

Clee Hills Trial 2026 Mark Wills Number 9, Beta Alp

Well, The Clee Hills Trial 2026 was certainly very wet and very muddy and very good fun. 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), George (Godkin) and Will (Slack). The 10-mile trek down the A49 to the first section isn't particularly enjoyable but at least it wasn't too cold.

The first hill, Harton Wood, was a nice lane but you had to concentrate all the same. It wasn't observed for us in terms of scoring according to the start marshal – don't understand why.

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. I think I beat George but Will beat us both, we didn't hear Simon's time. 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.

On the road just before the turn off to Easthope George had a rear wheel puncture – the first of two today. We went down to the old railway line and put a new tube in the rear wheel there. Fellow bike competitors passed us whilst we worked. A friendly marshal came and gave us a packet of jammy doughnut biscuits. Easthope 1 looked very slippery under the leaves and grass – all rutted up by the many bikes who had already had a go. Simon and George went up the middle, riding well, then got to about the 5 or 6 board. Will said to me he thought he should go quicker, off he went like a bat out of hell coming to a sudden stop in the left rut next to a tree – too fast. It looked quite funny how he went off – so I had a chuckle and then took off a little slower but dabbed in the left rut part way up – never mind.

Majors Leap was another very muddy section but all of us only got part way up as again many bikes had churned it up, no grass left on it.

Next up Harley Bank. The first part of the section was not too steep, and we could get some grip getting us to the sharp left-hand bend – we all got just around the bend and spun out.

We stopped for petrol, refreshments and a quick chat at the Shell station as we were running well behind due to George's puncture. It was a bit chilly at this stage. Then we set off and waited at the time control for about 15 minutes before heading down to the Meadowley Wood section. Another section looking very muddy from the start line. Simon and George went before me and was slipping and sliding until out of sight from the start line. They both got halfway up. I did the same as did Will. We we're now thinking we're all going to get a cricket score today but all enjoying the "no pressure, just enjoy it" day.

Onto the Hillside sections. It was very, very muddy here. We were all over the place just getting to the sections. The first section a turn before the steeper hill. However, Hillside 1 - it was all deep muddy ruts, and we didn't get to the 12 board. At Hillside 2 the start marshal said there was a deviation for us – which made us laugh as looking at the section before the turn we didn't expect to get to the deviation. Anyway, we all blasted off the line and just about got to the 12 board. Then Hillside 3 – I dabbed once but the others clean – no marker boards here and nothing in the route book about scoring so we don't know how that is scored.

Onto Abdon Liberty. The stoney track up to the bend was OK then sharp left and faced with deep mud ruts – we all blasted at it but again all got to 9 or ten board.

We were all really enjoying the day with plenty of banter – none of us had had so many failures on sections.

Then more of a windy technical section at Oak Dingle. However, here we were starting on the tarmac road on the bridge before the section – trying to give us a chance I suppose – again deep muddy ruts into the sharp right hand bend then hard left up a steep muddy slope – we all got to the top of the short slope and spun out, falling off – all getting a 9 I guess.

Then 27 miles to the last two sections – after we turned off the A49 George got another rear wheel puncture. Having practised repair in the morning we were well co-ordinated for the afternoon puncture. Another new tube in, admired the beautiful rainbow that had appeared and back on it to the last two sections. We were about two hours behind by now and it was getting cold. On to the last group sections.

The last two section were both steep climbs in the forest but there was the thick mud as the earlier sections had been. However, there was a sharp left hander on High Cullis which caught George. After High Cullis I was going downhill to the Goggin Section when I got crossed up in a rut and went over the handlebars – more mud on kit and typical of the day.

We all climbed the Goggin Ok – happy end to the sections of the day. 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.