

Clee Hills Trial Sunday 25th January 2026 by Simon Oates

On a high after the Exeter and Bodmin Heights Trials and all the luck that was on my side, I thought that buying a few Lottery tickets may be a good investment. Saturday morning was extremely wet and busy helping to sort trial equipment from a small trailer to a bigger one purchased by Launceston & North Cornwall Motor Club. It has been sign written and had Phil Francis and host, Nick Symons drilling, bonding and screwing some new racking inside the trailer for all the equipment to fit logically. Andrew Rippon, Darren Ruby and I were kept busy sorting, cleaning and throwing old items (will we use/need them again?) and making a few suggestions. I left before all had been completed so that I could load the car on the trailer and get up to Hereford for an overnight stop.

All loaded and checked, I picked Paul Bunn up just as half time for the Exeter Chiefs had been blown. At least he had time to watch a wet and dismal first half. The trip up was very wet and windy and a relief when we booked in without any sign of Lenny Henry. A quick check of the straps before leaving for Ludlow (the car was still there!) and a dash to the start. Into the Park & Ride car park to find there were three wheels on my wagon (trailer), had it been stolen or did it come off on the way up? I later put the spare on and drove home with three wheel nuts on each wheel. The lottery tickets didn't come up the night before either so maybe this was the bad luck week and the second thing to go wrong? Scrutineering completed, no route amendments and lots of comments about the finding and return of my lost hat from the Exeter.

The weather was holding out and not yet raining, so off to **Harton Wood** on 15 psi for an easy clear. The only special test was promptly dealt with (I still don't know how I was so slow in the first test on the Exeter) plus the video of Dean Partington flying (literally) on the test is worth viewing and to the first challenging section which was Coats Wood with an extremely sticky grass track with rooster tails of mud following all cars. Once clear on to **Easthope 1** with free pressures. The ruts certainly threw us around and once clear we inflated the tyres to 18psi and followed a track to **Ippikins Rock** where the right bend was somewhat slippery but again cleared. **Harley Bank 1** was another challenge as it was very steep and slippery through the trees with grip coming in and out. Eight miles on to **Meadowley Wood** and Holding Control for about an hour while the bikes finished the section. As we waited, the class 8 geezers started to arrive, we hadn't seen them since they set off in front at the start and were wondering what had happened to them, we half expected them to lead the cars all trial.

Eventually, two class 7 cars were released to the section, typically we were third car. The first two got to the 6 and reversed out. Our go through the ruts, tree roots and mud and it was like being in a washing machine but I'm not sure what the program was! Clear and the rain started, quite heavy as well. The wipers smeared the mud, then it tipped it down, the mud was volume washed off and as we got to Hillside 1, unbelievably the rain just stopped☺. Queues of cars in front and little movement until it was decided that only classes 7 & 8 could do **Hillside 2 & 3** (Hillside 1 cancelled). It was a quagmire up there, but we just found enough grip at 3psi on both hills to remain clear so far.

Two miles up the lane we arrived in the queue again for **Abdon Liberty** and discovered the back half of my rear driver's side mudguard was hanging by a thread (of fiberglass) and I hadn't a clue what had caused it. I twisted and pulled it off so that I didn't lose it and could wash it off in one of the many puddles. Hopefully that was the third unlucky thing of the week. This resulted with extra mud and water deposited on my back and down my neck, but the hat was working overtime. When we eventually got to the section (none of the queue cleared the section) there was a lot of conflagging about what was out of sight around the left-hand bend. Those that came down said gloopy mud and deep ruts but hadn't got anywhere. Luckily John & Natasha Early went in front of us in their Liege to an 8 and had helped start clearing a track. We gave it everything and got through the gloop and onto some tight grass. I made the mistake of easing off to see if I could find any grip and lost some vital momentum. We went through the 7 for a 6 but should have done better. I think most of the class 8 geezers cleared the section, showing the difference between 7 & 8 cars.

The only restart of the trial at **Oak Dingle** was next. A few words of wisdom came my way "right tyre in left tyre rut", I looked and was a bit sceptical, but it could work, or not. John and Natasha followed the left route, cleared the restart and out of the section. A brilliant drive which I copied next. I would love to have had a go in the track proper but made the right choice on the day. A long trip past the Squirrel of 27 miles to the last sections. **High Cullis** was first with the Early's giving it a go and reaching a 6 (I heard it on the walkey talkey). We followed and where there's a left turn up through a grass bank, the marshals were guiding the Liege out of the hill and were like me, surprised and unprepared. We slowed and hesitated until they were fully clear and turned up the hill. The car didn't respond very well, and I didn't get the engine revving properly but also went through the 7 marker for a 6. Through the woods to the last section **The Goggin** for a good blast to the summit, pumped the tyres up and back to the Squirrel to hand numbers in, sign off and hand the accident declaration form in.

As we were loading the car on the trailer, a Transit van owner (it was parked next to us) turned up to find his battery was dead. I'd shouted inside and outside at the start that the headlights had been left on. Unfortunately, he hadn't heard me, so we lent some tools, tried a jump jack and eventually it started.

A 90 odd mile enjoyable, dirty, muddy and potentially damaging trial, somewhat spoiled by the queuing and delays caused by the previous weather conditions and underfoot challenges. Several sections had to be cancelled to keep the cars flowing. Great organising overall and many great sections which are much appreciated by everyone, thank you all. A long trip back to Cornwall and a bit of repair work to the car in the garage to keep me out of mischief (wishful thinking).