

Winter Nights Lane/Trailquest/MBO - Saturday 4th February 2012

The winter night-time Trailquest has now become a firm favourite on the MTB calendar. For this event, we departed from the regular venue around the Foxdale area to a completely new location in the parish of Maughold.

The area features a fine network of back lanes and some serious gradients; as many visitors found out! These quiet lanes can be rough in places and, given the heavy rain that fell during the daylight hours, were a welcome alternative to the normal trails and plantations - which would have been awash.

It was a pretty miserable task putting out the controls during the day on Saturday in strong winds and cold, sleety rain. It was an act of faith in the forecast, which always promised that it would clear in time. However, the transformation, when it came, could not have been more dramatic. Suddenly the wind dropped, the clouds blew away and a fine, dry moonlit night followed. By the time the teams started to head off at around 6pm, conditions were pretty much perfect.

Inevitably, though, some were discouraged by the poor conditions during the day. Of the 74 who entered, 62 actually turned out. Those who were understandably put off by the conditions missed a good night!

When the event was conceived back in October, the original plan was to site most of the controls on the lanes themselves. But, aided by the fact that the area is right on my doorstep (which made frequent reconnaissance that much easier) I was able to spend a lot of time checking out the many private farm tracks. Although most of these are effectively dead-ends, they are ideal for the "out & back" checkpoint locations that characterise this type of event.

Fantastic co-operation from the farmers and landowners meant that, in the end, we had much more off-road in the mix than expected. As a result, I/we are indebted to many neighbours for their co-operation in making this possible.

As event HQ, we were also lucky in having the Glen Mona Hotel within 100m of our home base. This can be very quiet (even on a Saturday night) and they welcomed us with open arms at the prospect of 70+ hungry & thirsty Mountain Bikers descending on them. The lads worked all day to peel the mountain of potatoes (yes - they were "real" chips) to knock out the sausage & chip supper for us all afterwards. Big thanks to them.

On to the action.

There were 25 controls scattered over the event area and it took me around 5 hours to put them out with assistance from Sue in the car. Somehow, the winning team of Lee Clayton &

Juan Kinnish managed to pick up 20 of them and only be 7 minutes over the two hour time limit. They scored a massive 440 points (429 after time penalties) of the 500 available. They were closely followed by Ben Corkill & Paul Kneen who collected the same number of controls but for 30 points less (405 adjusted).

In third were the Ramsey team of Rob Cormode and Kale Hawkins on 402. Next in fourth place were Laxey dynamic duo Steve Partington & Dave Rielly on 370 followed by Mark Eastham & Darren Murphy on 340 points in fifth.

Looking at the categories, the open men's team category top 3 were also the overall winners. Fourth in category were the ever-improving David Harrison & Mark Tuson (the latter currently leading the Sport class in the XC series). Mark will undoubtedly be moving up to race Elite next year!

In the M40 Men's team category (combined age 80+) Rob & Kale took the honours by some margin. In second were Steve & Dave with third place going to newcomer Jarron Bibby who teamed up with Paul Cubbon. Despite 20 penalty points, Russell Collister & Rob Quirk clinched 4th place.

There were only two teams in the M50 class (100+) and regular quester and Laxey man John Barker made a successful pairing with (very) local newcomer Pete Lumb to take the honours with 261 points ahead of Tony Fallon and Geoffrey Makin. Tony is apparently recovering from surgery and making his comeback.

The only Open Women's team of Jo Hawkins & Julie Lyness managed an impressive 298 points, which would certainly have seen off any opposition, had there been any!

Claire Cavanagh & Craig Hindle won the X21 Mixed Team category ahead of Laxey regulars Ian Lamberton & Nikki Sharpe, returning to the MTB scene after what sounded like a great skiing trip! Sadly, Rob Arnold & Kirsty Cregeen had to retire early due to illness. Get well soon, Kirsty.

It is always good to see Generation teams taking part - and we had what I think is a best ever entry to this category - with 5 father & son teams taking part, including some new faces. Andy & Matthew Bostock chose a good route to visit 13 controls and pick up 270 points in a well-judged performance that left them two and a half minutes to spare and put them 60 ahead of nearest rivals Simon & Joseph Haddock. Well done to Wayne & Alex Lewthwaite in third place, Stephen & Ben Collins in fourth. Brody & Mike Hewison put in what must have been a huge circuit which at one time clocked them 330 points. However, they fell foul of time penalties being over 30 minutes late - and thus lost ALL their points. We hope that they will not be discouraged and will be back for more!

The atmosphere in the Glen Mona afterwards was excellent - everyone came in safely and most stayed to enjoy the conviviality. The next MBO event is set for the 1st April. This will be a 3-

hour daytime event - venue as yet has not been fixed but will be announced shortly. It will be somewhere on the Isle of Man!

Full detailed results may be found on www.manxtimingsolutions.com

Graham Hughes. 8th February 2012