

July 2024 Newsletter

Blimey July crept up on me, too much going on, or was it the “power naps” joining up and I just slept through June, anyway here we are with another newsletter full of things you’ve been missing in your life, or trying to avoid. Our usual contributors have been busy to help fill the pages so let’s hear from the chairman.

Chairmans monthly report

Not too much to report from me for June but some events to look forward to. On a personal note I have decided to sell my trials prepared Dutton Melos, the six weeks or so in particular have made me realise that various other commitments and a lack of space means using it will be few and far between for the foreseeable and I would much rather see it being used and enjoyed as it’s been built to be.

The Spry sporting trial had a more encouraging number of entries as we continue to see how the entry sizes go. At time of writing Richard’s trail ride is about to go ahead and then next weekend we have the Motor Traders Car Trial at our new site. Hopefully a late flurry of entries - I know in the summer in particular there is so much going on that committing to entering is a late thought but it really does help the organisers if we get a good idea of numbers in advance of any closing dates.

The Tamar sub-committee met in a small group and officials remain as 2023 with Jan pleasingly continuing as secretary with Nigel, Andrew and myself acting as joint clerks this year. More news to follow over the coming months.

I hope everyone is enjoying the recent up turn in weather and any summer holidays etc. Following the Motor Traders next weekend we are back at the same new venue for our Carr Cup Testing Trial two weeks later and this one is open to all bikes and cars. Come along and give these relaxed, friendly, sociable events a go, I am sure you’ll have a cracking day.

Simon R

Richard Simpson brings us a road test review

KTM 390 Adventure road test

When I took my GasGas ES700 in for service at JD Racing in Saltash I was offered the opportunity to borrow a ‘loan bike’ for a couple of hours. There was a choice of two: an ES700, or a KTM 390 Adventure. Curiosity dictated that I took the KTM. It’s a bike that has a mixed reputation: with critics slamming its poor build quality, confused spec and claiming that it’s not ‘really’ an adventure bike...whatever that is.

Well, after a short ride on one, I can see where they are coming from...but that doesn’t mean that it’s not a competent bike within its own limitations.

The first thing you’ll notice is the downright weird riding position. It’s an open secret that the Adventure is a development of the 390 Duke, and essentially it’s the top half of a trail bike on the underpinnings of a sporty road bike. So while it’s got dirt-bike shape handlebars, the relationship between the seat and the footrests is still very sports-bike. The result is that your legs want your

trunk to lean forward, and your trunk wants your legs to extend down and forward. You also notice that the seat was designed for a riding position where your arms take a bit of your weight, but the handlebars don't allow this on the Adventure, so there is extra and unwelcome pressure on your sit bones.

So far, so not very good. But the engine makes up for this: it's a willing little performer that's a bit reminiscent of the old DR350: there isn't a vast amount of power, but a lovely six-speed gearbox makes the most of what there is. Obviously, lugging luggage or taking a passenger would knock the performance considerably, but the KTM is equipped to do both if that's what's on your agenda. I spent most of my two hours pottering about on the little country lanes between Saltash and Liskeard, and in spite of myself found this little bike was well in its element. The quirky riding position was soon forgotten, and the WP-branded suspension and premium-quality Conti TKC70 tyres coped well with the consequences of Cornwall Council's 'ignore them and they will go away' approach to potholes and road maintenance generally.

It's a different story on tougher going, though. A seemingly well-made track opened invitingly on the edge of a wood, so I set off up it. Big mistake. Around the corner it rose up a steep incline, and it was apparent it had suffered badly from water erosion last Winter.

Pick a line! Would Sir prefer the ruts filled with gravel, or the generous scattering of rocks deposited on the remains of the top surface?

A proper dirtbike would have made short work of either, but the little KTM has very little ground clearance considering its billing. Rocks were striking its flimsy-looking bashplate which protects a very expensive-looking all stainless-steel exhaust system. Dropping into a rut, the rear Conti tyre surrendered all pretensions to off-road performance: there is no tread on the centre at all. With the tyres at road pressures, it was like trying to roller-skate on marbles.

I turned around as soon as it could: a task made easy by the KTM's modest 855 mm seat height; and carefully returned to tarmac before something broke.

