

Monthly Newsletter November 2022

It's perfect weather for putting the newsletter together, pouring with rain ! There seems to be a lot having been going on of late , not only trials but boring stuff like first aid training, more on that later.

As I hadn't entered the MCC Edinburgh trial I offered to marshal, this to be combined with ten days away in the camper van, so the route to the Peak district took in the windiest spot we could find on the Northwest tip of Anglesey, it was so windy that Vivien was convinced she could hear voices in a pub coming across the sea from Ireland, but we still managed to sleep well. I had a call about two days before the event saying that I wasn't needed on the original planned section so was given two options, one was on a section opening around 1.30am or another opening around 9.00am, after about a second of deliberation I chose the latter one and a chance of a full nights sleep (hard decision) called Hobhay.

We arrived early on the day of the trial, nice cooked breakfast in the van at the top of the section and then set to work, after much tossing of coins I was restart marshal so kept well occupied but still also able to see the deviation route for class 7 & 8 which to be honest at first glance didn't look too difficult, {how wrong could I be), of the total field of class 7 & 8 entries only four or five cars climbed it, Mike Leete first of all in his very pretty Dellow and a little while later Simon Oates in the Liege, meanwhile back on the restart myself and Ian Hingley were kept busy, one impressive climb here was the Reliant of George Osborn ably passengered by Celia Walton, it was also great to see the "step thru's " going clean, including a lost pizza delivery rider though I suspect his top box didn't contain any fresh Pizzas.

Not too long after the expected finishing time the course closing car came through, so hand in the kit and job done , back to the van for a cuppa.





Parc fermé at the Duke of York

First Aid Training

One of the concerns to the committee of late is getting first aid cover at our events, on two occasions this year we have been let down by our planned first aiders, so we decided it was time to sort something. On a morning in late September a small group of us and two people from the Launceston Voluntary First Aid Service met up at Tresmeer Village Hall for a day's training.

The primary objective of the course was for the trainees to be able to give emergency first aid and to keep a patient comfortable whilst waiting for the

emergency services to arrive, the course was low key but very informative, we covered aspects such as CPR and use of a Defibrillator. The CPR procedure covered children as well as adults, it was agreed by all those taking part not to shave on the day we are covering an event, if someone is to get mouth to mouth they might as well get the full “spikey bristle effect”. Admittedly we are not up to ambulance staff qualifications but it is good to know that should someone be unlucky enough to injure themselves at one of our events help will be at hand.



Top left photo shows just some of the equipment brought by the group, top right JT trying to inflate a plastic doll (never done that before said Vivien) bottom shows Mike talking to his doll whilst Andy is listening for a reply, it's all a bit worrying 😊

Sunrise over Screwfix



Tamar 2022

Exploring the Bermuda Triangle on the Tamar Trial

By Richard Simpson

A period of intense rain after a very dry Summer guaranteed a slippery start to the 2022 Tamar Trial, in memory of Pete Cooper, and it was with some disquiet that I realised fate had dealt a comic blow to Team Incompetence before the event even started: Richard 'Shaggy' Simpson (Beta X-Trainer 300), Merv 'Swerve' Brown (Honda XR400), and Ben 'Skyhook' Watton (Honda XL185) would be starting as numbers 7, 8, and 9.

This meant we would be sweeping the sections of slime and wet leaves ahead of most of the serious competition: at least until the inevitable blunders make us fall back down the field.

An early start gives me the opportunity to ride my X-Trainer in the dark and pretend that I am in an MCC Long Distance Trial. Breakfast in the Proper

And some café sees us catch up with the irrepressible George Godkin who originally hails from Ireland but lives in Bury St Edmunds. He'd not only ridden in a real MCC Trial the week before, but arrived in Launceston at midnight after attending the funeral of Phil Gunn, a stalwart of the enduro and rally riding scene back in Ireland. Respect!

Dawn breaks over Screwfix as we complete formalities, and off we went eastwards into the early light. There is an all-new start to the route this year, down minor tarmac lanes well lubricated with slurry, and with the morning sun shining in our eyes. Well it keeps us on our toes.

