

The Cheltenham Home Guard 'Sphinx' LDT, April 14th 2013, attended by the Caerphilly Club.

The forecast was for rain on Saturday and the met office were spot on but it was the strong wind that the riders would have to deal with on the day of the event.

The rolling Gloucestershire hills around Cheltenham was the venue and the boys braved the wind and rain to camp the night before in readiness for the 9.30am start.

The new club gazebo provided shelter from the stiff wind but not before it was ratchet strapped to the van.

The rain eased long enough to get the tents up, Big Nige and Ian had new tents to try out, Andy opted for the van. Jason's tent was tried and tested so he provided the extra pair of hands to the others to prevent the tents flying away. Little Nige set up his little tent that he was given by little Dan. All that was left was to spark up the barby.

It was Andy Morgan's 40th Birthday the following Monday so there was reason for celebration, we started with gammon steaks before turkey kebabs, hot n spicy chicken wings, speciality sausages and the old favourite quarter pounders. Stella, Bulmers, Guinness and some cheap cider that Jason got hold of started to take its toll and by the time it was dark the party was in full swing. An iced donut with a single candle and a chorus of Happy Birthday got Andy blushing but he refused to wear his oversized '40 today' badge or the 'Happy 40th Birthday' banners that were so expensively procured for the occasion.

The organisers had spared no expense at the campsite with the facilities in the farmer's field exceptional if you were a sheep, thankfully they'd arranged with the farmer to turn off the electric fence. A shame they hadn't arranged for his quad to be turned off too as he was out early Sunday morning tearing past the tents at what sounded like 90 mph.

When the lumpwood charcoal burned out it was time for the logs to go on the barbie but no matter how much puff was used they refused to burn so we gave up and went to bed.

The 9.30 start was greeted by a keen wind but blue skies and after a bacon roll and mug of tea, provided as part of the entry, we were off. First Jason & Ian then Richard & his mate plus Big Nige, we went around the corner, all of 20 yards from the start and waited for Andy & Little Nige. 20 minutes later and we were following Jase and his roadbook down the road to the first of 31 sections.

The organisers had set up three or four sections all in one area with a run on the road between each area to test the navigation. The boys were entered in the enduro bike class and it proved to be a bit tight in places for the big'ol enduro bikes. Early doors the favourites were going well, Andy on the KTM 250 and Big Nige on the Beta cleaned a couple. The rain that fell on Saturday had left a slick muddy surface which kept the dabs coming all day.

A puncture for Big Nige half way round was the only thing that slowed us down although we were still at the back of the field. Having finally got to the garage we rode the last half of the day with the sound of former winner and Ivor Morkott regular, Julian Pages' Beta Alp ringing in our ears. Having been unable to start the Alp first thing Julian decided to ride all day without turning it off so turned up the tick over to keep it running.

By the time we reached the hill climb we were stopped in our tracks by the Air Ambulance which was flying in to attend to some poor chap with a suspected busted collar bone. We watched in awe before the section was scrapped (fair enough) and we shot off to the special test. A nice short blast along a small field, around a tree and sprint back to stop in the box was good fun on the enduro bikes but Rich Smith posted the slowest time having managed to wrap his racing jeans around the foot peg rather than take a dab around the tree, oops!

The last three sections were behind the campsite and were a last test of the trails skills and another dosing of mud for the bikes. Finally to the village hall for another sausage sandwich and a mug of tea to round things off. A good days riding and great value for money, well organised and well worth a go even on an enduro bike.

Big Nige took the spoils closely followed by Andy Morgan. Everyone else managed at least one clean. Memorable was Little Nige riding the stream and trying his best to take out a bigger than average tree with his right shoulder before accepting a five. Ian Craig avoided the tree but found the wrong side of the bank and buried the throttle in the mud before accepting a five. Richard Smith managing to get beat on the special by half the classic twin shocks.

Lastly big thanks to Jason for doing the road book, nice one. See you again next year.

Ride report Ian Craig.