

## Taunton Jubilee Long Distance Trial May 19<sup>th</sup> 2013

Attended by Caerphilly MC&LCC



With just two vans available for seven bikes and riders it was going to be a bit of a squeeze on this trip to Somerset. Little Nige, Andy and Jase in one van, Big Nige, Ian, Paul and Dom in the other, we'd poured in everything but the kitchen sink and by 4pm Saturday were loaded with all the essentials – tents, gazebo, BBQ's, grub, beer, logs for the fire – oh and the bikes of course.

Entering England we figured out how to use Paul Morgan's IPOD and, ignoring all the House music, we rode the Avonmouth bridge blinded by the sunshine to the sound of Ozzy Osbourne belting out SnowBlind, followed by a nice rendition of 'Let it Snow' by Dean Martin. Best was yet to come as we pulled up outside the Camping shop in Taunton with all four of us singing along to 'Raw Hide'.

We prized the door off the van to get Big Nige out and before the guy could close up, he happily sold Nige his umpteenth tent which he blagged a big discount on for cash. 15 minutes later we were at the Raleighs Cross Inn and in the camping field. Andy, Jase and Little Nige had already got the gazebo up and cracked the cans.

The spring sunshine was splendid but we opted for the corner of the field in the shade. Little Nige had brought his new 17 man tent, now affectionately known as 'the Bungalow'. He'd invited Andy & Jase to 'sleep over' – very cosy!

While the tents were being set up the BBQ's were being lit and the sweet smell of burning charcoal wafted through the air. Next to come was a Caerphilly club first, the slotted log soaked in fuel. This idea was pinched from someone at the Powys enduro last year, a section of telegraph pole cut with two slots at 90 degrees, soaked in diesel and burned from the top down. The result is a great little log fire that burns from the inside out and from top to bottom. Not satisfied with one, Dom scrounged another couple of logs and with a bit of help from Andy and some BBQ lighter fluid, two more slotted logs were quickly knocked up. Let the party begin!

We polished off most of the beer and all of the grub before the logs burned out and by midnight we were fed up of laughing so had retired to bed in readiness for an early start.

By 7am the field was beginning to fill up with vans and the sound of two stroke engines as the competitors warmed the bikes before scrutineering. That's not the only thing that was filling up, the single trap in the gents at the pub was getting a battering and the plumbing was being properly tested – not pretty. The Caerphilly boys, delicate after their late night, were slow to rise but all scrutineered and signed on, they set off at the back of the pack to tackle the first of 27 sections.

The day started grey and overcast and the forecast was for afternoon rain so we started in full riding gear despite the warm weather. After a bit of road work we hit the sections. This event used quite a lot of private land so forest riding was the order of the day. At the first section we found a big queue and when eventually getting to the section start we were sent down an embankment around the trees and into a stream. Slick and muddy with a few roots it tested the level of hangover.

A particularly slick section alongside the stream convinced the boys running tubes to drop the pressures a bit as a couple of fives were picked up. The Caerphilly club favourites started well enough but the dabs were coming, although some sections were cleaned by all.

Some of the tracks between the sections were wonderful flowing lanes, greasy in places thanks to the soft mud and smooth rock underneath. On one fast slippery climb Jason managed to sling the Beta sideways before parking it directly underneath Paul's bike all in a lane just 5 feet wide – impressive. Paul's face was a picture – having lost grip and stopped to get the bike straightened up, he was able to watch Jase flying right at him with the back end snaking left and right and coming to a dead stop underneath his bike. A few choice words were exchanged and Jason extracted his bike and several tons of vegetation from his rear fender before slip sliding away up the track as if nothing had happened.

The sprint section was a test for Dom and Little Nige as they failed to follow the instructions given by the starter and proceeded to race straight past the poor guy with the stopwatch at probably 90 mph forgetting to 'stop in the box'. Little Nige said he thought he was a rambler – with a clip board and a stop watch, hhhmmmm!

Lunchtime came around soon enough and by now the sun had broken through the clouds so the boys were ready for a whiff. Sausages and bacon rolls fitted the bill perfectly and before setting off some of the boys opted to remove the sleeves to keep cool.

More forestry with some streams, open fields and stunning views over the Somerset countryside kept us entertained all afternoon. The mud dried to dust as the day warmed which made the forestry roads interesting especially where there was two way traffic!

Some great loops in the forest between sections provided some enduro style riding and an opportunity for some of the more competitive lads to bash bars through the trees. At forestry exit we were met by a stunning cottage with a garden full of bikers all eating Victoria sponge and drinking tea. This stop is tradition in this event and the cakes are baked and sold through the window of the cottage by the owner who allows the bikes to be parked on the drive and the riders use of the garden furniture – awesome!

Refreshed and stuffed with Victoria sponge and chocolate brownie we headed back to the campsite via the remaining sections picking up dabs along the way. Jason found the deepest puddle of the day and got covered in mud from head to toe.

A few spots of rain came to nothing and by the time we loaded the vans the sun was blazing again.

A superb event. Helped by the weather. Great value for money. Some great trails between sections all of which can be ridden comfortably on an enduro bike. Big thanks to Jason and Big Nige for working the roadbook and thanks to Paul and Little Nige for supplying the transport. Definitely one to pencil in for next year.

Ride report Ian Craig.