

Editorial

I was hoping and expecting to have something good to write about the trial at Snaque Pit following our recent holiday in Spain. However, we returned home to phone messages and letters advising that the event had been banned due to the Eastern Centre ACU refusing us a permit to run.

Ted and Ian have produced a letter which is reproduced on page 3 and I request that you read their comments regarding this attempt by certain members of the Eastern Centre hierarchy to once again thwart the actions of one of the largest and certainly the most successful club which is nominally under their control.

My 'special correspondent' tells me that the Essex & Suffolk Border trial at Raydon, the event which we were deemed to be in competition with and likely to reduce/ruin their entry had the grand total of 0 (zero) Pre-65 entries and probably 2 Twin Shocks neither of whom was known to my informant.

The ACU world is a funny place and believe me, both Tracey and myself have unfortunately been witnesses to both the good and bad sides of the organisation. We, both of us, have had very poor dealings with the Eastern

Centre and many of its hierarchy whilst we have nothing but praise and satisfaction of the way the 'umbrella' organisation at Rugby operates. Just WHY does the Eastern Centre have to go out of its way to thwart the activities of this club?

What comes out of all this is the requirement for the EFA to determine the path it takes in the future as we have come to a point in our history where, sadly, we MUST take stock of the situation for the benefit of our membership. Your committee/revolutionary council will be meeting in the near future to determine the best course of action for the future of the club.

Now, onto more pleasant matters.

I held over from last month, the article by Mark Wilson and Garry Plummer on their exploits in the Exeter Trial which was held at the beginning of January. Before the era of 'so-called' global warming, the Exeter Trial was famed for the cold and very adverse weather conditions to be met but now it seems to be the wet that 'chills the bones'. Together with their article, I have included items on the history of the trial and an extract from the regulations to add flavour to the article. You have to be a special breed of person to undertake any of the MCC

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Plonkers Trial

Sunday 20th May 2007

Hall Farm, Great Bromley, Nr. Colchester. Grid Reference TM 077 257

Start at 1100 hrs

A Trial for:

Pre 65 solos • Pre 65 sidecars • Twin Shocks
Youths/Juniors • Twin Shock sidecars

events - they are far more demanding than appears on the surface.

Summer has well and truly arrived! The first of Tims Five Star Tours is imminent - more details on page 7.

The annual trek northwards to Scotland has, I believe, already started. Will this be the last year for the foreseeable future that it will be possible to go to the Fort William area without a passport? Don't forget the forthcoming Scottish elections where the Scottish National Party are set, if the opinion polls are to be believed, for some sort of landslide victory.

Will the supermarket shoppers be subjected to a demonstration of puncture repair this year? We shall have to wait and see.

Mike Harden is organising another Plonkers Trial at Great Bromley. This is NOT an enter on the day event so make sure you get your entry in nice and early.

The Off Road Registration nonsense is still rolling along. There is still time to let your MP know what you think. Tracey has written to our MP, Simon Burns, and got a very positive response from him.

OK, it is looking more and more likely that the Bill will fail but we could still fall foul of some behind the scenes machinations in the same way that the aforementioned bill has managed to get this far already.

I see that there are moves to create a series of Beginners and Wobblers Trials within the centre. Whilst I fully support these moves I am still disappointed that the 'Essex style' Clubman class was, some 18 months or so ago, deemed to be an undesirable class. This belief of course was one of the many reasons behind my no longer being the Editor of the Eastern Centre Gazette. Perhaps the Eastern Centre junta would have found reasons to sack me by now so not to worry.

Let's hope for a better 2007/8 trials season and also let us hope that David Smith, the new and current Chairman of the Eastern Centre, can introduce some sense at the top level. I don't envy him the task

Best wishes,

Jim



Eastern Fourstroke Association

Affiliated to the Eastern Centre A-C.U.



VERY IMPORTANT

25 April, 2007

We must apologise on behalf of the EFA for cancelling our trial at Snaque Pit, but it was due to circumstances beyond our control. The Essex & Suffolk Border club who were running a championship (not Pre70) trial at Raydon on the same day objected to the running of our trial. Therefore our ACU centre would not issue a permit for the event. This really was extremely poor judgement on their part as both events could have been run successfully on the same day, but by their thoughtless action they robbed 60 or so members of their days sport.