The first section, Tresallack, is also the first special test, and straight into the sun. It has a 'target time' of 25 seconds, with a restart half way though. Dazzled by the sun, I only realise that the restart line isn't on the track, but on the bank at the side of the lane, at the last moment, and so drop a couple of points. But I manage to complete the section in 28 seconds. Congratulations to Andy Beveridge, who relinquished his Suzuki DR650 for a Honda Innova step-through, hit the mark at exactly 25 seconds, and won the Dunheved Trophy for his trouble!

Regrouping at the top of the hill, Merv confesses he's missed the restart line altogether, but, overwhelmed by the sheer power of his XL185, Ben is three seconds under the target time!

The next two sections are a departure for the Tamar Trial being situated on private land usually used for 4x4 driver training: as you might expect they are muddy and quite a challenge on trials tyres. I drop a miserable nine points on the first, have a harsh word with myself and score a rather more acceptable three on the next. Still a section that most of the field managed to clean though.

Barretts Mill sees me drop an avoidable four where my partners in disaster remained clean, but I manage to clean the next section: Danescombe; along with the rest of the field. This was the easiest section of the whole trial, in spite of the restart.

Tanks Terror took us away from the steep lanes and onto a grassy bank section in a valley. There were various different routes for different classes, and I picked the right one and kept my feet up for a clean. Two clean in a row: things can only get worse!

My teammates both got a bit confused and dropped a mark each. We trek over to Lew Woods, where there are two sections. Somehow, we managed to pass the Brownes (or Rickman Brothers as I dubbed them), who run a pair of magnificent Triumph 650cc-engined Metisses, on the way. They appear behind us as we are queuing for the first of the Lew Woods sections, and I gesture for them to go in front, saying I want to hear them climb the hill. This was true, but I also thought those big, heavy bikes are going to shift an awful lot of slippery leaf mould for us.

Up they go, the old Meriden-built twins bellowing heroically. It all sounds very straightfoward.

Well, it was for them. The British bikes run straight up the car section: modern solos have a Dougie Lampkin style deviation twisting between the trees. Ben drops five points and gets further than Merv or I manage with six. Merv's XR rewards him by having a hissy-fit and refusing to start after he stalls. The second and final Lew Woods section is easier. Everyone cleans it, with the exception of Innova Andy, even me. That's just six points lost in three sections, either this is getting easier, or I'm getting better!

Off we go again, with just a short ride to Lee Quarry: again there are two routes, with the motorbikes on the tighter one. I confess, I get a bit lost in the woods and drop seven points here, which is seven more than everyone else except Merv.

We all know what comes next: Angel Steps, complete with spectators and a humiliating restart. I'm determined to do better than last year when my old GasGas refused to fire at the bottom of the hill until all the bikes and most of the cars had passed. I then nearly got collected by a car unaccountably coming back down the hill while I was on my way up and ended up being dragged to the top. The Beta is electric start, and the cars are all behind us, I remind myself.

I've watched some YouTubes of the hill since last year, including one where one of the Brownes gets his Rickman Metisse up relatively easily by picking a line to the extreme right of the track. The British bikes are excused a restart, but nevertheless, I reckon keeping right is the best line.

Except, this year someone has cut the hedge and the rain has accumulated all the debris in the rut on the right. It would be like riding through a compost heap with added thorns. Working on the great Malcolm Smith's aphorism that

“A bad line done good beats a good line done bad,” I stick to the middle as it will give me more space. All goes well until the restart where I find zero grip on the rock slab. Several attempts later, and with a helpful shove or two from the assembled crew, I get going again.

Merv confesses that he just rode straight up without stopping. Given the amount of energy and tyre smoke I expended, I'd say that was a wise move. Looking at the results, only Rom Dobs (Beta X-Trainer), Jon Mildren (Sherco X-Ride) and Leon Youlton (KTM Freeride) seem to have restarted successfully, so an average six points for the rest of us!

On we go. Next section is motorcycles only, and another for the Dougie Lampkin impressionists involving a twisty circuit crossing the same drainage ditch twice. It's scored as a conventional motorcycle trials section so my 'five' equals a complete failure. Ben does no better, but Merv does well with a two on the unwieldy XR.

Next one is Park Impossible. Last year, I cocked this up entirely. This year, I entirely cocked it up! What went wrong?

