Night Trailquest – Saturday 24th January 2009

A total of 48 riders turned out on a fine January evening to tackle the inaugural Night Trailquest event around the South Barrule plantation area on Saturday.

Starting just after dark, teams had 90 minutes to visit as many of the 19 checkpoints as possible. These were liberally scattered around the main plantation area but also included a skirmish into the quarry area - where the challenge was to interpret a labyrinth of rough tracks not normally frequented by mountain bikers.

Just to make sure that a sufficient level of challenge existed for all the participants, a tough loop around Corlea was included - with controls sited in dead-ends leading off the main whisky run. For the truly adventurous, a single distant control also lurked at the edge of the forest that sits above the pipeline track. Only 3 teams attempted this one and probably realised that, with all checkpoints being worth the same value, it really represented poor value when compared with the easier pickings around the main plantation.

An aerial view would have revealed a blur of bike lights crisscrossing the area and flitting around the forest hunting for the controls. These were marked with scotchlite tape and glow-sticks - which made the task of locating the controls themselves pretty straightforward. The main trick was in interpreting the map and visualising this against the trails on the ground. Hard enough in daylight, there are many false-trails that appear on the tunnel-vision afforded by bike lights - but everyone managed admirably well and no-one reported getting seriously lost. Some had taken the advice to do a recce in daylight first.

The start was pushed back to around 5:15pm as the daylight hung on longer than expected thanks to a dry and clear day. So it was almost a mass-start and pairs of lights were seen heading off in all directions - Trailquest is not just about riding hard and fast - and everyone had their own ideas about the best route to choose. That is part of the appeal - working out after the event how others managed to judge the best approaches and the most efficient loops. It is also about judging your time well – especially with only 90 minutes available and a tough 5 points per minute penalty for anyone getting back after time. This was amazingly well judged, in fact - with several teams coming in with just seconds to spare!

Several family groups also took part - Trailquest is as much about having fun as it is about racing - and it is true that, in this particular branch of the sport, no-one gets left behind.

Overall winners (points gained / overall time) were regulars David Rielly and Steve Partington who coupled a strong performance with good route choice and just 4

minutes to spare to clinch 160 of the 200 points available. They were closely followed by the triple mixed team of John Barker, Cat Price & Peter Bradley who, with the same number of points were just a couple of minutes the slower. John Barker has put in strong performances in the Trailquests and was the first man to get his name on the E2E entry list - so he obviously means business in 2009!

Strong man team of David Glover & Paul kneen also took in 160 points and got in with just 57 seconds to spare. They attempted the more distant points – probably going all-out to clear the course but just ran out of time. Fourth were the men's team of Richard Watson & Tim Pressley (150) with Robbie and Neil Walker in fifth with 140. Kale & Jo Hawkins were second in the mixed category (140). Andrew Cook tackled trailquest for the first time along with partner Mark Easton and did well with 130 points with local men Mike Duffy & Geoff Ennett on 130.

The main thing is that everyone seemed to have had a great time - amongst the remainder of the field were several family groups, including the growing Corlett clan with Julian choosing a tough set of checkpoints and putting Alicia & Nick through the most gruelling set of climbs to be found on the course. They took the prize of earning the most in time penalties - apparently not realising that the checkpoints were worth the same value and that the penalties were crippling!

The Everitt family also did well with 90 points chosen to take in the best of the tracks around the plantation and quarry. A large proportion of the field adjourned to the Baltic in Foxdale for a social afterwards and to share experiences over a drink. A chips and sausage supper was laid on at very reasonable cost by landlord Joe - many thanks to him and his wife for their hospitality.

A full set of results, including the full-blown statistical analysis, can be found at www.results.manxtimingsolutions.com.

The next Trailquest event will be a 3-hour daylight event based around the Foxdale area on March 29th. Watch this space for confirmation.

Graham Hughes. 26th January 2009.

Condensed results
1, David Rielly & Steve Partington (Mens Team) [1] 160 1hr 26min 39sec; 2, John Barker, Cat Price & Peter Bradley (Mixed Team) [1] 160 1:28.57; 3, David Glover & Paul Kneen (MEN) [2] 160 1:29.03; 4, Richard Watson & Tim Pressley (MEN) [3] 150 1:23.47; 5, Robbie & Neil Walker (MEN) [4] 140 1:16.51; 6, Kale & Jo Hawkins (MIX) [2] 140 1:24.31; 7, Andrew Cook & Mark Easton (MEN) [5] 130 1:24.49; 8, Mike Duffy & Geoff Ennett (MEN) [6] 130 1:27.57; 9, Alison & Neil Clague (MIX) [3] 130 1:28.05; 10, Nigel Beaumont & Matt Mcsevney (MEN) [7] 130 1:28.44; 11, Alistair Beattie & Mike Banks (MEN) [8] 130 1:29.08; 12, Juan Owens & Andrew Beattie MEN) [9] 130 1:29.19; 13, Nicky Lane & Jo Maylin (Womens Team) [1] 130 1:29.48; 14, Darren Lane & Derek Sharpe (MEN) [10] 130 1:29.56; 15, Janet Corkish & Peter Smith (MIX) [4] 120 1:29.38; 16, Martin Lane & Jack Wolstencroft (MEN) [11] 120 1:30.20; 17, Russell Collister &

Robert Quirk (MEN) [12] 120 1:32.04; 18, Stuart Temple & Keith Lowe (MEN) [13] 115 1:31.18; 19, Steve Ormerod & Steve Smith (MEN) [14] 110 1:28.50; 20, Julian, Alicia & Nick Corlett (MIX) [5] 105 1:37.20; 21, Susan, Mark & Jamie Everitt (MIX) [6] 90 1:13.37; 22, Rob & Jooles Cormode (MIX) [7] 70 1:07.55