We were all ready to run our trial, the landowner had been approached, sections had been cut out, paper work done, when a phone call scuppered all our efforts. Surely this is completely out of order and we should have received an official letter in good time allowing us to re-organize our event.

Now for the funny bit - the committee of the Essex and Suffolk Border club suggested that as our event had been banned the EFA could go to Raydon and assist in running their event!!

JUST WHO DOES THE LOCAL ACU THINK THEY ARE DEALING WITH!!!!?

We are one of the biggest and best pre-65 clubs in the country, and in banning this trial they, to coin a phrase, have poked the sleeping lion with a sharp stick. In over twenty years that the EFA has existed, our local ACU, the Eastern Centre, have never helped us in any way, in fact they seem to have gone out of their way to do the opposite, poaching dates and land and on three occasion refusing to grant permits.

The EFA as always is dedicated to running good trials for our members when and where it wants to, and to that end it is time to take action to achieve this aim.

We will be having a committee meeting in the near future to plan what action we are going to take, and we will of course keep you all informed. The EFA has never been confrontational and is always willing to help or advise other clubs on things pre-65, but we believe that within our local ACU there are vindictive elements who are extremely uneasy with the EFA's continued success and popularity

Once again we apologise for the loss of your days sport.

Ian Preedv

President. EFA

Ted Smith

Chairman. EFA



FIVE RULES FOR MEN TO FOLLOW FOR A HAPPY LIFE:

- 1 Get a woman who helps at home, cooks and cleans up.
- 2 Get a woman, who can make you smile and laugh.
- 3 Get a woman who you can trust and who does not lie to you.
- 4 Get a woman who is good in bed and who likes to be with you.
- 5 It is very important that these four women do not know each other.

Please Note:

The closing date by which all articles and adverts to be included in the next issue of Trials & Tribulations should reach the editorial office is the 25th of the month preceding publication.

Material for inclusion in the magazine may be supplied in the following forms:

handwritten • typed • computer hard copy • fax • email • floppy disc

If providing computer hard copy, a font size of 12pt minimum is preferred whilst articles supplied on floppy disc should be saved in text format.

This and That!!

Having arrived at 1967 on my nostalgic journeying, I find the cellar is bare of programmes bar one - the Eastern Centre scramble championships at:

Cadders Hill, Lyng 13th August, 1967

Everyone is there - 171 solos and 13 chairs. The Chelmsford club were well represented by 14 bodies including the late John Parker riding a 350 Triumph solo and a 650 chair - a real enthusiast John, much missed on the scene. He hated to see bikes die and be scrapped and was always to hand with advice and bits, especially British and vintage. A sign of the times was that the 200s and 350s (diminishing classes) had a six lapper race to themselves to start the meeting with Dan De'Ath (B40 BSA), John Parker and myself (AJS) making up half the 350 entry. There were some real racers in the 200cc class - Pease, Baird, Harvey and Osborne. Result unknown - the programme is my own and one didn't record results as one had to keep the machinery going and get out for the next race on time. Happy days!! Scanning the programme it was interesting to note several names who went on to make impressions in other disciplines i.e. trials, sidecar trials, grass, and end enduros, with several popping up in the vintage scene today.

There was not so much money about in those days and although I don't think many race bikes were ridden to the meeting it was a case of you had one bike and the days of changing it from a scrambler to a trials iron come November were gone. I'm not sure the term specialised machinery was applicable as some of it wasn't very special! But, there was still enthusiasm and one can't be without it! At the age of 33 with two young sons, the Austin A 40 van carried the family and two bikes together with a large toolbox around the centre. I was the old man of the Chelmsford club then!!

Sunday 14th April, 1968

Several Eastern Centre riders went over the border to compete in the Cambridgeshire Grand National which was also the second round of the British motocross championships. Freddie Mayes warmed up by taking second place behind Malcolm Davis in the 250 invitation race beating Alan Clough and John Pease.

