

Gloucester Trial 4th December, 2022

The Gloucester has one of the longest histories of any trial, stretching back to the '30s at least, and it has been run by quite a number of clubs over the years. In my time it used to be the property of the London Car Club, but this year it was taken over by the very active and successful Midlands Trials Car Club run by Josh and Elaine Veale.

Several factors came into play to ensure an outstanding event. The site was damp having seen quite a bit of rain, but not wet, and that dampness was maintained by low cloud and very light drizzle all day, not enough to be uncomfortable but it prevented the sections drying out as they have done sometimes in the past. Secondly, as usual, this was the last event before the long Christmas break, and thirdly trials set out by the Veale family are always amongst the best, this was no exception.

The Gloucester attracted a huge entry of 39, amongst the biggest I have seen (for a normal championship trial) in 50 years of trialing. No doubt there have been others but I cannot remember any, and it is a wonderful indicator of the current level of interest in trials. My training day at Long Compton a few weeks earlier also attracted a record entry so hopefully we are in for a golden year in '23.

The site at Frocester Hill near Stroud has been used for quite a few years but the magic Veale touch brought out more subtleties than usual. The clever use of very wide run ups - some maybe 20 metres wide in places - caused drivers a great deal of head scratching. The choice of line was almost unlimited, but not all were successful. In every case the first part of the section was easy enough to encourage the rookies, gradually getting more and more tricky as the climb continued.

Richard and Joe Sharp's Cartwright running at number 27, Boyd and Sharon Webster's Crossle at 29 and Mike Salton and Claire Smyth running at 32, seemed to have hit the right spot, single figures in the first round and they continued to fight over the lead all day in their very similar cars, although Paul Price and Kate Kirk's CAP Indy and Matt and Dawn Sharp in the live axle Sherpa were also in single figures after the first round, an outstanding result for Matt in the Blue Live axle class.

In the second round Boyd Webster led the field on a fine score of just 10, by being the only one to clear Hill 3, with Paul Price in second on 13. Matt Sharp retained his Blue Live lead but Sandy Veale was driving the evil sounding Kincraft Imp superbly to equal Matt on 21 for the round. It turned out the choke springs on the twin SU carbs had been disconnected to help start the car in the morning, and were not replaced, so it ran (badly) on full choke all day. Watch out for Sandy in that car when it runs properly!

In the third round, after lunch, Richard Sharp really stamped his authority with an outstanding round of just 3 points to take the win on 22, and Sandy Veale, having changed the plugs in the Kincraft's Imp engine, but not yet discovered the real problem, was a wonderful fifth overall for the round on 11 giving him second in the Blue live axle class, with Matt Sharp in first. Second place overall went to Boyd Webster on 26 with Mike Salton third on 28. Julian Fack and Dave Caine's 47 year old Impunity II came out of retirement to win

the Red live axle class, on 53, and John and Anne Cole's Crossle won the Blue independent class on 64.

The Rookie class provided a wonderful fight between Nick Beere and Dave Kimberly's immaculate Facksimile and Chris and Max Burton's Sherpa. They were equal in the first round on 32, Nick was one point ahead in the second on 33 against 34, and equal again in the final round on 29 - you can't get any closer than that. It is worth noting that they were 27th and 28th overall out of 38 finishers, an excellent result.

An outstanding event, calling on all the skills, from subtle trickling on grass to fast trickling for lots of momentum and full on blasting in places. The eight sections all had at least three sticking points each and everyone got a full day's sport, with no retirements, brilliant!

Julian Fack.