

testing trial

FROM 125 TO 3917
in cubic centimetres

by Alan Foster

Being able to see others who ride or drive a different number of wheels to oneself is usually fairly difficult in M.C.C. events. Not so with the Club's fifth event per year (the fourth is Silverstone, just in case 4 wheel readers have forgotten) which took place in grand weather on September 11th in the heart of chalkland Wiltshire.

Following the success of Chairman Aley's brainchild last year, the second Testing Trial attracted 97 starters from most corners of England and Wales. Just 6 compromised and competed on three wheels, whilst 37 tried staying upright - most of the time - on just two. The other two classes were for cars with hats on or hats off, the latter being the more heavily subscribed, which is nice to see in this age of the tin box.

Machinery was varied and interesting. Ken Brooks was feeling strong enough to heave around his BMW R80, whilst at the other end of the scale, Dick Peachey made do with the 125cc of his Rickman Matisse. In between was the gaggle of Japanese engineering, with a couple of Norton 500 T's and a Yamaha powered Austrian KTM. More Norton power appeared with the combinations, together with the Pouncy Ajay. It was good to see Reuben Welch out with his Lea Francis 12/50, and Sue Halkyard battling with 4 litres of L type Allard. Any event which brings together Morgans from 1.5 to 3.5 litres, MG's spanning 50 years, Rileys, an HRG and a Renault 4 cannot be accused of being narrow in its appeal.

Any relationship between the sketch plans of the tests and what was found on the ground was slightly accidental, which added to the fun. The reasons for the changes was a combination of panic by the Clerk of Works and his merry advisers when they realised how wet the grass was early in the morning, and a wish to stop the overall award going to a solo. For those readers who have not got to grips with what this event is all about, it represents a combination of the type of timed special tests used on our long distance trials, held on one site, with three attempts at each - all to count.

The smiling faces of Ken and Mary Hobbs and Colin Sumner greeted competitors on Test 1, before setting off up the hill, around a bollard and back across the adverse to finish. More than one solo found the mixture of dew, gravity and centrifugal force sufficient to lay both rider and machine flat on the grass. Those who under-estimated their turning circle arrived at the finish gate on Test 2 at anything but the right angle, whilst four wheel competitors who were over confident about the amount of traction on Test 3 found that stopping cost 50 penalty marks. Test 4 was 'T' shaped, involving reversing for the cars and some short radius turns for the others. Back at the bottom of the field, Test 5

demand a couple of across and back over lines before arriving at the finish. Test 6 had the lot - a causeway, over a bank and a 1 in 2 downhill finish. Those who survived enjoyed a thrash up something resembling a trials hill at Test 7, around bollards and back for those on two and three wheels, and a touch of quick reversing for those on 4.

Good scenery, good company, good weather and good caterers all made for a most enjoyable day of relaxed fun. The ladies rapidly produced final results showing Keith Townsend on his Honda XL as the overall winner, followed by Maurice Arden on an XR, an identical result to last year. Third was Ian Godden, Yamaha XT. On three wheels, Brian and David Bell finished ahead of Dave Wright and Barry Smith, with Peter and Nicky Vaughan close behind. In the car classes, John Hornby Smith brought his Cannon within 16 seconds of the winning solo, and only 5 seconds ahead of the Troll of Chris Reeson. Proper cars finished 3rd and 4th in the form of 2 MG's: Mike Wordsworth in the 1100cc Midget and Derek Pearce just 0.2 seconds behind in the TA. Those with lids saw a rare top place in an M.C.C. event for an Imp, ably piloted by Terry Flay, leaving his JCB at home for the day. Equally rare, a Skoda in the hands of Michael Banks arrived second, and another Imp third, driven by David Sullivan.

All competitors I know, would wish to be associated with a sincere vote of thanks to John Aley and his team; John Hayes in particular, and the excellent and cheerful band of marshals who made it all possible. It says something for an event when I can put my briefcase and overnight bag back in the +8 and continue my journey to Devon, ready for meetings on Monday morning.

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