In the first leg of the five hundreds, Dave Nicoll beat John Banks (both Victors). Terry Challinor was third (360 Sprite); Vic Eastwood (Victor) 4th; and Freddie Mayes 8th. Malcolm Davis beat Fred in the 250 Grand National with John Pease in 7th.

The 500cc second race again saw Dave and John!

A good day's racing over an interesting riders course - Lawn Farm, Elsworth.

One of the highlights of the Eastern Centre grass scene was the Braintree National - 7th round of the championships. Colin Packman (Hagon JAP) won the first 500 semi-final with Don Godden winning the second at a speed of 51.1 - very quick and extremely stylish.

Next, the first sidecar race saw Dave Hunter and Brian Cox from York again classically stylish!

Following this was the first of the 250 cc championship legs. Our Denny Barber putting on the style!

The second chair race saw J Miller and Gerry Flack from Haverhill making a name for themselves (650 Hagon Triumph) ahead of a 1000 cc Vincent from Liverpool. The speed 45.7. Steve Todd and Frank Burke from Bishop's Stortford went very well for third spot.

At this point the programme owner nodded off or went for a long tea-break. Ho, hum! The advert on the back advised that Jack Hubbard had new Raleigh Whisps for immediate delivery - no doubt he was kept busy when they were immediately returned! I imagine the deflated owners were then introduced to the lovely Honda, Yams and Suzukis!!

Bank Holiday Monday September 2nd E S S A grass at Sandon

40 sidecars and 50 solos - depleted in comparison with previous years. Several CDAC members were riding under the ESSA colours so that they qualified for the members' race and these included Ken Willis; Robin (Joe) Church; Martin Saunders; the writer; Alan Orrin; and Dave Temple. Those riding under blue and silver CDAC colours were Peter Groom and Ray Booty. The two Johns, Parker and Edwards together with Bob Chapman and the late Harry Ketley endeavoured to get in the chair results. Intermittent noted results indicate heat placings for Robin, myself and Ken. Denny Barber set the pace in the 250 final and Max Creasey was in fine form in second place (strange that as he was down to ride a 500 Trevor Rumsey special!!) and the writer managed 4th place.

The very stylish and neat John Bryant, with Dave Basson doing the acrobatics on the side, won the first chair final chased as always very forcibly by Dave Hunt and Colin Meadows. David Manning and Dick Moone were lost in the dust (not funny - bloody dangerous). Brian Gladwell and Tony Steggles were shoulder to shoulder in the 350 final but it finished in that order with Harry Godding fighting the dust storm in third and no doubt he made his feelings known upon returning to the paddock! Colin Flexman, a very neat un-flurried bricklayer, finished 4th on his Finn JAP.

Felsted grass meeting September 8th

Once again limited programme recording!! The writer made the 250 final finishing 8th and was sixth in the 350 final behind Brian Gladwell, Harry Godding and John Coughlan. A good day in my book! My 250 mount was a C15 motor in a James chassis which had been run into a brick wall to produce something nearer a grass bike configuration. This had been contrived by Jack Taylor, foreman at Hadlers Garage (Chelmsford). After I purchased the bike, Jack emigrated to Aussie!!

Fast forward to April 1st this year. The Mid Anglia trial at Snaque Pit had an entry of 52 on a lovely day with excellent sections courtesy of Ian Bennett together with a full quota of observers - what more could a secretary of the meeting wish for - Mike Harden had a smile on his face even more so as he plonked the Ariel around my section - that is a big bike! Good performances by both young and old. A great day!

I recently saw the world indoor trials championship round from Milan - that just gets crazier!! About 31 year old Dougie Lampkin wasn't fazed and finished third - what an incredible and brave man

The world motocross scene is now underway and Carl Nunn is in contention and we have some Brits coming on stream amongst a host of Belgians and South Africans. Good sport.

There was also some good sport going on at Maylandsea on Easter Sunday. Several club members were going for it at the Pre-65MX meeting. Sam Appleton and Jim Patey were near the front on a hard and demanding course which produced good racing. Chris, Tim, Jason and Keith had enjoyable and trouble free rides on a very pleasant day.

Happy riding

Pedro E



It's time to blow away those winter blues and get the road bike out again.