The gentle note of the exhaust system paid dividends in the rural setting: I got happy smiles and waves from two ladies on horseback who were clearly much taken by a motorbike that was just loud enough to warn of its approach, but quiet enough not to cause alarm.

Main roads formed the route back to Saltash: the KTM is as comfortable at an indicted 75 mph as my GasGas is...arguably more so thanks to the screen and bulky tank. A 60 – 70 mph cruise is easily achievable.

Looking around the bike, KTM is clearly working to a limited budget and has spent it where it counts. There are premium-quality tyres and adjustable handlebar levers, and a nice clear and uncomplicated TFT instrument panel, but some of the paintwork is a bit thin, and there were spots of rust in places on a bike that had done less than 700 miles.

That price, by the way, is about £6,500 new (or down to IRO £6,000 if you are prepared to shop around). Good value?

Well, the obvious competitors are Honda's CRF300 Rally (£6250), which is far better off-road, and the BMW G310 GS, which is pretty much the same price as the KTM and appears aimed at the same niche as it.

My view: if you want a bike with genuine off-road capability (able to take on an MCC Trial, for instance) get the Honda. If you want a more road-orientated bike get the KTM. Its near 250 mile claimed tank range makes it capable of doing most journeys you could do on a big a road-orientated adventure bike like a Moto Guzzi 850TT: just a bit slower and at far less cost. I can't comment on the BM, I can't even recall having ever seen one.

But, I couldn't help but think. What if KTM produced a scaled-down version of the 690 Enduro (which is identical to the GasGas ES700 in pretty much all but colour) using the 390 engine but with better footpeg positioning and 18/21 in spoked wheels (the 390 has a 17/19 in cast wheel set)?

Would it fill the gap left by the departure of the much-missed Suzuki DR350S/DR-Z400S: a genuine trail bike of appropriate power and spec for green-laning and even capable of doing long-distance trials and perhaps a clubman's enduro or two?

Answers to an address in Austria...and my thanks to JD Racing in Saltash for the loan. It's a good place to buy a bike.



Spry sporting Trial by Andy Prosser

Spry Trial – 15th June.

The 15th June is only five days away from the longest day of the year so some time ago you could have imagined that laying out a sporting trial in anticipated hot and dry conditions would be somewhat of a challenge. However, as we all know, this has absolutely not proved to be case this year. With heavy rain over the previous few days before the event we were concerned that the steep grassy field near Lifton, kindly loaned to us by the Harvey family, would prove a somewhat different type of challenge. With a good entry of nine competitors from as far away as Yorkshire and the Forest of Dean we wanted to ensure that everyone had an enjoyable day's sport despite the conditions.

On walking the sections we had laid out on the Wednesday before the event two things became evident, one, the ground was not as wet as I had expected and two, clearly a herd of wildebeest, or something similar, had been running around the site and had knocked over half of our poles, so the first job was to put them all back up again. However, with rain threatening, we had to make a decision on what tyre pressures to use, in the end we elected for 10psi and fortunately with generally dry weather and some light intermittent rain showers it turned out to be just about right with scores ranging from 19 to 149 at the end of the day.

Another challenge is trying to make the sections different and interesting as the field topography is pretty much the same across the whole venue but a few twists and curves over the various steps seemed to work ok. As seems to be coming the norm in sporting trials, given his superb run of recent results, Thomas Bricknell won the event and the Spry Trophy, dropping just 19 marks. John Fack was second on 37 and Alan Murton was third on 68, winning the blue class. I would like to thank the competitors for supporting our event, some having travelled a great distance to be with us, the marshals and particularly Mike Wevill who does all the administration before the event, no small task in itself.



Thanks to Andy Prosser for the photos.

