

Gwent Classic Boxing Day Trial 2013 – attended by the Caerphilly club

A heavy frost on Christmas night meant the roads were a bit tasty on Boxing Day morning, black ice, white ice and every other kind of ice were experienced before reaching the venue at Mynyddislwyn. Robinsons Quarry is high on the East side of the Sirhowy Valley with far reaching views providing the perfect backdrop. To the North, PenyFan and the Brecon Beacons could be clearly seen covered in a blanket of snow. Luckily for the thirty or so riders of today's trial, the sun was up early enough to remove the frosting, leaving mostly wet, soft mud conditions mixed with water and some rock sections. As is the format with the Gwent Classics, the twin shocks and mono's were split into groups – only for everyone to ignore their group and ride with their mates – and each group given a punch to mark their own sections. The Caerphilly club was well represented by a few regulars plus some new boys and some old boys. Nibbs Adams helped with the organisation and rode the Fantic Twin shock. Former club member and Enduro regular Simon Morris (Moz) also made an appearance in his Caerphilly racing shirt. Not riding but also spotted was former committee member Nigel Bull. Our little group was made up of Mark Evans on the TY250 Twin shock, Stuart on the immaculate Honda TLR Twin shock, Big Steve on the mono Gasser and young Cory on the Yamaha TY80. Big Nige Smith made a rare appearance on a borrowed Gas Gas and Ian Craig on the Sherco TwoNinety, we started at Section 1. A gentle start helped ease everyone into the swing of things as everyone cleaned the first. Section 2 was a steep bank with a short run up and the frost was making it tricky to climb, some of the group in front already failing due to the lack of grip. Section three proved to be even more interesting, after a few tight turns on a camber around some trees the section turned sharp left and up the bank. Some of the experienced riders amongst us spotted the opportunity to drop down onto a flat area below the bank and take a shallow turn allowing a clean run up the steepest part of the section. Big Nige went first and it worked perfectly, unfortunately some of the organisers were watching and quickly shifted some pallets to prevent dropping out of the section, forcing the sharp left, muddy turn uphill. Ian, up next, made the turn but the hill proved too much as he threw the Sherco and himself into the trees whilst picking up his first 5. A bit of dabbing got everyone else up although on lap 2 Mark Evans, in a wonderful effort on the twin shock, got to the top of the bank at the end of the section with the back wheel spinning and expecting a 'clean' the TY gripped and flipped over onto its rear mudguard which was no match for the frozen ground and splintered into several shards of white plastic, making the trial a bit more expensive for Mark than the others. The middle sections of the lap moved into a wooded area of the quarry with a stream. The stream section proved tricky at first with Big Nige picking up a 5 right at the start as the Gas Gas stalled. Stuart managed to climb the rock step in the middle of the stream but had to take a dab in the soft mud at the top of the bank. Ian flew at the rock step and cleaned it like a pro only to take a soft dab around the log that was the end of the section – at the second attempt on lap two he got it right and picked up the only clean of the day in the stream amongst the group. Moving back into the quarry the riders were getting bunched as the groups started to catch up to each other. Some deep water and tricky descents helped to force a few dabs. Sections 13 to fifteen introduced some of the quarry stone keeping the riders alert, and testing the balance. Lap two provided more of the same only in about a third of the time, all fifteen sections despatched in around 25 minutes. The trial took about 3 hours in total and about half a tank of fuel, a good time had by all. We await the results but Stuart and Big Nige were looking like contenders with everyone else picking up lots of cleans. A great trial, good venue and not too difficult, especially for newbies. Looking forward to the next one.

Ride report Ian Craig.