There will be a ride out on Saturday 12th May, starting from the Alma at 3:30pm. The finish will be at Tesco's car park at Braintree/Notley with a breather taken at Finchingfield en-route.

All welcome.

By Order of The Management

SNOW STORMS . . .

One winter morning a couple from Ohio were listening to the radio over breakfast. They hear the announcer say, "We are going to have 8 to 10 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the even- numbered side of the street, so the snowploughs can get through. Norman's wife goes out and parks the car on the even numbered side of the street.

A week later while they are eating breakfast again, the radio announcer says, "We are expecting 10 to 12 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the odd-numbered side of the street, so the snowploughs can get through." Norman's wife goes out and moves her car to the odd numbered side of the street.

The next week they are again having breakfast, when the radio announcer says "We are expecting 12 to 14 inches of snow today. You must park..." Then the power goes out.

Norman's wife is very upset and with a worried look on her face she says, "Honey, I don't know what to do. Which side of the street do I need to park on so the snowploughs can get through?"

With the love and understanding in his voice that all men who are married to Blondes exhibit, Norman says...

"Why don't you just leave it in the garage this time?"

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and
Riders to seek Sponsorship

Further Details from Mick Brown 01206 250462



LEONARD CHESHIRE *Essex*

Jack Lilley Cup Trial 2007

Throughout the year 'The Vintage Motorcycle Club' organise some really great 'Sporting Trials' for us old/young and daring mudpluggers. One of the best of these is the 'Jack Lilley' which is still going strong due in no uncertain terms to the continuing efforts of the 'Brooklands Section'.

The VMCC 'Brooklands Section' is also well noted for their 'Brooklands Relived' events held of course at the 'Brooklands Track' in Surrey. This is probably the most famous and historic speed track in the UK. But! The format for that historic event centres on the motorcycles that raced on the concrete surface in those heady heydays of speed. The Jack Lilley Cup Trial also has a speed event, but this is only used as a tie decider, just in case riders are on equal scores at the end of the competition. An off road standing start, followed by some very quick manoeuvres, then heavy braking into a 'marked stop box'. All this has to be performed against the stopwatch. Hand timing in the old tradition is always used!

When springtime arrives our clocks have to go forward an hour, so to get to Bagshot Heath on time an extra special effort is needed. This is no problem for I would gladly get up several hours earlier (if required) just to ride this friendly well-organised event.

There were 18 rigid rear bikes entered in the programme which is testimony to very ride-able sections. Thirty-five other machines spanned two more classes. These were made up of four strokes, two strokes, singles and twins, but these were predominately of British manufacture. I believe there might have been some more entries on the day as well, but the rules for these riders means they would not have been eligible for an award.



Paul Lecoq 350 Triumph



Bob Onley Velo 350

Last years Jack Lilley Cup winner was Mike Barton (AJS) so you can be certain that he was extremely pleased to win it again this year! Mike was the only rider in this class to have a clean sheet.

This years Thurlow Cup (harder route) for the pre-units and twin cylinder unit construction bikes went to John Johns with 3 marks lost (which were left as faint footprints in section 6). He was entered in the programme as riding an Ariel HT5.

The Steve Lilley Cup (harder route) for the more nimble unit construction machines went to a very famous name indeed. Malcolm Simmons (of grass track championship fame) lost just one mark in section 4 on the hard route, riding his Francis Barnet twostroke. His special test time just blitzed everyone else's efforts by a very considerable margin! But this was to be expected!

Thanks are due to Stuart and Sue Towner and all the club members and helpers for a great event. Mike Holloway and his little sister Joan Westbrook for planning and setting ten superb sections.

Sunday the 25th March 2007 was a great day for everyone involved. Lets hope that 'The Jack Lilley Cup Trial' continues for many more years to come!

Dave Blanchard

BUMPER STICKERS

Hug your kids at home - belt them in the car!