Well, at the foot of the section last year I convinced myself it would be a nadgery ride through the woods, so set off cautiously in first gear. I then realised it was a flat out climb, applied too much throttle, much too late and looped out. I'd forgotten all about it until this year, when I managed a repeat performance. Ten points for me, and clean for all the other bikes! Next year, remember, second gear from the start and give it hell on the run-up!

No matter, it's lunchtime. Off we go, back into Cornwall. Team Incompetence refill at Launceston BP station, and one of our number has to be stopped from riding off with his sidestand down. Whoops!

Now for the best part of the day, lunch! Delicious pasties, cakes and tea at Tresmeer Village Hall. There are even Cornish cream teas available. There's also a GasGas enduro with a broken radiator which apparently resists all attempts at repair, and the unwelcome news that the second special test has been cancelled and the roadbook amended.

What follows is a wise decision, that goes hopelessly wrong. Merv says he will navigate his way to the next section, New Langleys, by using What Three Words.

Good plan, except the three words appear to be Bermuda, Triangle, and Mystery. We find ourselves in a peculiar hole in the space/time continuum somewhere between the Atlantic Highway and the Atlantic Ocean. Circulating in an ever-tightening vortex, we seem to collect more and more lost motorcyclists. One minute Merv's phone tells him we are about to arrive, the next that our destination is 17 miles away!

Eventually, we break free, and arrive at what should be the New Langleys entrance, except the gate sign says Trevilla, which is the name of the section after. I piss everyone off by pointing this out, so we ride up the road a while, then Merv remembers that New Langleys and Trevilla are next to one-another and both accessed via the gate.

Sorry chaps!

To show just how sorry I am I humiliate myself by scoring eight points on each section...but the Bermuda Triangle effect is still at work as I see from the results that four riders managed the first section but missed the second...strange given their proximity.

I've got a long-range tank on my Beta, but I've no real idea how far it can carry me, and I seem to have used a lot of fuel in the Bermuda Triangle. So, I split off from my companions (I'm not exactly flavour of the month anyhow) and scoot off down the Atlantic Highway to refuel at Wainhouse Corner. From there, I know how to get to the next section at Crackington.

Going through the little settlement of Mineshop, I am alert for the vision of loveliness who saved the day for John Turner and me on the Lands End Trial last Easter, but there's no sign of her. Around the corner, and Crackington is deserted. No competitors, and seemingly no marshals either. Have I fallen back into the Bermuda Triangle?

Marshals appear, and up the section I go. I'm confident of cleaning this one: I cleaned it last year, and I've since ridden it a couple of times without difficulty. So this should be a shoe-in.

Except, it's not. I get the front wheel caught in some washed-down silt at the point where you have to go to the right of the tape, and fall off! Idiot! Three points dropped.

I pick myself up and ride to the top, where I stop for a moment to kick myself. And I hear in the background the distinctive sound of Merv's XR400 coming up the section...what??

How did that happen?

I thought I was well behind him after my fuel detour. Perhaps he got caught in the Bermuda Triangle again?

It turns out that Ben has taken a tumble and broken his clutch lever. Attempts to replace it with a spanner and some cableties failed, and he's retired. There are just two more sections to go, and the weather, which has been kind, starts to close in. The first Trehole section is an undulating path of slippery wet grass over slippery wet clay. It takes points off most of the field, but it's only me and Innova Andy who drop ten!

Trehole 2 is the final section. It's long and ends in a quarry. I miss the first of the yellow posts that I am supposed to keep to my left, which costs me six points.

Now it's a dash back to the Frog & Bucket through steadily increasing rain to sign off and grab a quick bite before heading for home.

My not-quite waterproof riding gear manages to keep the wet at bay, and the rain washes the worst of the mud off the bike, so that's a result!

And the real results show, that although I finished in the expected last place, I did at least get to the end, and that is some kind of modest achievement given there were four retirements from a field of 46 motorcycles.

Congratulations to Tristan Barnicote, who kept a clean sheet throughout to win the Dunhevd Cup on his Honda XR200, and Rom Dobbs who won the B2 class. I'll leave the last word to George Godkin. When we explained the Bermuda Triangle Mystery to him he pointed out with impeccable Irish logic that "What Three Words is great at telling you where you are, but not so good at taking you where you want to be!"

