

CLASSICAL GAS

May 2004

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No Gold Rush on Lands End



Keith Oakes Grits his teeth as Claire performs above and beyond the call of duty to bounce the Dutton Phaeton out the top of Bluehills 2 (Picture by Colin Stewart).

The 2004 Lands End wasn't a particularly tough trial. Most of the sections were relatively easy but there were two big obstacles for those aspiring to gold. The ever-difficult Hoskins, and a tricky restart on Bluehills 1 for the higher classes as a spoiler. All this meant that there might be fewer than 20 competitors who cleaned all the sections.

Good Friday was a nice sunny day and Popham car competitors had the unusual experience of wearing their sunglasses for both the start and finish of the trial. Scruitineering was a bit different to usual, with the marshals coming to find cars in the back field rather than competitors get checked on the way in. As usual a few were having early problems. Philip Whatmough had the brakes of his Morgan +4 in pieces; assisted by Ian Blackburn who is normally associated with his unique Singer. Neil Bray arrived at the start to find he had his first puncture of the day and it took the combined resources of about six people, including a spectating Stephen "man in black" Bailey, to break the bead. Ian Davis fell foul of the scrut when after 17 years the MCC have decided that the buggy's dynamo belt isn't properly guarded!

Neil wasn't the only one with tyre problems. Pete and Carlie Hart were no more than five miles away from home, on their way to the off at Michael Wood Services, when they had a flat which they fixed when they got to the start with the aid of David Foresheew and his bead breaker.

The weather stayed fine on the route to the North Petherton Control near Bridgewater. In Stuart Harrold's case it was accompanied by the ever increasing rumble of a failing front bearing which mysteriously cured itself as the trail went on! There was some confusion at the control as a lot of people didn't read their route card, arrived to find the petrol pumps closed and had to retrace their steps to the M5 services a mile or so back down the road.



The real hero's — more Lands End biker pictures from Colin Stewart on the web at www.classictrials.co.uk

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It was soon time to leave for Felons Oak where there was some confusion about the route to the section. The instruction in the route card said "SO no DP - SO up lane to". The turn left had an MCC no entry sign so competitors dutifully went straight on to come to a dead end an irate householder as you had to turn right to find the section! The restart for cars was nice and dry but a couple of steps have developed making it very important to stop in the right place. Ted Holloway and Simon Groves were amongst the few to fail here. The motorbikes didn't have to restart here but a few did anyway which was unfortunate. Peter and David Manning arrived at Felons Oak to find they had Brian Alexander's time card and had to retrace their steps to North Petherton to swap it for their own. This put them about 100 cars back down the field and they had a slow journey over the moors.

Stoney Street was quite rough this year, especially near the top where a number of pipes cross the track and are sticking up more and more each year as the rocks either side get eroded away. Sadly Ed Nikel didn't get this far. Ed had been struggling with a miss-fire, then the lights disappeared and he was forced to retire.

Leaving Stoney Street the route headed up onto the moors and into a dense mist, which was a real problem. Competitors formed into groups with the followers having a much easier time than the pathfinder. Veteran Aerial rider Tom Beckerleg was running amongst the cars as he had machine problems back at the Plusha start when he couldn't get the engine started at scrutineering. Tom and John Lees soon found that the chain drive to the mag had jumped off and got the venerable Aerial on the road. Peter Mountain had his wipers stop working crossing the moors and Jim had to operate them by hand as they fought their way through the murk, only for them to fix themselves when the sun had burnt away the mist!

Beggars Roost wasn't too bad for the early numbers, but cut up as the event went on, causing more and more failures and a delay soon build-up. Beggars wasn't entirely straightforward



Nashy had to fix no less than three punctures at the top of Darracott

even for the early numbers. Clive Booth and John Allsop struggled to get away. Simon Groves cleaned the section OK but by the time he got to the main road his newly fitted clutch had well and truly gone. Simon managed to get the stricken car to a garage and fitted a new clutch, only to find a terrible vibration. As he couldn't find the cause, let a lone cure it, Simon had no choice but to retire, although he limped down to the finish. The many failures had caused a queue all the way back down to the garage by the time Mike Pearson came along at the end of the field. Unfortunately when the time came for his assault on the hill Mike stalled the engine getting away from the re-start. He got going quickly and didn't roll back but was concerned about how the marshals would view this and was on tenderhooks until the results came and he could see he had been given a clear.

