

HUX Bruce Dominey Trial, 4th December 2016 at Benington

From about the middle of November the long range weather forecast had predicted that the end of the month and into the beginning of December was going to be cold and dry. There were smiley faces all around at the HUX November meeting to finalise proceedings for the Hillingdon and Uxbridge MC club's annual Bruce Dominey Cup trial on Sunday 4th at Benington Lordship near Stevenage, Hertfordshire. We did feel we had some stiff competition from the Southern Experts event in Hants. However the entries kept rolling in, and by entry closing day of 1st December we had amassed 54 riders in total, which we felt was pretty good, as over the years entries have been steadily declining.

A "small band of enthusiastic helpers" gathered at the venue on Saturday morning and were pinching ourselves that the forecast was still holding true. Now, that might sound wonderful but it presents its own set of problems, nice and dry, toughen up the sections, it is very easy to defeat/demoralise the majority of our entry. And as every organiser knows it is not the easiest thing in the world to make an easy challenging section. So with everybody's interest in mind the "small band of enthusiastic helpers" had to gently encourage our very knowledgeable Clerk of the Course, Graham Haslam (who is renowned for producing challenging sections), to take off his "expert" helmet and maybe think less challenging. Graham as some might know is out of the saddle for a while after his left hand became the filling of a tree - handlebar sandwich, with this memory still fresh in his mind the final set of sections were a very good mixture of sensible and challenging. However we did let Graham have some fun on the very steep and very loose gravel quarry which included a bottomless sandy bank.

Although the sky was a glorious clear blue the temperature was not much above freezing, so the officials, observers and the fifty-odd riders were very keen to get moving on the stroke of Ten. Gradually the sun lifted the temperature so there were not too many frostbitten fingers or toes at the well-attended Sizzlers refreshment bar at the end.

There are to be four laps of ten sections in the three distinct areas within this land, a chalk quarry, great when dry, disastrous when frosty or wet, a steep sided ballast/shingle/gravel quarry, topped off with some nadgery roots and large concrete slabs.

The first major obstacle was section two in the chalk quarry, here the experts utilised a hole some five feet deep, large enough to park two cars, which had been excavated for a "Toughmudders" course, on exiting straight into a very steep and slippery climb out to the ends card. The first lap proved trying as the frosted chalk was devoid of traction which extracted 10 from Daniel Greeves on his first two visits, the best here before the frost came out was Josh Brimecombe who had a well-deserved 3 on the first lap but then a 5 on his second attempt, the climb-out even caused problems for the lesser classes who had a straight run. However there were a few exceptions but these were all after the second lap.

Then we moved on to section three, the first of the banks and roots, which seemed simple enough but again proved the undoing of the unwary, none more so than best Novice, Tim Davis, who cleaned it on his first lap but then had a single prod on his next three attempts, these accounted for half of his final total of 6. This seemingly simple twiddle managed to loosen the foot of centre stalwart Kevin Peters, where a simple dab was his only loss for the day in the clubman class, this narrowly beat HUX club member

Jonathan Banister, who did exactly the same as Kevin here but then had an unlucky prod on his first lap at section 10, taking his total to 2.

Now section four was an unusual one, in that it was all down hill, not the normal blast for 70 odd meters up the steep quarry side but down twisting and turning, and yet again just catching out the unwary, one notable catch was the wonderful gentleman rider, Doug Theobald who after many, many years with his feet up was unable to secure them here and dropped 3 in his grand total of 4 to take the sportsman top spot.

Section five was the first of Graham's specials, the bottomless sandy bank, with its twists and turns did exactly what it said on the tin, "bottomless sand" for the first lap but then with the passage of numerous riders, it became compacted to become much easier than expected. But, this one gave up hope when confronted with Gareth Price, intermediate, who conquered it on all four visits. Fives were dropped on the first laps for all experts and inters'.

Sections six and seven were tricky little numbers amongst the roots and concrete slabs, which kept everyone on their toes, most marks were lost through lack of concentration and missing markers.

Then we move onto the next Graham special, section eight, a long long loose camber the height and length of which is not often seen in the South Midland centre, daunting even for a Mountain Goat, however it was conquered twice by eventual winner Daniel Greeves and Matt LeFevre once. The middle and easy routes also had their fair share of a constantly moving platform, for the loose boulders/pebbles and sand took plenty of single prods from the unwary.

Some relief from the uncertainty of the quarry to the relative stability of sections nine and ten, two tight little bomb holes amongst some bushes and slabs which succumbed quite easily to most which brought an end to a perfect lap.

Generally the scores were consistent with the sections but overall the intermediate class was a very close fought contest. HUX club member Andy Earnshaw managed to stave off a strong challenge from Jason Clifford, both finishing on 11, with Andy being clean until section 5 on his first lap, whereby Jason dropped 2 on his first attempt at section one. Then there were three contestants finishing on 13, the best of these was Gareth Price who stayed clean until section three, while his challengers both drop marks on section one.

There were many favourable comments which are always most welcomed by the club helpers, who put a lot of time and effort into producing any event. So at this point I would like to thank the club helpers for their efforts, the riders for entering and enjoying their day and to the tireless group of Observers who always do a sterling job and helped to make this another very successful H U X event.

Dave Jenkinson

Results.

Best Expert & Bruce Dominey Cup:	Daniel Greeves	19,
Best Intermediate:	Andy Earnshaw	11
Best Novice:	Tim Davis	6
Best Clubman:	Kevin Peters	1
Best Sportsman:	Doug Theobald	4