

# TRIAL REPORT - February 2006



## Matthew and the Lamb Roll

We know what to expect at some sites such as Trisant and Cwmergyr, we've driven every inch of them over the last few years but different C.o.C's, maybe different weather, is enough to make the familiar a brand new challenge.

Which is just what you got at Cwmergyr with Ian McMahon and Marc Price in charge.

It's a great site anyway, where else could you find such a variety of terrain in such a compact site? When we say "I go off-roading in Wales" people think it's nothing more than bog and mountain, but here we've got it all, including the bog and mountainsides.

We even got good weather, which was nice in such an exposed place. The last thing we wanted was a repeat of the ice storm that forced us into our only ever abandonment. Icicles forming on the steering wheel between sections is not a good thing.

So, who was having a good day, and who was having a bad one then?

In Class 2 Jim was driving against himself, and at the end of play had a high score. But that didn't mean he wasn't trying, oh no, Jim puts everything he's got into his driving and makes that 90 go places where most Land Rover drivers would have got out and started walking a long time ago. Cwmergyr isn't the best site for that kind of motor because of the amount of places that can cross axle you.

It's a shame we don't have more drivers in this class because it is exciting to watch, especially when we have good drivers like Jim who aren't afraid of trying sections that drivers like Chris Spittle are also driving. There's a world of difference between class 2 and 5 motors!

Class 3 was won by Frank who ended the day in Chris Hughes' V6 Land Rover after the diff' in Half Pint disintegrated and brought about Alan's retirement.

Having driven both of these machines at different times I can assure you that they each give you a vastly different driving experience, not that Chris' motor is a bad one, but it couldn't be any more different to Frank's. Whether Half Pint would have gone down the long, steep pile of loose stone any straighter though, is another matter entirely.

Chris Hughes was having a good day and keeping Frank on his toes until a soft 9 on section 7 set him back at least 7 points, but he kept second place.

Les Davies had most of the cylinders firing nearly all day in the Minx, but sadly the old girl is beginning to show her age a bit now, as are most of the leaf sprung motors unfortunately, but Les certainly isn't past it and he drives it as hard as he possibly can, often with surprising results.

Tim Mackley wasn't up to his usual pace though and just seemed to pick up an extra point or two on a few sections, which all add up. The average score for the day was 31 points and he was seven points up, which is less than a point a section or one bad section. But that's the way it goes some days, and it's very difficult to pull back lost points.

Class 4 is generally dominated by the 'hybrid' type of motor, a Land Rover shape on a Range Rover chassis or a tubular space frame, and they are hard to beat as well.

But now we have Angus Hornby in a chopped down Range Rover with a LPG conversion to add some variety. It might not be fully competitive - yet, but maybe it will be? The tractor weights on the back have improved traction no end, and don't forget he also gets a shunt which if used well can make a big difference. It's certainly good to see something different in this class though.

J.P.R. and Dave Tomley have started the season in the way they mean to carry on, making sure that this year one of them beats the other!

John got this round though, and Dave was another driver having one of those days where he

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seemed to pick up one extra point on most sections. But as usual it was a great display of driving and rivalry.

John Bradshaw wasn't that far behind Dave though, and we should never discount John's experience and skill.

The engine's just about knackered in his motor which certainly wasn't helping, so this class could have some surprises once John gets a few horsepower back.

Malcolm Sumner seemed to be getting the worst out of that engine, and on a few sections he ended up misfiring badly instead of powering his way up a slope. Which was a shame because on a few sections he beat John.

The star performer of this class, and indeed of the day, was Matthew Tomley who did a superb roll from the top of a pile of loose stones, unfortunately I was the other side of the parish and missed the action, but I think it was a complete roll.

That was a particularly devious piece of setting out by the CoC's as the section went off the top of the stones right at the end of the pile with a steep slope on three sides, and you couldn't see the gate at the bottom until you were committed to your line, so you had to remember exactly where you're supposed to be aiming for. If you didn't, it was 'door - roof - door - wheels' as Matthew discovered, and he wasn't the only one to get the line wrong, he just got it more wrong!

And just to add to Matthew's embarrassment he was seen in the company of a whole flock of sheep later in the day. But we won't mention that.

This was a day for Class 5 to get out there and go for it, which they did. Fiddle brakes were useful in many places, and lockers were very beneficial as well.

Jo Willett and Hal Ridge were running on the dumper tyres, which gave good grip in that evil rabbit infested sandy area at the bottom, where Jo scored one of the only two clears, along with Chris Spittle.

Jo's Ford V6 Rover is a good motor, but the fiddles seem to let it down a bit by not being aggressive enough, and in this class it's essential to be able to haul the motor round as brutally as possible. They worked perfectly on the first section, but was that a result of the braked dumper tyre digging into the soft sand allowing the other side to swing round easily?

Tim Brooks nearly didn't make the start of play when his V8 refused to fire up on the trailer, but a full service from the assembled collection of mechanical wizards soon had it coughing into life.

With good results as well, 13 points on a hard trial like this is a damn good score.

But site's like Cwmergyr seem to suit Tim's motor because it climbs so well, and the way he powers up the steep slopes makes it look easy, but it isn't.

Like Tim, Chris Spittle has very effective fiddle brakes on his motor, as they both demonstrated on the section that had the steep climb up between the ruined walls. The loop / turn at the bottom was just about possible for motors without fiddle brakes, but the line you got for the climb was so much better with them.

And they got both these guys out of trouble more than once during the day.

Chris' motor, The Muddler, was built by someone else originally, but Chris has now made it his own with various modifications, and they work!

OK, the motor is good, but Chris is also a very good driver, which his score of 3 points at the end of the day proves.

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It was a great trial at a good site, and Ian and Marc, with help from Les set some very different sections out, and they worked well. They also made the best of the all the different types of ground by mixing them up in the sections so you drove from rocks to grass to mud to sand, you needed to concentrate on this trial!

I know these guys stepped in at quite short notice when Dave Dee was taken ill , so thanks for that.

And we wish Dave a speedy recovery so he can once again show us that leaf sprung motors are still competitive. He'll never forgive me for my earlier comments!

Dave