

Taunton Jubilee Long Distance Trial May 18th 2014

Round two of the Interclub LDT Trailbike Championship

A definite case of 'van-i-tus' was spreading through the club this month and coupled with the Caio Enduro the same weekend, vans were in short supply for this trip over the Bristol Channel. With Andy's van puffing smoke and still being diagnosed, Plan B was Spreads van. Unfortunately it went pop the day before travelling and needed rescue by the nice man from the AA.

Plan C involved a three bike trailer and a lot of running around. Big Nige attempted to make the trailer road legal with a bit of wiring but the electricians refused to comply. Plan D: borrow a trailer board. Sounds simple enough, if we could find one. Luckily Jason's brother John had one in the loft which was left by the previous owner of his house – sorted.

Rich Smith brought along his van and helped by carrying brother Nigel's bike while Jase, Ian and Andy's bike went on the trailer. The trailer had two number plates, neither of which matched the car but hey, at least we had lights! 5 bikes, 4 riders - Andy was riding the Caio enduro so would drive to Taunton on Sunday morning.

The weather was perfect for camping, warm and sunny. Within two minutes of arriving at the campsite behind the Raleghs Cross Inn we were on the cider. The bbq was lit before the gazebo was up. Tents erected and someone noticed Jase had a tear in his eye, he claimed it was hayfever but we realised it must have been the cost of his gold plated airbed! He soon cheered up when Richard announced he'd brought along 40 sausages and 8 pork chops from a pig he'd had slaughtered last week – sweet!

Posh crisps, onion baji's, cherry tomatoes, sweet chilli chicken strips and half a pig, all washed down with lashings of warm cider, we had a veritable feast! We even had pink wafer biscuits for dessert!

Russ Cosway turned up and stayed for a couple of hours and we shared a beer and a laugh. By midnight the log fire was sending us to sleep, time for bed. After a great nights kip we awoke to clear blue skies. Andy turned up before 8am, still knackered from the enduro the day before. By 9am we were kitted out in our warm weather gear – sleeveless jackets and no waterproofs – yippee!

We set off around 9.30pm for the first of twenty eight sections. Jase was on the roadbook with Nige bringing up the rear. After a few road miles we hit a slippery lane with low hanging trees that took us to a clearing and the first two sections. Set up on the hillside the surface was slick enough to cause many riders to drop their bikes even before riding the sections. Lack of grip was a factor and a few fives were picked up early – a sign of things to come.

We set off downhill into the dingle and back against the traffic to the road. The Jubilee is well known for its use of many forest tracks and the weather helped to keep the speed up as we travelled between sections. The surface was slick despite the dry weather and a lot of the sections were tight on the big enduro bikes. Big Nige was on form but showing some weakness, Jase was consistent, Richard looked like he was enjoying himself, Andy Morgan (Trials god) was out of sorts, Ian was picking up fives like they were going out of fashion. All in all lots of laughs and lots of horn blowing and piss taking ensued. By around 1pm we were ready for a bacon burger and headed back to the campsite for some fuel for body and bike.

The afternoon was more of the same, tight sections and some awesome forest riding, green lanes and open country. Some of the lanes in the forest were fast flowing track reminiscent of a Welsh forest Enduro, awesome. Ian managed to bin the KTM on one fast track, avoiding a deep puddle he rode the ridge between the water and the bank before sliding the front wheel off a small shiny branch which tossed him over the bars head first into the bank. Regaining his feet and sporting vegetation jammed through his helmet visor, he picked up the bike to find it missing the petrol cap and spewing petrol into the puddle. Bike upright again and petrol cap secured Big Nige suppressed a laugh as we headed down through the forest to the tea stop. At a cottage in the woods with great hospitality we were allowed to park the bikes on the drive and purchase Victoria sponge and chocolate brownie with a mug of tea through the kitchen window. We sat in the shade and relaxed before heading off to complete the last few sections.

The hill climb is a classic at this event, a steep hillside, rutted across its entire length making it like riding a giant washboard angled at 45 degrees. Andrew showed the way for a clean, Richard took a different route but also cleaned, Jase followed Andy and cleaned, Big Nige went his own way and cleaned, Ian tried the Andy route, lost traction at the bottom, bounced off the first rut and dropped the bike on its side for a 4 – doh!

A few more sections tested the skill and endurance, the speed test was a fast blast up a forest track through a taped chicane and past the time keeper. Andy bust the tapes on the chicane but posted the fastest time. Everyone set a decent time but nothing to worry the eventual overall winner.

By around 5pm we were back at the campsite and loading the bikes.

The results would show some surprises, Big Nige had a good day despite quite a few fives, brother Richard came in second ahead of Jase then Andy and Ian. Points were picked up for all in the Interclub Championship and a great weekend was had by all. Thanks go to Jase for doing the navigating and to Rich Smith for the half a pig

Barring any van breakdowns we'll be back for more next year!

Ride report Ian Craig.