was too early and the section wasn't opened yet.

I explained that I was a marshal too, and I was immediately promoted to the role of clipboard holder when Andrew and Dick rocked up in the course-opening Land Rover. The section itself was a reasonably straightforward climb up an avenue of trees at 90 degrees to the trail with a liberal

coating of forest floor leaf and twig litter and was numbered on a 12 to 1 basis rather than a simple clean/fail.

The sidecar outfits appeared first, followed by the solo motorcycles, and most of these managed to clean the section with little drama. The cars posed more of a problem, especially at first, and we decided to let them have a positioning shunt so they could enter the section more or less straight rather than risk them trying a sweeping turn and ending up falling off the drop on the opposite side. Nevertheless, the first few cars struggled with the depth of leaf loam and some were spinning to a halt for double-figure scores.

All that changed with the arrival of a posse of powerful rear-wheel drive BMWs which blasted up the hill sending the leaf litter cascading over the track and out into the valley below. Their passage transformed the conditions underwheel and most of the remaining competitors managed to summit the section.

The only real issue was that after the section, competitors were routed back down the hill to rejoin the main route behind the queue for the section itself, so I had to encourage a few people to park to the left while they sucked their teeth and fiddled with their tyres to let those ahead of them progress to the next section. But no one crashed or got stuck or had to go to hospital so I think we can count it as a success.

If you can't compete next time, why not volunteer as a marshal?

And if you want to see the Tamar Trial 2026 from a competitor's POV, check out: www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqQSl5xEEJM&t=2s

Garage Chat with Simon Oates

The Ilkley Trial earlier in the year proved to be a very expensive as I got into conversation with fellow competitor Jeremy Salter who was driving a blue Liege. It was his first trial in the car since purchasing it the previous October at auction. It turned out that his passenger, Alan Skirvin was thinking about purchasing the car while bouncing for England throughout the day! I had offered them my spare tyres as I thought they would enhance their drive. They had a few issues throughout the trial but completed the whole event with smiles on their faces. Quite an achievement for a car that hadn't been driven for eight months which prompted me to underwrite the car in case Alan didn't purchase it.

With little expectation of anything coming from my offer, I went home thinking of another missed opportunity and I didn't really need another Liege did I?

Monday came and a phone call from Jeremy saying that the car was still available if I wanted it. Of course I wanted it, was the first thought followed by blind panic as the second reaction and how to tell Ali my wife. Diplomacy probably isn't my strongest suit and I sent feelers in Ali's direction and stepped back a few paces and then trundled off to the garage. I knew of several people that would like a Liege but would they stump up the money?

An hour later when I returned to the cottage I was confronted by Ali and the words "I've been thinking that I could buy it for your 70th birthday present". Maybe confronted is the wrong word, but how could I say no?

A few conditions came with the purchase, mainly don't spend too much money on the car which I agreed it wouldn't be more than £1,000. Two days later I was off up to Godalming near Guildford in Ali's car with the trailer and the hope that neither changed their minds! A long trip but definitely worth it. The initial drive on cross-ply tyres when I got home was underwhelming and the first thing

to do was to swap some wheels and tyres around which transformed the little beauty on the road. Straight away I could see the new car was well put together being the 44th one made, with vastly improved thickness and quality of glass fibre bodywork compared to Mr Toad. Disc brakes on the front as well and a Reliant 850cc engine and gearbox as originally conceived by Peter Davis which most people seem to have upgraded to Suzuki items.

The following three months have been spent under, over, inside and around the car apart from when I had to refurb the summerhouse for Ali with 90 panes of glass, six new doors, gallons of paint in scorching heat (you've got to start around 4.30am to beat the heat) and hours and hours of labour.

I have to admit that too many hours have been spent on the car in comparison and many more to come. Both cars have been resprayed (Trialling standard), wheels refurbed, brakes overhauled, suspension refreshed, Blue car dash updated, spacers made for rear wheels (were nearly 3 inches narrower than the fronts), strengthening of rear axle, new tyres (old cross-ply ones sold as nearly new with tubes). The back axle on the green one has had the outer casing replaced and strengthened due to my average repairs (it's done well really) of three years ago when I snapped it on the Exmoor Trial.

Both cars are near to trial-ready now and our Chairman, Simon Riddle accompanied by Nigel Cowling will be driving the Blue car on the Edinburgh Trial the week before the Tamar Trial in October (see story above).

Tales from the ed's bike shed by Richard Simpson

I seem to have spent quite a lot of time 'on the tools' these past few weeks, but very little of that has involved motorcycles, and most has just been a reminder of why I hate working on cars so much. The background story is too tedious to relate in full, but it has left me staggered at the unscrupulous tactics now employed by insurance companies and their associates to prolong and wring financial advantage out of a simple claim for a 'no injury' low-speed crash.

Luckily none of it involved me personally, but the strokes these licensed robbers pull are frankly unbelievable.

Anyhow, I've now got the Beta running again, thanks to a replacement for the replacement rear light (the first one supplied had some kind of massive internal short that would let the bike start, then blow all the fuses so it wouldn't restart). It was all sorted without argument by SMX Offroad (www.smxoffroad.com) who are highly recommended. They didn't even want the old lamp back. They do parts for KTM, GasGas, Sherco and Husqvarna as well as Beta and are based in Wales.

So I now have three bikes running and on the road while the fourth (the Aprilia Mille) is SORN until the Spring.

On another note, I was in Camelford Bike Bits getting an MoT done a while back and I noticed two lovely bikes from my past (as a Ducati and Moto Guzzi salesman) shoved under a counter, looking like they had gone nowhere for years. A Guzzi Le Mans 850cc Mk II Black and Gold Edition and a Ducati Darmah 900cc also in matching black and gold both from 'my era' of the late 1970s, early 1980s. Apparently they belonged to the same owner and had been left at the shop for 'recommissioning' many years ago, and the shop had been unable to make contact with him since.

What a sight and sound those two very different Italian V-twins would make together if they could be restored to their former glory…but how the hell would you claim title to them to put them back on the road?

Keep the contributions to the newsletter coming…long or short, funny or serious, words and pictures. If you don't write it no one else will!

richardsimpson94@yahoo.co.uk