

## Winter Nights Trailquest - or "MBO" (Mountain Bike Orienteering)

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011....

After a fine, dry week with plenty of winter sunshine, Saturday was rather foggy – especially in the valleys. This lingered in patches throughout the day. However, on climbing up to South Barrule to put the checkpoints out, I found myself climbing above the fog blanket and was treated to a fine sunny day.

Foxdale itself was still shrouded in fog as competitors began to arrive at around 5pm. The school car park provided ample parking for everyone and we were grateful for the illumination provided by the street lamps.

Registration was slick and easy thanks to everyone using the new BMBO online entry system. No tedious checking of membership numbers, no time-consuming day-membership forms and (for us), no mad panic to try and get all the names typed into the system before the first riders returned. Just a simple case of ticking names off the list and issuing maps and dibbers – excellent 😊

One benefit of the fog blanket was that darkness fell surprisingly quickly – so those seeking an early start were able to head off shortly after 5:30. It was a wonderful sight watching the stream of riders' front and rear lights heading off into the mist in all directions. Everyone was away by about 6:10.

A short time after that, the fog lifted and we were treated to a starry night. Barely a breeze - but with temperatures dropping away sharply to around 2 degrees. Some ice persisted on the tracks but thankfully no one reported any serious problems.

The course included a scattering of checkpoints around the event centre plus Archallagan plantation – relatively close at hand. To the west, South Barrule and Stoney Mountain offered a similar number of checkpoints with Renshents Lane providing a (rocky) conduit between the two plantations. From there, a long spur lead out through Corlea and up to the Round Table at 300 metres altitude. Reaching yet further to the west, a tough loop around Cronk Fedjag, Cronk ny Arrey Laa, Eary Cushlin and Glen Rushen. This outer loop alone would have been a 2-hour ride to most mortals in itself.

Looking at the checkpoints visited by most teams, only 5 teams attempted even a part of the big loop.

First to return home were one of the top teams – Martin Bell & Rob Sorby. Feeling below par and having lost their map, they decided to call it a night.

This left the challenge wide open for the power-team comprising Paul Kneen and fell runner Lloyd Taggart. Their route choice showed a mix of daring and supreme optimism... Whether by accident or design, they opted to sweep all the checkpoints around Archallagan first, link through South Barrule and Corlea and THEN tackle the demanding loop. Somehow they managed to pull this off and still make it back to Foxdale with only 4 minutes in time penalties. They cleared all but 3 of the available controls.

It would be a good training exercise for anyone to try and complete the same route, in daylight, in a similar time! The dare paid off, however, and they ended with an unassailable score of 578 which placed them 113 points clear of their nearest rivals.

Next in the overall standings were Chris Watson & Stephen Clague. Despite having helped to set part of the course earlier in the day (although only being shown a small part of the overall course) they managed 20 controls via a totally different route – opting to climb on-road by-passing South Barrule plantation up to the Round Table. They declined the outer loop and then worked their way back through Corlea and South Barrule where they cleared up before heading along Renshents Lane and collecting all the Archallagan controls. This plan had the advantage of remaining flexible close to home towards the end and they judged it perfectly to get back to base with 3 minutes to spare and 465 points.

Third in the overall standings were Robin Arnold and Martin Bonser on 423 points – sweeping first through Archallagan and then South Barrule and Corlea. Worth noting that Martin rides a single-speed...

Fourth were the canny pair of Gary Quilliam and Mark Eastham also on 423 but just a tad slower. Lee Clayton & Juan Kinnish were 5<sup>th</sup> overall on 405 points.

Looking at the various categories, Rob & Martin were the top Open-Men's team, with Gary & Mark second and Lee & Juan 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In the M40 Vet Men's team category, Lloyd and Paul were far and away the winners ahead of Chris & Stephen with Steve Partington & Dave Reilly in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Of the two M50 Grand-Vet teams, Mike Duffy & Geoff Ennett beat Keith Lowe & Stuart Temple.

Best of the three X21 mixed teams were Ian Lamberton & Nikki Lane who clinched 268 points ahead of Steve & Emma Hearnden.

Best (of 6) veteran mixed teams were Cat Price and David Gooberman with 348 points ahead of Alison & Neil Clague on 327 points.

Last but not least were top Generation team of Brian & Nathan Draper who notched up an impressive 347 points. The generation teams were not permitted to venture onto the top road so had a smaller table to play on. However, none complained about this when they saw what the outer loop entailed ☺

There were 4 generation teams in all – which is a positive side of MBO (we are not allowed to call it "Trailquest" any more by the way – officially it is "Mountain Bike Orienteering" which has a much more serious ring to it! However, at its heart is a sense of fun and adventure – which maybe explains the broad appeal and the fact that everyone seemed to be arriving back at HQ with big smiles on their faces. The only complaint that we heard was that some teams would have liked to stay out for longer – maybe a 3-hour option next year?

We are always glad that everyone makes it back safely. When the last dibber comes home we know we can relax. After the event, 70% of the field accepted the invitation to the Tynwald Inn where Dave and his staff served us with copious quantities of sausage and chip butties – washed down with various beverages. Thanks to them for making us so welcome. It was great catching up on the various accounts of trails lost and found.

Just in case you are not aware, there is another nocturnal adventure in store at Conrhenny plantation next Friday (28<sup>th</sup> Jan) where Dave Reilly and accomplices will be staging the first cross-country night-race. Better get the lights charged up again!

All the controls were safely gathered in again on the Sunday – with glow-sticks still burning surprisingly brightly. Thanks to Chris Watson for helping put out the course on Saturday afternoon, Geoff Ennett for clearing Archie on Sunday and to Foxdale School for allowing us to use their car parking facilities. Finally to Sue for invaluable help with registration and just about everything, really!

The next Trailquest (sorry, MBO) will be in July and will offer 3 and 5-hour options. We are hoping to firm up the date on this very soon – pending decisions from other events and also our own holidays .... We will announce the date via MMBC and also on [www.trailquest.manxtiming.com](http://www.trailquest.manxtiming.com) as soon as it is confirmed. Full results breakdown may be found on [www.results.manxtiming.com](http://www.results.manxtiming.com).

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23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011.