

MAC CLEE HILLS TRIAL

23rd January

The Midland Automobile Club's Clee Hills Trial enjoyed a very successful return to the calendar after missing out in 2021 for obvious reasons. Based at The Squirrel near Ludlow, competitors enjoyed an 85-mile route on public roads, byways and private tracks round Shropshire's very scenic Wenlock Edge, interspersed with 12 competitive sections – 10 in the case of the Novice class – with one 'observed test' where individual times would resolve any ties. Contrary to the system used by, for example, the VSCC, points were 'gained' rather than lost by failing to complete a section, so that a 'clear' run would result in a zero score.

The Clee Hills Trial caters for bikes as well as cars, and the class structure includes a section for Production Cars built before 1941 and selected others such as Dellow, HRGs, MG TCs and other pre-1941 cars holding a current VSCC buff form. This year's entry here was not as big as it has been, totalling only five cars, although there were two Austin Sevens running in the Novice class. Of these, Peter Kite's Frazer Nash, with Jim Edwards in the passenger seat,

completed most of the route successfully but was eventually posted as a retirement, while Joe Stollery and Garry Plummer in Joe's Wolseley Hornet came away with the award for Best VSCC entry. Mike Henney and Philip Stader (Austin Seven) were awarded Best MAC while the class was won by Roger Ashby/Roger Wibberley in their Coates Orthoptera, a neat little car similar in appearance to a Dellow or Buckler Mk 5. The Novice class – which also admits 'less prepared cars and/or less rugged drivers' – was won by Michael Dorset and Mary Grimmett in their Suzuki X-90.

The little Suzuki off-rovers, in fact, have a class all to themselves in which the entries included MAC stalwarts Jonathan and Pat Toulmin and transport-book specialist Simon Lewis with his daughter Charlotte navigating. Some 11 X-90s were entered and the class was won by Nick Deacon/Ben Wear, who finished a worthy second overall.

As usual, the entry included several names familiar in VSCC trials but in unfamiliar cars, such as Winston and Patrick Teague in an MGB Roadster, running among the front-engined production cars, and Matt Johnston and Emma Wall, who were mixing it with the potential overall winners of Class Eight, the 'anything

goes' class for non-production cars, in their Troll T6E. And the overall winners among the cars did indeed come from that class, Paul Merson and Nick Sherrin in their Shopland Mk 2, who dropped only two points all day – at Jenny Wind, where a winched tramway once lowered limestone from the Wenlock Edge Quarry to a bank of lime kilns below. Second in class and fourth overall were Ian Davis and Paul Vincent (VW Buggy). Winner of the 'almost anything goes' Class Seven for highly modified production cars was another regular in VSCC events, Richard Houlgate, with Ian Webb alongside in Richard's Marlin Roadster.

Outshining all the cars, however, with the only completely clear round and zero points all day was two-wheel exponent Kev Stannard riding a GasGas Pampera, a specialist off-road bike of Spanish descent. Ian Thompson's Yamaha Serow backed him up with another unblemished score but slightly slower time on the observed section to finish second overall. So with three cars and three bikes filling the top six places overall, the organisers can be pleased that their efforts to provide a level playing field for such a wide variety of vehicles were clearly successful.

Peter McFadyen



6 Peter Kite and Jim Edwards (Frazer Nash) were going well but retired before the finish of the MAC Clee Hills Trial

7 Although the day was dry, most of the sections were muddy, as here at Longville where Steve Hill's Ford Model A had no apparent difficulty in reaching the top

8 Richard Matthews and Adrian Allen were in one of the two Dellow Mk 1s competing

9 Adam and Eleanor Jones (Austin Seven)

10 Colin Bromley and Louise Anson's Citroën 2CV, running in Class Zero, struggled for grip at times

