



## Mud, Sweat and Tears

I'm sat here typing away on my laptop with the sun blazing down wondering whether to have a cold beer or some lightly chilled wine, unlike the trial at Cae Glas where intravenous steaming hot Bovril would have been welcome, bloody hell, did it rain .....

Not that we let the rain, or the gale that accompanied it, stop us, oh no. We just enjoyed ourselves as usual.

And I think it was one of the best trials we've had for ages, not only were the sections great, the driving in between was a challenge as well, as Arwel discovered when he tipped over dropping down a river bank.

And as we've come to expect Alan kept us entertained throughout the day by 'testing' the sections, and getting stuck.

I'd forgotten just how good Cae Glas is, and how much scope there is at this secluded place. It's classic Welsh hill country with steep banks, a river, trees and mud. Plenty of mud on a day like that as well.

Frank and Alan had also found some new sections, and very tough they were too. Frank and Alan both dislike driving against the canes, so it was the ground that stopped you, which meant wide gates but cleverly placed to force you onto or through the natural obstacles.

With only eight drivers the plan was to rip through the sections, skip lunch and sod off home to the warm and dry, but as ever the plan went haywire as soon as people started driving, well, mainly when Alan started driving.

The first section took advantage of the track leading to the site and basically weaved its way along the bank, a loop in the lower field and a climb up some tree roots to finish.

Les Price was first away and started his day well with a 1 that was only matched by Jo Willet. But as always Les was driving the Scrapu fearlessly.

The Scrapu power steering has evolved to an even greater level of technological wizardry now with the addition of an electric pump robbed off a Renault Clio, which seems to work very well and makes sliding in the mud even easier.

Which is exactly what the rest of the drivers did at some point along the section.

Section two was a long one in the lower field with some climbs that would have been difficult with a bit of early morning dew on them, but Chris Spittle and Marc cleared not only that climb along the side slope but the uphill mud run for the finish.

Angus span to a halt with the Range Rover on a very precarious angle, but booted it out of trouble and took the points.

By this time some drivers were beginning to get a light coating of best Welsh mud, so the next



section had three river crossings to wash some off.

The start was muddy, and if we'd have had more drivers there would almost certainly been some high scores.

The highest was Chris, but he got lost and missed a gate, which was a shame as the finish was a steep climb in the trees that suited the Muddler.

It also suited Jo's V6 as he scored the only clear.

Reversing away from the 1 gate was also entertaining, well it would be when the bank was as slippery as a politicians tongue. I think it was Les that came back down at all angles and at a speed he never intended to, but the trees saved him.

By this time Alan was perfecting the next section and proving that it could be driven.

This was a classic section, long and difficult with a few river crossings over the steep banks and tree roots and an Olympic mud run somewhere around the 4 to 3 gates. The finish was a very optimistic climb out of the river, so the 2's from Chris, Marc, Jo and Arwel were as good as this section was ever going to get.

Never mind that there were no clears here, the entertainment value made it all worth while.

First of all we had to recover Alan in the Half Pint as he'd buried it up to the sills. I think it took both Class Five motors to haul it out, and the mud bath was only just starting!

Ellie was sat in Half Pint, and got plastered from head to foot, as did everyone within 100 yards. But as ever she didn't complain, perhaps she's learned it's not worth complaining to her dad anyway?

Arwel rolled onto his side just getting to the start when he misjudged the drop into the river, at last the Rover bodied Daihatsu is beginning to look like a proper trailer with it's crushed wing!

His wife Meriel was driving her first trial, and hadn't even practiced much either. But she did a great job of ramming the top off the bank at one of the river crossings.

The mud run was wide and allowed for a choice of places to get stuck, so everyone seemed to adopt the same technique. Select the highest gear possible and bury the accelerator pedal.

Chris used third gear and his V8 to great effect, and emerged with an even coating of mud over himself and the aptly named Muddler. Sometimes a windscreen and doors looks so attractive.

Angus had a smug look on his face all day.

Jo and Hal have a screen in the V6 Rover, but the wipers weren't working. Bad news with those dumper tyres shifting crap at that rate.