Tales of a Liege (Mr Toad - Class 7)

Part 1

Being fairly new to Liege ownership (purchased end of November 2021 not running) and trialing in one is slightly different to the previous Class 8 Triumph Torum I owned for 11 years. Did I really purchased it because it had doors and more modern mechanical parts or was it because I hoped to use it as a run around car (which it does to Bude twice a week) and trial car?

Torum was running around 140bhp, the Liege when on its first trial with me (**MCC Exeter Trial**) had 30bhp. Putting it simply, the cars engine was struggling to power up the hills and I ended up increasing the tyre pressures to get the tyres to slip so that the engine wouldn't die on a hill.

A week after the Exeter I went to Mark Shillaber owner of SRD on Newport Industrial Estate and had a short session on his rolling road where he managed to extract a further 10bhp to a staggering 40bhp, 29% of what I was used to in the other car.

Holsworthys **Chairman's Trial** followed on 27th February which ended with a 4th in class still running with half worn Avon cross ply tyres all round. The engine pulled much stronger than before but lost power on 2 hills (electronics?) but all things considered, it was a good result.

Next was the **Launceston Trial** in Lew Woods on 20th March with a change to Michelin Taxi tyres on the back. There was certainly some improvement in grip except when high tyre pressure limits were applied, you'd just sit there and spin however you approached the section ending with a 3rd in class.

MCC Lands End Trial on Easter weekend was as exciting as usual. Long delays meant we were doing Beggars Roost in daylight which was truly a first for us! An unbelievable clear on all sections and fastest times on the Observed Tests meant that we were overall 1st car in Class 7.

Torbay Trial followed a week later and all was going well until we had the engine once again lose power for about 3 sections and probably lost us 18+ points. It could have been another great result but we did end with a Class 7 Award.

Last but not least was the **Flora Trial** held by the **Pendennis Motorcycle and Light Car Club**. What can I say except you must go down and try it? Great sections (some extreme) and fun – very under rated and worth entering. Where did I come?? - home with a massive smile and great memories!!

During the summer the main job done to the car was the fitting of a needle roller cross pin to the differential which should strengthen it for trialing. Several Lieges use Suzuki Jimny rear diffs which have cross pins and are meant to be much stronger but have smaller half shafts (weaker?) which doesn't make sense to me, basically what I have done is a compromise but improvement.

The new winter season started on 4th September 2022 with the **Exmoor Clouds**. We were cutting it fine getting to the start on time. I was hoping to be there to see Trevor and Daniel Bailey off on their first trial in my old Triumph Torum. They had purchased it a few weeks before and never competed in class 8. I was too late but spoke to them later after they had completed the whole trial – no mean feat first time. My trial started with poor concentration and a few points in the first section. It got better until we had a simple restart where the car again just lost power and wouldn't pull away.

The drive to my cottage is steeper than that section – not a word of a lie! We got to section 6 which I thought was moderately rough and snapped the axle tube which had about 20mm of steel at the top holding it together. We ratchet strapped across the bottom to stop it completely breaking away and retired to the trailer 4 miles away in 30 minutes. Not a good start to the season. The only positive is that we claimed the fastest special test time of 18.8 seconds (the engine must have been OK then!!)

It took a day to straighten the axle and strengthen top and bottom with extra steel. The finished job looks the part, so I hope it will survive. The diff housing

didn't fare well and the diff input gear to the half shaft was smashed also grinding out part of the housing and part of the end of the half shaft. It was all put together with parts from a spare axle I'd sourced a few weeks before ready for the next trial.

The Tav & Torridge Trial was the next to follow on 18th September. Lovely weather greeted us and some challenging sections. Some too challenging with a couple of cars seriously close to turning over on Rat Run with the section eventually cancelled. The diff wasn't quite right and the back propshaft UJ had started to knock. We were beaten by Francis Thomas in his Dutton Melos (1 point) because I wasn't concentrating on one section (Pen Steep) and went off the side costing 6 points.