Simon Oates was also at the Spry

Marshalling for the Spry Trial Saturday 15th June 2024

A forecast of showers (many expected to be biblical) wasn't the best encouragement to stand out in a field and marking a score card at the weekend but sometimes a man's got to do what a man's got to do! Off to Higher Frankaborough Farm, Broadwoodwidge near Lifton in the Liege without roof on (umbrella at the ready though) and a qualifying round of the ASWMC Sporting Trials Championship. There was an enthusiastic field of 9 cars from all over the country arriving out of the showers and hoping to clear all of the sections set up by Andy Prosser the previous day. Spirits were high and the comradery was fantastic to see, what a brilliant group of competitors they were. I was issued with the all-important clipboard, score card, soft pencil and Health and Safety (impossible to hit) gear and a signature to say 'I was there'. Three sections awaited us all in the steep undulating field and the plan was to do four rounds in the morning and a further four in the afternoon on another three sections. Tyre pressures were set at 10psi due to expected high grip conditions and would be dropped if the grip didn't materialise. There were a few skits of rain around mid-day and gusty winds depending which direction it came from, that would increase or reduce grip in the blink of an eye. A great bit of banter from within and outside of the cars but when the drivers were inspecting the hills, I failed to break their concentration. I was running hill 2 first of all and changed it twice by moving the poles so that they had to run through thistles, ruts or cow poo to reduce the grip levels. I succeeded to stop a few but failed with others. The slightest

hiccup in an engine would spin the wheels while the driver fought for grip again with the fiddle brakes (like a tractors independent rear brakes). By lunch all seemed to be enjoying the conditions and sections. After Lunch, it was back out to the second lot of three sections where I marshalled Section 5. It proved to be a tough one with a turn back down the hill and across the camber at number 6, to then turn back straight up the hill and over some field ruts to the 1 marker. My only success of the day was to see no one clear the hill and a 1 being the best score. The truth is that Andy Prosser had marked it out so well in the first place and I suppose he should take that credit I was so craving from the hill! A few fettles to the hill after two rounds made it a little easier to the point they came down hill, but intermittent showers soon mixed it up again as the grip disappeared. Stalling tactics by drivers were attempted while the hills dried in the wind after the rain, or maybe I'm just a sceptic? Comfort breaks, checking the car thoroughly, asking questions, 'I think I've got cramp coming on' and many more could be observed and certainly entertained me! It was a great way to spend some of the weekend and I would thoroughly recommend to any members of the club or public. Any help marshalling on any of our events is always appreciated by both the club and competitors. Have a look on the website for events to help or enter, unless you have a go, you will not know what has been missing from your weekends. It's fair to say that in the middle of winter with howling gales, horizontal rain, sleet or snow, it can be known to change opinions, but we all like a challenge don't we?? For the results of the Spry Trial, have a look on the club website for them and explore all the other places there that you'd forgotten about. The next club Field Trials in July are at **Winsdon Farm**, Clubworthy, North Petherwin, PL15 8NX Sunday 7th July **Motor Traders Trial** – Cars only and qualifying round for the 2024 ASWMC car trials championship at the new exciting venue on a moderately steep field. Maybe a test drive in our chairman's **Dutton Mellos** that's for sale if you're interested in a purchase? Sunday 21st July **Carr Cup Trial** – Cars and Bikes aimed at everyone including newcomers, old, new and young! Flatter non damaging field that should probably suit road cars (less damaging than the potholes around here!!) If you don't have a car for these events, **please ask** as there may be a spare one to share and/or use.

The Beanie gang have been out and about, but it's only two of you, there must surely be more members taking their hol's. Show your Beanie "some love".



Bob Blackman is after the most Northerly Beanie award.



Simon Oates has given his hat sea legs, it's what any well dressed pirate is now wearing. Talking of Pirates, having found out that one of our committee members has been on holiday with his beanie but failed to take any photos the punishment is Cutlass, Plank, Splash



More beanie photos please.

Whats on.

Sunday 7th July, Motor Traders Trial at our new venue Winsdon Farm, North Petherwin. This is a cars only event. The event will be arrowed from Nairobi, Bangkok, and New York, so get your skates on or you will be late in arriving.

Sunday 27th July we're back at Winsdon Farm for the Carr Cup Trial, this is for cars and bikes and with emphasis on younger members entering to have a fun day (older children also accepted Mr Groves).