Riverton wasn't too difficult and on to Sutcombe where the restart has become very cut-up and it could be very difficult to get away if you didn't stop in exactly the right place. Riverton wasn't so easy for Ian Davis though. First the car had to be bump started then the lights failed on the section. After his earlier mechanical problems Tom Beckerleg had been running back amongst the early cars, who were very disappointed to see him record his only fail on Riverton.

Fellow British bike fan, and reader of this column, John Lees struggled a bit with his Triumph twin but recorded a clean and went on to a class award.

If some of the early sections have become rougher that certainly wasn't the case at Darracott, which appears to have been resurfaced, and even the Class 0's were due to have a go. However four of them had failed by the time Ken Green came along and after a mobile phone conversation with the C of the C it was cancelled for class 0. The section was followed by a nice simple special test after which Dave Nash stopped to repair no less than three punctures he had accumulated so far in the event. Dave's unique MGeetle was going well, with no troubles from a re-built type three engine, which allows a flat parcel shelf under the rear window. Dave wasn't the only Falcon to be suffering from tyre problems. Richard Tompkins was another to have multiple punctures and had to miss out a couple of hills when he diverted to a tyre depot and got over taken by the course-closing car. Ian Davis had finally traced his electrical problems to a faulty earth although he struggled with the indicators later on.

The special test at the top of Darracott was cancelled after the marshals gave verbal instructions different to the route card and there was further confusion at the

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Widmouth Holding Control. The first bike competitor was due to leave at 5.05 am. However, for some reason marshals held an ever-increasing number of bikes and only let the first one away at 5.45. They then let competitor's go at one-minute intervals. This was fine until one of the car competitors persuaded one of "those who must be obeyed" to speed things up. This was all very well until Crackington where the holding control was cancelled and marshals at the old hill were getting cars arrive much more frequently than they could let them up the hill and a horrendous jam developed.

It didn't seem that the traditional extremely local shower of rain had been as heavy as usual. Only the red cars had to restart, but even so there were a fair few failures. Michael Leete was delighted to power his way through on the minimum 10-psi pressure, albeit at the expense of a puncture. Neil Bray successfully restarted Primrose to clean the hill but heard later that the marshals had failed him for taking too much time to get away. Running close together neither Dave Nash nor Peter Thompson managed to get through, nor did Keith Oakes who was having an un-characteristic bad day in his Dutton Phaeton.

Ian Davis had a different problem. Arriving at the section in splendid isolation he was beckoned to the start line and asked the start marshal if he had time to let the tyres down. No problem. But no sooner had he started than Robin Moore comes over 'I'm chief marshal. You haven't got time for that. I'm going to invoke the 30 second rule'. OK technically he may have been right but with no cars behind Ian thought that a little harsh.

Later in the event it appears that the marshals allowed multiple cars on the hill in an attempt to reduce the delays and this caused a number of competitors to get baulks when the preceding car came to a halt. Pete Hart, Mal Allen and Murray Montgomery-Smith were running close together and all suffered this fate.

The river at the foot of Treworld was running very full and

plenty of water was being carried up the lower reaches of the hill. The yellows had to restart here and Simon Robson was failed for not doing so. Tony Branson got his Marlin away in fine style only to stop a few feet from the top when the engine had a fit of the sulks. Sadly Treworld was to see the end of Peter and David Manning's trial when the teeth on the crown-wheel stripped so it was ride home on an RAC truck for the Midget. Class 8 didn't have to stop but Peter Mountain was one of many who very nearly did!

A very welcome rest was a few miles up the road at The Wilsey Down Hotel where the facilities are accessed through a cattle market where men with sticks normally drive beasts to their fate, steel hurdles keeping them straying from the path set by their masters. During breakfast one wag was heard to enquire if this was a message!

In the past the rest halt has been followed by a quite long main road run, enabling competitors to catch up time. This year the route lay through lanes and villages and even the early cars were running behind time at this stage if the event. Warleggan isn't a difficult section but it's a bit rough and the challenge is easing your way over the rocks while keeping the car in one piece. Stuart Harrold and Chris Phillips didn't have any problems as their Troll has sufficient grunt so they can ease off over each bump and accelerate to the next. By the time Mike Pearson came along at the end of the field he had to queue for 45 minutes and found the hill dreadfully rough causing a lot of punctures.