THE 79TH EXETER TRIAL AND EXETER TOURING ASSEMBLY 5th & 6th JAN 2007

The youngest of the club's 'Big Three', this started in 1910 when the MCC broke new ground by introducing the "London to Exeter and Back Winter Club Run" on Boxing Day, when saner folk might be expected to be enjoying the warmth of the festive season with their families. To prove MCC members were, and still are, a race apart the event generated 81 entries on two, three and four wheels while within three years a dizzy 231 faced the starter. This was a no nonsense trial starting in the evening and finishing back at the same place the following afternoon during which nearly 500 miles had to be travelled at a predetermined average speed on indifferent roads through the worst of the winter weather, and it is perhaps this very feature which has always made this one so popular.

By 1913 improving roads led to the introduction of Chard and Trow Hills, which had to be taken non stop under observation, and this trend continued when hostilities resumed in 1920 with increasingly more 'set piece' hills in the route. Unlike the Lands End Trial it was not until the Thirties that hills still in use, Fingle Bridge ('32) and Simms ('33) appeared on the scene while surprisingly it was not until 1935 that the event officially became known as The Exeter Trial.

Whatever the name, the event had already become popular, with record entries and a course which was really difficult. In the opinion of some members it was becoming too difficult and the wisdom of including Simms was queried after 1933, when it stopped all but 18 cars, so by the end of the decade it had become an optional hill with a special award for those who conquered it.

The trend since WW2 has been for the finish to move further west, Salisbury, Blandford, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Sidmouth being favoured, and finally to Torbay, while several starting points followed by a concentration run save competitors wasting mileage positioning. The date moved to early January, when daylight is shortest and the weather at its worst, and if that were not enough the established hills were joined by some 'Toughies' in Clinton and Bovey woods ensuring the trial remained competitive.

A few years ago, when the Exeter Trial was celebrating its 90th anniversary, a special section was included using an easier route which included many hills which had been used in the trial in the past but were no longer a challenge for modern machinery. This Run attracted an enthusiastic entry, and became the precursor of Class O which is now included in all three MCC classics. This is effectively a trial within a trial catering for competitors who want to continue competing in MCC events but because of age, or the type of machinery they drive, prefer something less demanding.

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Excerpt from the Regs for the Exeter Trial

The MCC was founded in 1910 as a club for motorcyclists - the first of its kind. In 1902, E.H. Arnott set the pattern for MCC trials and runs with a run from Land's End to John O'Groats after the Motor Show held at Crystal Palace. Held under NCU regs, pedalling was permitted! The first London to Edinburgh took place in 1904 and initially took place annually at Whitsun. The first cars were admitted to the 1906 event (but only if they cost less than £250!). This mixed entry set the scene for all modern day MCC events and was followed by the Land's End Trial (1908) and the Exeter Trial (1910).

In each event the competitor strived to complete the specified route exactly to a scheduled time, being penalised for early or late arrival at specified locations along the route. However, in today's environment we do not impose penalties for time keeping but competitors have a specific starting time and must ensure they keep ahead of a leisurely driven course closing car. To gain an award, competitors must climb the "observed sections" without "footing" or "stopping". There are "Restarts" for the more competitive classes on the steep slopes of some of the hills and in addition, strict tyre pressure limits are used to limit the advantages of the "specials" on the difficult sections. There are also two timed special tests which are used as tie breakers for class and overall awards.

Back in the twenties, the ordinary roads such as White Sheet Hill (still used for Class 0) and Old Trow Hill near Sidford were sufficient challenge to the entries of the time to be observed. However, as motorcycles and cars improved, more severe hills had to be introduced. Some of these hills are still included in today's event, the most notable of these being Simms, which was first used in 1933 and is still a 'stopper'. Other long standing Exeter Hills are Fingle Bridge (1932), Higher Rill (1931) and Meerhay first used in 1929 and included last year after a 10 year gap.

Yet again, one, must be impressed by the sheer diversity of the entry, spanning nearly 70 years of motoring heritage, with examples both of production machines and "specials". By the time you see them in action, a cold (and probably wet) night will have been spent on saddle, seat or 'chair'. Spare a thought, too, for the marshals and officials. When observed sections close, they will have been on duty for at least 6 hours - and often for significantly longer. Without their voluntary services, the trial could not take place.

