

Clee Hills Trial 2025 Mark Wills Number 3, Beta Alp

This was my third Clee Hills Trial. The 2024 event was very wet, muddy and slippery and I was expecting the same this year – and we got it, although the weather was good to us. The Clee Hills, at Ludlow, is only a couple of hours drive from home, so I didn't book into accommodation but set off just before 6am and arrived in good time. As usual I met up with Simon (Fillan) and George (Godkin).

The first hill, Harton Wood, was a nice lane but you had to concentrate well to clean – all three of us going well. Heywood Common next – another good classic hill.

Next the special test at Coats Farm. We took care here as we didn't want to slide and end up on the floor on the concrete. I decided to stand up on the pegs – better balance as we weren't allowed to foot on the test. Test passed Ok. George quickest, then me, then Simon. Off we went along the old railway line to the next section, Coats Wood. It was really wet and slippery in the field up to the section. This was the first real indication of how wet and muddy the trial could become. It was very muddy at the start and then slippery going up the hill, but we climbed successfully.

It was picturesque waiting in the woods at Easthorpe and suddenly the trial had become much more challenging because the hill looked very slippery under the leaves and grass – and so it transpired – Simon and I not reaching the top, getting crossed up in the ruts but George going great – a steady climb up the middle.

Majors Leap was another muddy section, and we had a short run up this year, so we managed to get up by sticking in the middle of the track – taking care not to spin out.

Next up Harley Bank. The first part of the section was not too steep, and we could get good grip. This year I took the sharp left hander quicker and got to the top OK. All three of us cleaned it this year.

We stopped for petrol, refreshments and a chat at the Shell station as usual, we were running to time. It was a bit chilly at this stage. Then we set off and didn't have to wait at the time control before the Meadowley Wood section. Simon went before me and was slipping and sliding until out of sight from the start line. I decided to go in the left side wheel rut – all OK but drifted into the middle of the section as the gradient got steeper and was struggling for grip eventually getting crossed off and stopping. Simon had struggled but George had an early dab but then went really well to exit the section. Again, I'm beginning to think I need to get a XTrainer!

Onto two new sections – Hillside 1 and Hillside 2. The ground was grass and slippery. The first section a turn before the steeper hill – was grip for us all and so all clean. We were warned about the deviation for bikes at Hillside 2. George and Simon went up Ok. I thought the deviation was the right turn not long into the section, as the track went up to the left, but as I sailed up the hill for the other classes I saw the deviation on the right – well disappointed. I could have done with a bunting tape across the section to guide me to the deviation!

Then more of a windy technical section at Oak Dingle which was really good. The track for the cars was really wet and muddy again as we found out when descending from our section. I was happy to have cleaned a section again!

On to the last group of three new sections. The diagram in the route book was really helpful here. The three sections were all steep grassy/muddy climbs in the woods. The first two were straightforward on the bikes. Looking up the section at the start line of section 3, High Cullis, it looked steep and very slippery. There wasn't much grass but no ruts at least. Simon spun out on the steep slippery part which warned us. I went off to keep to the left looking for grass and grip and made it Ok, as did George.

We had a leisurely ride back to the finish and enjoyed a hot drink with friends before setting off for home.

Thanks to organisers and marshals as always.