I'm now hoping that the power loss issue is sorted. I've been working through all the sensors and have now disconnected the LAMBDA (O2) sensor on the exhaust. If the problem hadn't been intermittent or there was a plug in port to interrogate the ECU, it would have been a lot easier. The propshaft UJ was replaced and the diff was taken apart again with new shims purchased and fitted. Once it was all together again I went to Barrets Mill to do some PR work for the Tamar trial. On the way home I thought it would be a good idea to take a look at Angel Steps (or is it no steps now) and drove straight up at 18psi. Another day you wouldn't get up there with 4psi. As I entered Lifton on the way home, the diff started clicking which I knew wasn't good. Back home the diff is removed again to find that the new needle roller cross pin had broken probably due to the original broken back axle on the Exmoor Clouds and the pressure when the diff input gear got mangled. Better it happened here than on the first section of the Edinburgh Trial a week away! Original solid cross pin and gears were then installed and away we go.

Two days later on the Monday before the Edinburgh, I went to see Alan Murton at his engineering workshop to see if he could produce a modified stronger cross pin and needle bearings for the diff. He agreed it was possible and I left feeling more positive but definitely not expecting the call the next day confirming that I can pick up the machined parts. After some haggling and crossing his palm with silver, I picked up the parts but was dreading taking the diff apart again and whatever my darling wife Alison will say (or not say) to me about working on the car again. It came apart and went together very well (must know what I'm doing now) and was completed by mid-day Thursday in

time to drive to Bude for a game of golf (a drive on so many levels). New steel wheels that had been made for the car were now shod with new Yokohama Geolander rubber and picked up from Wicketts of Bradworthy and fitted to the car. A final fettle, grease and check through means it's time for the MCC Edinburgh Trial.

Edinburgh Trial 2022

Having had all the paperwork for the **Edinburgh Trial** emailed to me the week before its start and reading it all through, I felt there was a Big Brother feel to some of the advice and instructions. It's a shame that a small minority can cause so much hassle and red tape for the majority of competitors. I do begin to wonder if common sense is being bred out of people or is it excess legislation and HSE (rant over).

The trip up from Cornwall took the best part of 7 hours, so we arrived in the dark at Brassington where we were staying. A quick fish & chips and chat with our hosts and it was time to head back to the start at Lichfield Rugby Club. Running as car 158 we left at 01.38 according to the marshals mobile phone (the planned display clock had broken) and made our way to **Tissington Ford** where we queued until our allotted time and drove through the ford steadily on to **Haven Hill(1)** where 20psi and a restart greeted us.

Once completed we drove through Brassington (left here 5 hours ago!) and made our way to **Cliff Quarry(2)**. We've often been in queues until daylight in the past, only moonlight this time. Starting at the gate, we progressed to a restart on the corner and then to a deviation through exit A. Restart OK, pass exit C and then to the left was a sign low down with A & B with arrows to show the way. The problem was that the A arrow was obscured by something and it couldn't easily be read. Last second reactions only just saved the day and I got to the left side. Nasty.

I hoped this wasn't the way the Trial was going to be. On to Whites of Calver for a top up of petrol and next to **Tumbletrees(3)** which was a wooded section with a yellow restart for us. Onward in the dark to **Special Test 1 Rebellion** which was completed but not very fast. I guess it's better to be clear at this stage! After the test, big brother was meant to be watching on the moors in the shadows in case you got over 15mph 😊 The mileages and route

instructions became a little inaccurate on the way to **Special Test 2 Middleton Moor(4)** which threw us a little but once we got there the test route was shown on a board. Two cones or was it three, one clockwise, the other anticlockwise and the next to your right---I think! As daylight had crept up on us we approached **Calton(5)** which in the past has claimed many a dream. Two cars in front had failed the hill and was reversing back to get a run at it and the next car was released before the hill was clear. By the time they got to the restart the fail car was still ahead of them. Quick thinking by the marshals held the car on the restart until the hill was fully clear and then let them away for a clean restart. For us, the restart wasn't too slippery, so all good and on to **The Duke of York** and a well-earned Bacon Bap and cup a Tea. 83 miles of the route so far + 44 miles from Brassington + 280 miles from home, only 407 miles so far. 😊😊

Great stop at the pub and catch up with other competitors, felt a bit more with it after that. Departure was at scheduled time of 08.48, some left early which I guess (in the route book) will be penalised. **Excelsior(6)** called and wasn't too wet or slippery with the restart good on the wide approach. We then drove on to **Clough Wood(7)** where the cars had caught up the trailing bikes which caused a bit of a delay, but boy were we entertained by all that went on around us. Too much spare time had many looking at the second section worrying about if it was possible off the top restart. Off to section 7 where we were Ramp A, Exit A which were well signed, so no problem. **Clough Mine(8)** was to follow. The instructions were Exit A and top Red Restart box, what could possibly go wrong? Answer – nothing, all goes to plan and up to the top. What were we all panicking about when waiting earlier, funny lot aren't we?