The MCC is special in that every competitor who successfully climbs every "observed section" wins a premier award - "Gold". One failure anywhere earns a "Silver", whilst two failures result in a "Bronze". For many, however, actually to complete the course and gain a "Finisher's Certificate" is in itself, an achievement. In order to give all competitors a theoretically even chance of success, vehicles are allocated to different classes: there are five for the motorcycles and 3-wheelers, and eight for the cars. In class '0', all hills and tests must be successfully tackled to gain a class 'O' award.

Ham and Eggs - all in a days work for a chicken but a lifetimes achievement for a pig!

The motorcycle classes are:

"A" = Single or Multi-Cylinder British Solos, generally pre-65

"B" = Solos up to 450cc

"C" = Solos over 450cc

"D" = Sidecar outfits

"E" = Three-wheelers

The Cars must all use STANDARD ROAD TYRES and the classes are numbered according to climbing ability (the lower the class number, the lower the climbing ability - in theory!).

Class 1 = Front wheel drive (the most disadvantaged)

Class 2 = Pre-1941 cars (many with small side-valve engines and large diameter wheels)

Class 3 = Production saloons, front engine, rear-wheel drive

Class 4 = Production saloons, rear engine, rear-wheel drive, below 1300cc

Class 5 = Production sports cars

Class 6 = Production saloons, rear engine, rear-wheel drive, over 1300cc

Class 7 = Kit-cars and heavily modified production cars

Class 8 = Trials 'Specials' (many of which are very lightweight & the 'crew' sit almost over the rear axle)

Finally there is Class 0 which continues to grow in popularity and allows new members, or those with elderly or much-loved machinery to take part, albeit without being eligible for the major awards. It is open to bikes and cars, but omits the severe or very rough hills,



Mark Wilson and Garry Plummer making a splash!

We left Black Notley at 1pm on Friday. After an uneventful journey, we arrive at Popham Airfield, just off the A303 in Hampshire, at 5.30pm. We are the first competitors at the start area.

Our overnight driver, recovery man, John Yearley, leaves at 7pm for his overnight stop at Ilminster.

We relax in the flying club control room with freshly made egg and bacon rolls and tea.

Start is 7.43pm sharp.

The 101 miles to Sparkford and the Haynes Motor Museum is uneventful apart from having to switch to reserve for a few miles.

Scrutineering is in the museum workshop. Various machines are in the workshop, the racing Ferrari belongs to Mr Haynes Junior.

Two hours to wait before the start. We have a mediocre meal in the on-site cafe. The rest of the time is spent in the bookshop. They do not seem to mind hundreds of people thumbing through their extensive stock.

Competitors are arriving from the three start points, Popham, Lewdown and Cirencester, 84 bikes including 15 sidecars.

Bikes and cars of all makes and types, Anglias, Escorts, Sierras, Martins, VW Beetles, specialist trials cars. Strangest of all are two Trojan Utilities, very lower power two stroke open-top cars 1930? These seem to go almost anywhere. Chain drive to a fixed axle. No diff.

Our start is 00.12, twenty four miles to the first section at Meerhay near Beaminster. This is a long rough muddy climb with at least two pairs of "section continues" boards. These are to remind us that there is still further to go before the end cards.

Twenty miles on, we reach the passage control at Musbury Garage where we are greeted by a cheerful but bewildered official, who signs our control card - 2.30am.

Next is Gatcombe Lane. We clean this. Its pitch dark!

Section 3, Normans Hump, is withdrawn this year as it has been stirred to a sea of mud by forestry equipment.

Fifty two miles from Sparkford we reach No. 4 Clinton.

The Matchless outfit ahead of us unexpectedly fails this section which causes us some concern. Whilst waiting our turn, we spend the time trying to judge the severity of the hill by the direction of the headlight beams.

It proves quite difficult but we gain another clean ride. We later learn that the Matchless crew were in the wrong gear which was the cause of their failure and frustration.

Having sold my soul a long time ago to the devil the least he could do was grant me sunshine on April 1st for the Plonkers trial and he did. Splendid day, good turnout of riders (50 plus) and an abundance of observers also plenty of spectators and a good chance for a natter or start a rumour, so many thanks to all who helped to organise and run the event especially the observers and also those that rode and enjoyed

Thanks again - Ian B aka Mr Blobby

We carry on through Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 and remain clean.

