

# Autumn Mountain Bike Orienteering – Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Event report – by Graham Hughes

This Autumn has been an extremely wet month for the North West. Talking to a farming neighbour last week, he told me that, by his reckoning, we have not had a dry 24 hour period since August 26<sup>th</sup> – and apparently there are several hundred acres of Manx cereal crops rotting in the fields.

In that context, we were fortunate to enjoy a completely dry day for the Autumn Trailquest. However, it rained almost all day on the Saturday – and I was very glad that I had taken the decision to put out the remaining checkpoints on the preceding Thursday & Friday evenings. However, this did make for some very wet trail conditions on the day. One of the checkpoints in Chibbannagh plantation, when plotted some 3 weeks prior to the event, was described as “rear of quarried area”. Positioning the control (in the dark) on Friday evening, this was revised to “back of pond...”.

A full complement of 100 riders entered the event, which is the current maximum that we can cope with – limited only by the number of SPORTident dibbers that are used to record checkpoint visits. This reinforces the popular appeal of MTB orienteering – which appeals to riders at all levels. It is also the only form of MTB competition where riders ride together as a team. This makes for a more convivial experience which, when combined with post-ride refreshments and the fun of comparing routes, makes this a very sociable event.

Whilst we have used the Crosby hall several times in the past as an Autumn venue, we do try to make the challenge as different and as varied as possible. To that end, instead of splitting the event to the North & South of Crosby, all the checkpoints were located to the South & West.

The event area stretched as far west as Barnell (above Patrick) and South to include Arrasey, Glen Rushen and the Pipeline. With a pair on Slieau Whallian, others were scattered around the South Barrule, Archallagan and Chibbannagh area. The intent was to present a course challenging enough to test the best, whilst offering plenty of diversity for everyone.

The super-team pairing of Elliot Baxter & Rob Sorby certainly rose to the challenge: They compiled an impressive route that climbed up Eairy Kelly, through Archallagan, back down to the railway track, up Slieau Whallian, out-and-back to collect the Barnell checkpoint, back up to Arrasey, into Glen Rushen, up the Pipeline, down the whisky run, through South Barrule, down to “The Gate”, along the shooting track before mopping up in Chibbannagh to finish down Ballcotch. They were just 8 minutes late and collected a whopping 763 points of the 868 available. Try this route some day and see how long it takes you.....

If you are interested in seeing the routes that others took, the list of controls, in visit order, can be seen on the web results.

Second overall were Andrew Brooks and Ronan O’Toole, with another impressive score of 693 and coming in just inside the time limit. Solo rider Darren Murphy put in an impressive ride and showed that he is a force to be reckoned with on 683 points. David Griffin & Simon Skillicorn were just one point behind on 682 with Dave Rielly & Steve Partington snapping at their heels on 674. Rising star Lee Clayton teamed with Juan Kinnish were 6<sup>th</sup> overall on 660. Julian Corlett had a difficult day to finish 7<sup>th</sup>, possibly struggling with oversize wheels in the slippery conditions ☺. Stuart Garry put in an impressive ride and was only just behind Julian in 8<sup>th</sup> slot. Regular power team Paul Kneen and David Glover were 7 minutes over the time limit to finish 9<sup>th</sup> on 638 points with Paul Flanders & Neil Kerruish making the top-10 with 623.

In the solo categories, Darren Murphy was top Senior, Craig Hindle was top Veteran and Julian Corlett top Grand-Vet. For the teams; Rob & Elliot were the top senior men with Dave Griffin & Simon Skillicorn the top Vets.

Andy & Matthew Bostock won the generation team – being the best of 4. Kirsty Cregeen & Emma Hearnden were the only Senior women's team, with Tina Cleghorn & Mary Watson similarly the only veteran women's team. Dave Goberman & Cat Price were the best of the 5 mixed teams.

Also worthy of mention were the “downhill” team of Gareth Fargher & Russ Sansom. Swapping their downhill bikes for XC machines and picking up map-reading skills along the way, they reportedly enjoyed the challenge and hopefully will be back for more!

Full results are on [www.manxtimingsolutions.com](http://www.manxtimingsolutions.com)

We did have a couple of problems with checkpoint positioning, for which humble apologies... Checkpoint 22 in Chibbanagh was a “clerical” error in that a secondary GPS plot that marked a track that is not on the OS map mistakenly “became” the checkpoints and was not picked up at the proof-reading stage. Similarly, checkpoint 6 in Arrasey was the “provisional” plot and was not updated with the GPS position after placing the control box. Both were in fact about 100m off the true position. Some persevered and did locate them. But anyone else who clearly had visited the correct location was credited with the points. We do try to maintain a high quality of mapping in the events but occasionally mistakes do happen

The next “Trailquest” type event will be rather different. Given the extremely wet conditions and the desire to find new challenges, we have decided to run a 2-hour night-time “Lanequest” around the Maughold peninsular on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Maughold has a host of very quiet minor lanes which, combined with some off-road sections should provide a great (and surprisingly challenging) event area. The plan is to use the Glen Mona Inn for the HQ and social/food afterwards. One advantage should be that no one gets TOO muddy! More details to follow.

Lastly, we would like to add a “thank you” to Jacqui Fletcher & Julie Lyness for mucking-in and giving Sue some help in the kitchen. Many of you will know that Sue has not been well – and we were concerned that she may struggle with the catering arrangements. So the help was much appreciated. Some may have noticed that some of the cakes were home-made (by Sue) as she has been using her convalescence time wisely.... Special thanks to Paula Gelling who, despite having also competed in the event, stayed to the bitter end to help clean the hall and put all the furniture away!

After all was clear at the hall, I myself put in a route through Archallagan, Stoney Mountain South Barrule & pipeline to finish at the Waterfall in Glen Maye for supper. Sue cleared the railway track and the Arrasey controls. The remainder were collected by me, in the rain, on Monday night – all safe & sound.

See you next year.