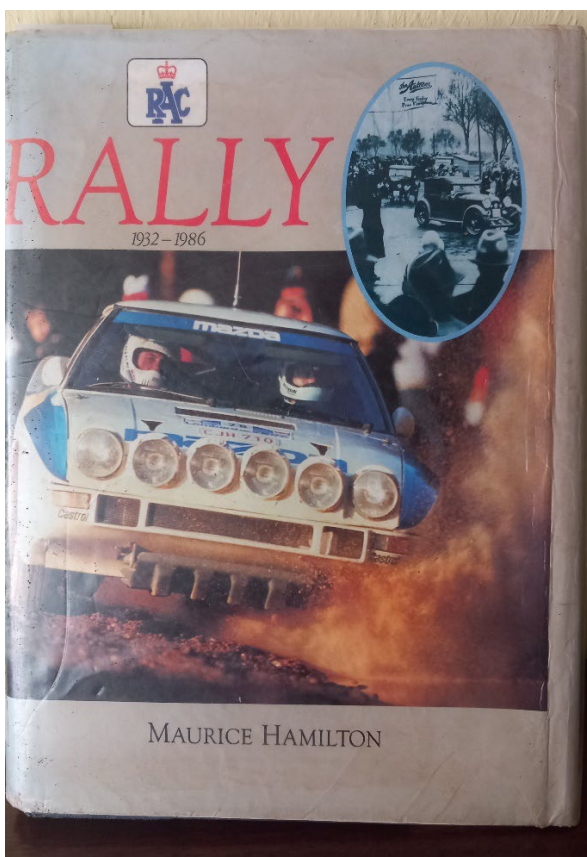
25th August we have the Invitation Trophy Trial a non damaging event at Trevilla Farm, Marshgate, basically an event on flat grass against the stop watch so come and have a bit of fun.

1st September Joe Caudle has once again organised a social run on a pre determined route around North Cornwall finishing at a venue with a unique car collection.

8th September David Ayres Sporting Trial, this is a round of the MSUK, ASWMC & ACTC championships to be held at Trevilla Farm, Marshgate, Camelford.

Tailpiece

I've recently been sorting some of my old books and came across this old book of the RAC Rally by Maurice Hamilton. It covers the era from the start of the event in 1932 up to the end of the "supercars" in 1986.



It's funny to read how a gentle start to this event , often finishing with a "stop go" test in Torquay (shades of the MCC ?) could turn into a huge battle between all the leading motor manufacturers , some of the cars taking part such as the Sunbeam Rapier or the 2 Stroke Saabs seem a long way away from what we became used to in the later evolution of the sport.

The humble Ford Escort became a weapon of choice for many teams and drivers and for about 10 years it was a force to be reckoned with.

The group B cars such as the Metro 6R4 , Peugeot T16, Audi Quattro and my personal favourite the Lancia Stratos were like rockets on wheels , grip and acceleration prior to this was just unheard of.

The book is in some ways slightly statistical but that is hard to avoid when compiling over 50 years of motorsport and achievements both by teams and drivers, as well as all the big names of the day such as Stig Blomqvist, Roger Clark, Timo Makinen etc it does pay some credit to the lady drivers such as Pat moss, Michelle Mouton and Louise Aitken Walker.

My favourite quote from it is when the Irish driver Billy Coleman who had been selected to drive a privately-owned Stratos.

"He (Coleman) hadn't sat in the car for some time and when he did he couldn't find his driving shoes, or to be precise his left shoe, the one on the right foot a grubby green gymshoe allowed "heeling and toeing" he was keen to know what happened to the other

shoe as we set off to explore the unknown. I had the distinct impression he hadn't seen the stage before either. He kept saying "Jayzus" or some such expletive, I'm not sure if that referred to the road or the car. If ever a car kept the driver busy this was it. The V6 barking crisply through the funny little Perspex panel behind your head, rocketed up and down the rev range. Throughout Coleman sat slightly hunched forward as though all this was catching him by surprise, which I was to discover at the bottom of the hill, it was.

"Jayzus it's quick" he said in that lovely lilting Cork accent, I didn't get lookin at the rev counter he added, pointing to the largest dial on the rather grubby and untidy instrument panel stretched before him. "What were we pulling in t'ird? He may as well have asked a mugging victim whether he had caught the assailant's name. "

If you happen to see a copy of Maurice Hamilton's book buy it, it's an enjoyable read.

That's it for this month please keep the contributions coming. J.T.

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