Between 6 and 7 is Stretes special test. Having failed to thoroughly read the instructions, we are unsure if we should stop at, or straddle the three virtual stop lines. 5.15am still pitch dark, raining as well.

We drive along Sidmouth Esplanade. The shipment of BMW bikes are yet to arrive.

Next stop is Exeter motorway services. We have to endure a compulsory one hour break - strangely, two mugs of tea are £3.96 whilst freshly cooked egg and tomatoes on toast are £3.17!

Section 9 Tillerton Steep, 7.45am, 107 miles from Sparkford. Our first fail. A long rocky, steppy gully of a hilly - we make good progress until the combined weight of BMW bike and BMW rider, overcome the best efforts of slimline passenger, Garry and sidecar, and we tip over and stop. Very controlled though!

Next is Fingle Hill. 12 miles, still raining, still dark.

The section is approached over a narrow pack horse bridge at the bottom of the valley and climbs away through steep wooded hillside, as we ride, clean through the end cards, daylight finally arrives. Still raining!

Wooston Steep

There is a holding control and competitors are released in pairs to descend a very steep and slippery hill to the start at the valley bottom.

There is a long delay, and we nervously spend this time in the queue testing the ground for grip. This testing causes a loss of free play in the clutch cable. The result is no drive and a cloud of clutch smoke when we finally make our attempt. Just for a change, DRIVER ERROR, and an annoying fail!

Bovey Tracey 9.50am. Passage Control. Again we meet the official who signs our wet control card. Still cheerful after 10 hours helping!

At last we reach Ilsington Village Hall. Good home made pasties, cakes and tea in china mugs served by cheerful ladies! Allegedly, the funds raised are to restore the local church organ. This has apparently been the worthy cause for at least twenty years!

Rested and warmed, if not dry, we remount and drive the half mile to Simms.

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USEFUL CONVERSIONS . . .

For those who thought the hardest part of Physics was the constant conversion from feet and inches to the metric system, including all its Newtons, Joules, and Watts, here is an example of another useful conversion:

Time between slipping on a peel and smacking the pavement -

1 bananosecond

A famous hill is Simms, possibly the hardest climb in the three MCC Trials.

I have not so far mentioned, so as not to alarm the insignificant passenger, that I was having trouble connecting my right boot with the recently modified brake lever.

Last year on this hill, we stopped and performed a perfectly executed reverse 'J' turn assisted by the original pedal. With this problem at the back of my mind, a repeat of last year did not appeal!

With this thought, I attacked the hill with maximum available speed, leaping from rock to rock, we reached a far higher point than last year. Well past the 'A' boards which are used as a slightly lower finish if all competitors fail to reach the top. We did reach the top, sadly with the Marshalls assistance.

Going down from our stop point did not look at all easy. Still raining.

Tipley 137 miles, 11.15am

Another long climbing rocky gully with steps, running water and mud. We reached the end cards with difficulty but I footed low down. Footing means a fail.

Slippery Sam 150 miles, 12.15 - still raining!

The last section near Babbacombe, five miles from the finish in Torquay. This is a long zig zag climb with red Devon mud, large rocks and running with water.

Corner three was very different from last year due to water erosion. This required an unexpected and difficult line change over a large steep rock slab to secure our final clean of the event. Another mile or so of flooded muddy track, with hikers, prior to the descent to Torquay and the finish. Still raining.

Being early, the passenger washed the outfit with the hose supplied by the hotel, in the car park.

While this task was carried out, I went into the hotel to sign off and relax with a well-earned pint!

The bar and reception area in the hotel is fully covered with fixed plastic sheeting which means there is no problem with muddy people and boots.

We started the event at 1pm Friday 5th January. Arrived in Braintree, Saturday 6th January.

Our thanks to John Yearley, for giving his time, and for driving the knackered pairing home.

The total trial mileage was 250. The van mileage was 520 miles.

It rained continuously from the early hours of the morning to the finish. Heine Gerrick clothing kept us dry.

Why is the Gortex on the inside? Why are water-proof gloves not waterproof?

Report by Mark Wilson and Garry Plummer

End Thought . . .

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?