Considering we only had eight drivers, and a CoC who was determined to join in, that must have been the slowest section we've ever done, but it was also one of the funniest.

After that we decided that stopping for lunch might be a good idea after all, most of us were soaked through, some were looking like swamp monsters, but we all needed a break by then

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however uncomfortable we were.

Frank and Alan had found some more new sections, and the theme for the afternoon was 'long, steep descents', always fun in dry conditions, but the rain was still heaving down and the wet grass took no prisoners.

I couldn't see the early part of the next section and only Chris and Marc made it down the hill to score points. Chris scored 1, but only after some very imaginative fiddle braking when he was about to miss a gate, and Marc scored 2 when the Scrapu dug its front spring hangers into the river bank.

Up on the top, by the barn, the ground cut up and seemed to stop everyone else, and Jo's motor caught fire.

It wasn't drastic, but required some rewiring just to get it off the section. For the rest of the day Jo and Hal could start it but had to stall the engine to stop it.

The next section was the same from where I was marshalling, I couldn't see the start. But I could see the descent! And it was superb.

The long and steep grass hillside was bad enough on its own, but turning right over the rocks into the stream guaranteed some excitement.

Angus didn't make the turn, well Range Rover's are heavy. Thankfully there was room for him to toboggan off into safety.

Going over the rocks at that angle, and speed because brakes were useless by this point, meant lifting a rear wheel and hoping for the best, and surprisingly everyone who got this far made it.

The finish was a loop or two through the river and a short climb up a tree. I don't think the tree was actually the finish, but that's where Chris ended up for 1 point. Les, Marc and Jo's 2 points deserve a mention as well.

The last two sections were on familiar territory along the track past where we park.

There's a smaller stream here, but it's deep and just about Scrapu width.

Section seven was long starting by the gate, across the field into the stream, out and up the bank, down into the stream and a swamp, then a long loop left and the finish was a choice of a side slope or a loop up a climb. I think everyone took the loop at the finish.

There were clears from Chris, Marc and Jo, who were by this time well ahead of everyone else. But that didn't mean the other drivers had given up, far from it.

Meriel was getting the hang of the Daihatsu by this time and really drove this section well getting her second 4 of the day.

Saving the best till last Frank and Alan set the final section down in the steep sided, heavily wooded valley.

There is one way in, and one way out, and both are difficult in the dry.

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Once again Alan needed the most recovery, but we'd got used to this by now. The drop into the valley was made that little bit harder by having to go a little bit diagonally through the trees, and again even thinking about using the brakes was pointless, but the trees were big enough to slow you down and bounce you in the general direction you wanted to go, as Arwel found out. Angus missed all the trees - somehow- and carried on to score a 2, but he was fast down that hill! Chris and Marc scored 1 and there was less heavy recovery than we feared.

After that Frank and Alan let us pack up and go home, and it stopped raining. Did we have fun? You bet we did, that was the funniest and hardest trial we've had for ages. There was so much going on, the state of the drivers, Chris especially was plastered in mud from head to toe. And he ran over Mike Lee's foot! Luckily the ground was soft and Mike's foot sank.

Mikes two spaniels turned the inside of his Range Rover into a mud wrestling ring. Alan and Laura's kids looked like refugees and their dogs just chased each other around in the mud. It must have taken them a week to clean up.

Meriel chose the toughest day to start trialing, but she had a great day and drove very well, and not doing the steep descents in those conditions was exactly the right thing to do. I bet she'll be doing them soon enough though.

The scores of Marc, Chris and Jo were remarkable close, and Jo only lost out on the last section which shows that you were definitely driving against the ground and not against the gates

Marc's score in Class Three was exactly the same as the winner of Class Five Chris Spittle. So either there was no advantage to air-lockers, a V8 and fiddle brakes or Chris was having a bad day! Or maybe Marc was having a good one ?

It's a shame there weren't a few more drivers, but maybe we'd have been still been there on Monday.

It was a great day, and it really was a day to thank Laura for keeping score, Frank and Alan for doing so much to provide a trial in atrocious weather and all the other marshals and spectators who made the day such fun.

Yeah, we had mud, sweat and tears. But the tears were from laughing so damn much !

Dave