Hoskins has developed a reputation for being the Lands Ends main stopper in recent years and this was justified once again as car after car had to reverse back down. Peter Mountain was one of those but then along came Dudley Sterry to show it could be done. Class eight had a very tricky restart in one of those areas that had once again experienced an extremely local rain shower. Stuart Harrold and Chris Phillips mastered the section. Stuart got out of the

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From the Top – Brian Alexander cooling his tyres before his attempt to burn his way up Crackington.

Neil and Alison Bray passing the restart on Treworld.

Colin Sumner and Mike Young gunning the venerable Morgan up Hoskin.

Michael Leete demonstrating how to clean Bluehills 1 by getting over the step with the wheels straight then worrying about how to get around the corner.

(Pictures by Michael Leete and Charlie Wooding)

Michael's Musings

Mike Hayward and I really enjoyed our Lands End. I thought the sections were just right (although I might not have said that if I had to restart on Bishops Path or Bluehills 1).

We got a Silver after cleaning everything except Hoskin. Now I would have said this hill was impossible for class four until the results came and I saw how many people in similar cars got up. Needless to say we have a master plan for next year!

Time for a quick apology to Mike Pearson who will continue his C of the C role on next years March Hare so not to loose to much continuity by both he and JP stepping down to compete in one year. I know I have said it before but MP and JP don't get enough praise for the fantastic work they do on our trials, both in organising and behind the scenes.

With trialling finished for the season I can turn my attention to getting the Dellow's brakes working so I can take it to the autotests. Then there's the Beetles front suspension to re-build and.....

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polished ruts well over to the right in the red restart box, got away well but then had to get back into the ruts so it was engine on the rev limiter and a great deal of bouncing/side to side woggling by Chris and they crawled to the top and out of the section for a clean. Running near the front of the field Clive Booth couldn't get away and neither could Mike Pearson in the other Reg Taylor/Geoff Jackson built Dellow Rep. Mike got off the restart but wheel spin set in almost immediately and he went no further. Reg Taylor himself was running his Anglia in Class 0 but had to retire when his fuel pump packed-up. Class 0 competitors appeared to be enjoying themselves but it was far from damage free and Alan Foster stove in both the rear wings on his Morgan +8.

After a Special Test, came the Bishops Path section where the restart for yellow and red cars had been moved back a bit. Pete Hart was delighted to get away. Fellow class Seven competitors Tony Branson and Simon Robson both failed with different opinions. Tony reckoned that the section was doable and fair while Simon reckoned it was too Mickey Mouse for The Lands End.

With the nice weather the slopes around Blue Hills thronged with spectators. Bluehills One had Dennis Greenslade in charge with Graham Brasier taking care of the start. There was a restart on the slab onto the road for red and yellow cars and bikes and poor old class three cars for some strange reason. Blue Hills One is one

of those sections that is very easy to fail if you don't put the car in exactly the right place and with the restart it was very tricky indeed and didn't go down well with competitors some of whom thought it was bit unfair. Ross Nuten was one of the early failures, bringing his total to three failures on the event. Ross enjoyed his Lands End, being much more confident in the car now it has a Fack Diff. Ian Davis was another one to come to grief as was Mike Pearson.

Things were a bit confusing between Bluehills 1 and 2 as what happened bore little resemblance to the route card and it wasn't clear where the section actually started. The hill itself was just right, challenging but far from impossible and it went down well.

With the delays later numbers were arriving at the finish up to three hours late after waiting for a long time at Beggars, Riverton and Warleggan. The facilities there were good and there were plenty of the MCC hierarchy around if you wanted to express your opinion about the event.

All in all a good event, even if one or two of the hills had controversial restarts. It was very noticeable how much the mileage has reduced in recent years and I for one do not think this is a good thing. The Lands End is about more than the sections and I would like to see it go back to going further west. However, that and some of the restarts apart, well done to all connected with the organisation for an enjoyable and well-balanced Lands End Trial ☺

The spectators are close to the action as Ross Nuten hustles his Dellow Mk2 into the complex at the top of Bluehills 2 (picture by Colin Stewart)