Five miles further on we arrive at **Dudwood2(10)** where the first section was cancelled so we waited in the queue for our turn. It didn't seem that many were getting up – don't panic. Eventually it was our turn and we went around to the right and kept to the left to suddenly find ourselves approaching two markers between trees and the end of section on the right. Don't know how it happened, but it did. Only 4 cars got to the top I believe, with the 'A' board coming into play for classes were no car got to the top. Shell shocked we went down the hill and on to **Special Test 3 Dudwood** where it was shorter than previous years and I didn't reverse far enough back in the middle of the test, so lost a lot of traction on my way to the finish.

There's only so quick you can do a special test with 40bhp so I shouldn't complain. The trouble is, I know I left a lot of time out on the special tests 😊. On for another 32 miles to **HobHay(11)** where I waited for Rob and Elizabeth Haworth in their Liege as they had stopped for petrol. While I was waiting I had the pleasure of seeing 147, Michael Leete and Dean Partington in their Class 7 Mk1 Dellow, clear the section – well done both, there's hope for us yet. A few cars later a VW Beetle took the class 7 & 8 deviation only to get stuck and 8 – 10 minutes to extract the car and a bit of a mess where we had to go, such is life. When it was our time, we gunned it as best we could at the deviation and it felt like we took off (safer to fly than drive they say) and just went through the heather and bog to the end! At the top of the section I took a picture of 3 Liege cars (146 John & Robin Charles, 158 myself & John Werren & 160 Rob & Elizabeth Haworth) together to celebrate the trial so far and what a view from our vantage point. Only 4 cars from classes 7 & 8 cleared the section this year. Hollinsclough Chapel Hall was calling 9 miles away for a time control, cake and liquid refreshment. It was much needed and appreciated after the last section. The views coming down into the village was stunning, you couldn't have asked for more, how lucky we are.

Break over and we're away again for another 3 miles back up on top of the dales to **Booth Farm(12)** where it was up and over a rough bit of moorland and then on to **Corkscrew(13)** that in the past had stopped me in my little GTM Coupe before breaking the diff at a later section. We collected a lost car at the bottom of the approach to the section and pointed him in the right direction. Corkscrew was very stoney and rough and luckily we didn't have a restart in class 7 to contend with.

Only two sections to go and on to **Litton Slack(14)** which has such good and bad memories. It turned out to be as easy to get up as I can remember, so let's hope that the section can be retained for the future. I almost felt cheated as it didn't bite back as we all know it often can, but the clears continue. Only **Waterloo(15)** to go which was a gravelled sloping track plus restart for all classes which would provide few problems to anyone. Off to the **Duke of York** again to sign off and a good old natter.

The trial proved to be thoroughly enjoyable with less queuing to contend with and it felt as though we were moving between sections more than in previous years. There's no question that wonderful weather, cracking marshals and

beautiful views may have had something to do with it. **THANK YOU ALL.** We managed a Class Win (7) and finished 3rd car overall, much better than I could ever have hoped for.



Part 2 Mr Toad and the Tamar Trial next month.

Tailpiece

It's been all go at home with the arrival of "Mona", or as Vivien named her "Mona the Vampire" (you'll have to google it). She's a bit of a project (understatement said Vivien who is not happy that JJ the Fergie Tractor has been turfed out of his cosy shed for some foreign upstart!) but I'm sure she will be up and running in no time, unfortunately the tin worms were given her address before I could find her but as I have said to others there's no holes where there's metal. As with most classics the spares these days are almost better in availability terms than when they were built. Once up and running

she will gradually be brought up to trials spec and will be floating over those bumps, rocks and potholes as if they didn't exist, in the meantime the spanners and welder are going to be busy.



All for this month J.T.

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