

Manx Big Summer Trailquest – Sunday 28th June 2009

After several weeks of dry weather, the Manx trails were in fine fettle for the Big Summer Trailquest last Sunday. Based in Laxey at the Pavilion (thanks to them for providing us with an excellent HQ and providing the post-ride refreshments) this Mountain Bike Orienteering event presented a level of challenge for everyone.

A total of 69 competitors entered across the 3 and 5 hour events with a mixture of solos and team entries (6 of the teams being generation parent/offspring combinations). A visiting contingent from New Zealand upped the stakes somewhat plus a representation from Cumbria.

Winner of the 3-hour event Stuart Lynch is apparently a member of the current world champion team of adventure racers who came over just for the day. He would have done the 5-hour event but had to dash off to catch the 3pm ferry; so who knows what he would have scored in the 5-hour event - satisfying himself with cleaning up all but one checkpoint in the 3-hour. In an email from him after the event he praised the terrain, the course and the organisation so we have to be proud of being able to impress him....

Unfortunately, several of the teams doing the 3-hour event failed to read the instructions and happily set off around the 5-hour course (apologies to them for not making this clearer but registration was pretty hectic - moral of the story - always read the instructions!) and thus visited several checkpoints that did not count. Wasted efforts in the heat of the day were not appreciated as the temperatures soared to around 25 degrees. The only ones gloating over the stifling heat seemed to be the legions of horse-flies that lay in wait to pounce upon riders caught stationary at checkpoints.

In the 3-hour event, visiting World Champion adventure racer / New Zealander Stuart Lynch overcame lack of local knowledge to produce a devastating 693 points (despite being 3 minutes over the time limit) to show a clean pair of heels to the locals. Friend and fellow NZ'er Neil Kerrison came second with 521 points. Thanks to Neil for also helping out with course setting and clearing. Top locals were Tony Fallon & Brian Draper (Supervets) with 504 points. Visitor Karyn Burns was overall 4th and top woman with 437 just ahead of the DAFF partnership of Graeme Watson & Jason Bolt. Robbie Walker was top Veteran with 393, Julie Lyness & Jo Hawkins were top women's team with 371 (and were one of those chasing non-live controls).

I wish that I could mention everybody but also worthy of note were the 6 generation teams (of whom Rob & Jacob Holden were the best - despite also chasing discounted 5-hour controls) who all seemed to have had a good time plus a regular posse of riders not normally seen at regular MTB events. The spirit of Trailquesting is essentially that you do not have to score high points to have a thoroughly good day out and this seemed to be borne out by the favourable comments received after the dust had settled. Well done to you all and we hope to see you again.

In the Elite/5-hour event, the gloves were off between rivals Kale Hawkins & Julian Corlett - the latter out for revenge after being beaten in the 3-hour Enduro the previous weekend. Kale was first to set off and came home first - revealing a breathtaking score of 899 points (thanks to the instant electronic timing system) with over 6 minutes to spare - and still looking fresh as a daisy. As Julian Corlett pounded up the track through Laxey Gardens to the finish it was clear that he was into time penalties (5) but notwithstanding that his also impressive final score of 846 meant that Kale was again the victor. To be continued....

Cumbrian visitors Max Cousins & Emily Brooks (from Keswick) did extremely well to overcome the vast local knowledge of Kale & Julian to clinch 764 & 687 points respectively (Emily being top woman). Ever-improving local man John Barker picked up 5th with 670 points just ahead of top Grand Vet Neil Helks (who would have scored better but for missing a checkpoint) on 632.

David Goberman & Cat Price were the top mixed pair on 572 and it was good to see Gary Hinds making a comeback into Trailquesting with partner Mark Caley on 555. Richie Cryer & partner Sarah Jewell had a good day out to pick up

268 points.

Again; well done to all of you and we hope that you enjoyed the challenge, whatever the scores. Thanks again to Neil, Kale & John (Barker) for helping with the course. A few of you missed checkpoints and were some were credited by giving them the benefit of the doubt. A couple were somewhat enigmatic - especially the one labelled "Heather" in an area of several square miles of, you guessed it, heather! However, on collecting that one in I had to admit that it was pretty hard to miss - so you must have had your eyes closed. "Tree near beach" was actually nowhere near the beach so that was a tad unfair - apologies - and took me several attempts to find it. However, all were accurately positioned by GPS so, if your map reading was accurate they were all pretty straightforward. All the controls were in place when I collected them in - so they were all there for the taking.

The next event will be on November 8th - venue to be confirmed - and will be a 3-hour only.
Full results including splits and route breakdowns are on www.results.manxtiming.com

Graham Hughes. 30th June 2009