

Bruce Dominey Cup trial 2018 report

2018 will be remembered not only for one the hottest and driest summers on record but for some amazing trials that were hewn out of bare rock, well not quite but, the toil that faced section setters in trying to mark a challenge was as difficult as it would be if it were pouring with rain.

The later anomaly more frequently found in this country beset the hapless yet enthusiastic H U X crew as they assembled in torrential rain on Saturday morning. Look on the bright side chaps, the weather man assures us that its going clear up in an hour I gleefully announced, "oh yeh" came a resounding response from the now bedraggled bunch.

Any way we did look on the bright side and got on with the task in hand, being very mindful that H U X has a reputation to sometimes err on the side of challenging when it comes to setting out sections, so a great deal of caution was upper most in our minds.

Just for a change we decided to run the trial in an anti clock wise direction, using the same groups of sections, gravel and sandy quarry, concrete slabs and muddy banks with tree routs and an infamous chalk quarry, the sections all very familiar but attacked from a different angle, made for interesting discussions with the large number of helpers at hand, which was actually very beneficial as all challenges were agreed, by the clerk of the course by lunch time, then a well earned sandwich and cup of tea was eagerly sought, in the now dry day.

Heavy rain was again forecast during the night, but we left Lordship Farm, Benington in the knowledge that our sections were good for the trial, however upon inspection on Sunday morning, it was decided to alter three sections as a second look prompted to make them less of a challenge.

The morning was as forecast, dry and windy, which encouraged a spring in everyone's step, especially the club's group of steadfast helpers, along with the 64 pre-entered riders, as they heard Paul of the Traveling Butty Box shouting "Tea's ready".

With the course and sections checked and ready to go the first rider was away promptly at 10:00. Unfortunately we were two observers short, so club members Graham Haslam and Andy Earnshaw who were due to ride but gave up their places to stand in and man sections. Graham to cover section 5, one of his own making, so was one of the more challenging routes and Andy on section 8, laughingly called the muddy slot, which it was when first pressed into action some 20 years ago, now it is a teasing array of slippery tree roots and adverse cambers.

Section one looked as awkward as could be with tight turns and bomb holes in all three routes but, in fact rode very well with little challenge to all comers, as the clubs Steve Ross with his very own Christmas tinsel pipe adornment will attest, "this is just how the first section should be". Immediately next door, section two, the first of the 50/50 sections, proved somewhat more of a challenge even though very similar in nature, however with a couple of tighter bomb holes and slightly longer route queues which soon built up were quickly managed by the Clerk of the course and sharp observing by club member Jerry Pack.

Section Three overseen from on high, as if on a throne, club man Pete White kept a beady eye on the first in the main gravel quarry area, this proved relatively straight forward with sweeping turns and steep climbs, only caught out the unwary who were unable to stay within the route gates. Very close by section four the next 50/50, was under equal papal control by Pete's brother Phil who kept a tight reign on a section

that yielded very little, only to the more established riders who mastered the slippery concrete slabs, tree roots and tight turns.

With half the trial underway we reach section five, a Graham Haslam section manned by Graham Haslam who was enjoying seeing the fruits of his labours, the middle and easy routes were tough, but circummed to most in the middle classes but, it was the expert route which Graham had set out to challenge, this he achieved with a very awkward steep bank on an adverse camber with an angled tree log across the bottom just after the start. There were many calamitous attempts ending up sprawled in the bushes, until eventual Trial winner Will McBein from Oxford Ixion came along, after much deliberation he hit the turn with perfection and was the first to exit with a three. During one of the middle class rides a misguided bike and rider removed the log which made the ascent for more accessible, but it was only Will McBein who continued to clean this hazard.

Section six was looked after by Robin Brownsell a wonderful Centre stalwart who is always keen to support clubs come rain or shine with his observing experience, this was a free-flowing section on an adverse camber sandy bank with rises and drops which would catch out any lack of concentration and extract the odd unnecessary dab.

Just along from Robin was another fine Centre stalwart Bob Twigg who is always eager to help, this time on section seven devised by yours truly, which was to incorporate the best of the loose ballast/gravel, a mound of large lumps of bricks and concrete and the inevitable long and steep climb out to the next set of sections. Again the middle and easy routes were relatively straight forward, giving each class enough wind it on room for the climb out but, still caught the inexperienced as either grip or power was lost on the climb out. The expert route proved the undoing of many, even for Trial winner Will, he lost 6 here of his total of 9, a frequent visitor to Benington, Mark Reason was the only other rider to equal Will's score with 2 cleans. There was the odd dab but mostly 2s and 3s with a number of failures, mainly due to a left hand turn up on the ever moving and slippery camber into the climb out slot.

After climbing out of the quarry there was a short blast before section eight, which has already been mentioned, this one did little to increase any ones score but, again caught out any lack of concentration, as it did for intermediate winner Nick Wilford with an unnecessary dab on the first lap, this could have quite easily have cost him the award as the rest of the group were snapping at his heels but most were undone during their efforts at section two.

There was now chance to give the bikes an airing during the half mile or more blast to the last two sections in the chalk quarry, these are usually notorious for their slipperiness, but clerk of the course Steve Salter and Graham had the foresight to ease them, as there was no point in making life unnecessarily difficult. But, throughout the day there had been a drying wind which had helped their cause, which it had done for all of the sections. Section nine gracefully observed by Grace Hagan, whilst not riding was keen to help out. This section like most of the others looked innocuous with gentle turns on adverse cambers but, again caught out most in the expert and inters' classes.

The final section, ten, was under the eagle eye of ever busy club member Barry Bannister, normally features a horrible slippery climb out which was not an option to incorporate it this year, so after extensive clearing on Saturday a fresh unchartered route appeared which again sorted out the men from the boys in the inters' with dabs all over the place, but a 5 was the exception for inters' winner Nick Wilford when his front wheel tucked under on a left hand drop and pitched over the top. The experts made easy work of it, which they had done on a number of sections, but this didn't mean the trial was too easy, far from it, what transpired was a great balance, the odd grunt for the experts with good all round sections for the bulk of the entry, many of

whom expressed their enjoyment of the event, for some the best they had ridden all year.

It is now time for me to bandage my fingers and to thank all of the many club members who helped and got wet on Saturday and observed, Centre stalwarts for their support, the riders for entering and to the club web monitor Stuart Hodgson who keeps the club site in perfect order, where you can find a full list of results.

May I also wish you all a great festive time and look forward to another mud plugging clean sheet in 2019.

Results:

Best expert and Bruce Dominey Cup	Will McBein	9 ml
Best Intermediate	Nick Wilford	17 ml
Best Novice	Scott Robinson	6 ml
Best clubman	Adrian Steel	0 ml
Best Sportsman	Gavin Pryor	0 ml

Cheers for now, Dave Jenkinson, Secretary of the meeting.