

A guide to taking up long distance motorcycle trials

What is an observed motorcycle long distance trial?

Since 19th November 1901, without a break save for two world wars, the Motorcycling Club has been running popular well supported long distance trials catering for standard road vehicles including cars, sidecar outfits and solo motorcycles. The MCC was formed when in response to a press advertisement 30 enthusiastic motorcyclists attended a meeting held at Frascati's Restaurant in London. Three years later, in 1904, came the Motorcycle Cycle London to Edinburgh Ride – the first of three long distance events that were to become the MCC's classic trials and which continue to this day.

The three MCC trials form part of the Association of Classic Trials Club's annual programme of some fifteen or so Championship events. The ACTC exists to promote the world of classic long distance motorcycle and car trials and through its member clubs organises events in the West Country, Cumbria and the Peak District.

ACTC events provide the opportunity to sample classic reliability trials with good company in some stunningly beautiful parts of the country. Each trial is usually routed over between 60 and 100 miles, although the three MCC events are overnight and the distances are up to 350 miles. There are usually around 12 to 14 sections included in each trial, normally located on non metalled rights of way. Some sections are no more difficult than you would encounter on your average trail ride. Others may be more challenging. Some events i.e. MCC Trials, are as suitable for the larger machines as well as the smaller trail bikes as a lot of the route may be on A or B roads and the occasional piece of motorway. The other ACTC events being mainly more suitable to the smaller capacity bikes. Classes include British made, pre 65 machines and Sidecar outfits. Machine preparation is based upon reliability rather than sheer speed or horsepower.

In classic long distance trials, marks are lost for 'footing' or 'stopping' during sections. All sections are 'observed' by marshals, who look for penalties incurred by riders and complete scorecards for each competitor. In each event a number of sections will include 'Restarts'. These are boxes or lines where the competitor is required to stop and execute a hill start. Most trials also incorporate a 'special test', which is a timed section starting on line A and stopping on line B.

Which motorcycle can I use?

Any road legal motorcycle can be used in long distance trials. However some are more suitable than others. The most commonly used and suitable for a newcomer are lightweight Trail bikes, particularly if fitted with 21 inch front and 18 inch rear wheels. the most popular being 200 Beta Alps, Yamaha 200 Serrows and XT250's and Honda XR250's. Though big trail bikes such as Honda's 750 Africa Twin and BMW twins are also used on some events.

ACTC Trials (With very few exceptions for some pre 65 machines). require that lights are fitted and working.

The motorcycle must have a current MOT certificate and be taxed for road use.

Preparing the motorcycle.

Tyres are the most important consideration here. The ACTC and MCC publish rules on the type

of tyres that are permitted in long distance trials and it is vital to observe these rules as scrutineers will not allow non permitted tyres. Please read the tyre regulations. A good choice would be to use Pirelli MT43's front and rear and run pressures at normal trail riding rates – 14 psi front and rear. Note. Tyres of off road type used in single site venues are not permitted even if they are of similar pattern, as apart from not being road legal they may break up when used on the road. Also not permitted are enduro or motocross tyres even if road legal. Security bolts are normally fitted to rear and occasionally front tyres.

What to take in the way of tools and spares. Tools of suitable quality and of the type that you know can be used.... A good quality LED torch and Headtorch are always worth taking, with spare batteries. spare sparkplugs and bulbs. Puncture repair kit, tyre pump, spare inner tube and tyre levers if you really are proficient and confident that you can change a tube by the side of the road. [A spare front tube will fit the rear tyre in an emergency – but a rear tube will not fit a front tyre.]

Other spares may also be carried, like split links for the chains. However only take what spares you know you are likely to use and can actually fit, using the tools you have with you.

Clothing

Long distance trials are usually held at the risk of pretty inclement weather, so best dress for road riding. Some competitors use electrically heated Waistcoats or Jackets for the MCC events. Of which the night sections may require extra layers. The shorter events may require less layers. Helmets may be of open or full face. Some competitors carry a pair of lightweight gloves for the sections. Boots designed for trials and water proofed or with waterproof liners. Gortex kit is well worth using.

Paperwork

To compete in long distance trials there are various formalities that have to be completed. The first of these is to join a member club – there is a list of ACTC member clubs elsewhere on this web site. To compete in MCC events, competitors must be members of the MCC.

An ACU trials license is also required. [Click here for the ACU web site.](#)

If you wish to compete in the ACTC motorcycle championships, then you will need to be a member of the ACTC.

The final item of administration is event insurance. If your existing motorcycle insurance does not provide cover for competitive events, most organising clubs can arrange blanket cover per event. The event entry form will include this provision at a small additional premium.

Entries

ACTC members automatically receive entry forms for ACTC championship events 2-4 weeks prior to events. The entry form gives important information on classes and closing dates and, because some events are particularly popular, it pays to return your entry as early as possible.

Approximately 10 days before the event, you will be sent a programme, final instructions and route card on A4 paper. Or e-mail. Many competitors alter the route card to suit the size of their route card holder. (Normally A5) and it is also possible to increase the font size so they are easily readable. Some competitors laminate the cards and wrap them round the handlebar crossbrace. Most use purpose made Route card holders which are available from Acrebis or Touratech. The latter come with lighting units and electric winders if required.

On the day of the trial

Read the final instructions carefully before you leave. These instructions will give you important

information on venue location, parking, petrol availability, signing on, scrutineering and start times. It is generally advisable to arrive at least 45 minutes before your scheduled start time to allow sufficient time for signing on and scrutineering.

Upon arrival, follow the instructions. Usually you should present your bike for scrutineering before signing on. Scrutineering may check the safety and the eligibility of the machine. Checking that handlebar levers have ball ends, tyres are within the permitted type, lights [if fitted] are working, as is the horn and that there are no spokes loose or other obvious and potentially dangerous defects. You will then be given your competitor numbers upon signing on. These should be taped front and rear to your bike. (Not your clothing or Helmet). in such a position that they can be clearly read by observers.

Stephen Bailey.
ACTC Motorcycle Championship Coordinator
ste.bailey@o2.co.uk

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