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Trials & ribulations ns

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Visit the Eastern Fourstroke Associations website and Facebook Page for a wealth of club information, results, pictures and much more.

(Submissions gratefully received)

<p>Disclaimer - The articles and comments published herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Eastern Fourstroke Association, they are the opinions of individual contributors and are published with a view that free expression promotes discussion and interest.</p>

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KEEPING TRACK!

2025-2026

Club Fixture List & some other classic events.

5th October	Snaque Pit
23rd November	Thumpers Thorington
14th December	Boxford Bash

Thumpers working party 9.30am November 9th

Copdock Bike Show 7th September.

South Midland Classic 21st September with North East London MCC ACU.

Hagon Classic Off Road Show Telford 8/8th February 2026.

EDITOR'S DABS

Well things have been a little quite for me at moment, but I did go and watch the AMCA Belle Trailers Ladies and Girls British Trials Championship at Purls Hill. Absolutely amazing! the sections for the top girls looked pretty hard, I, for sure wouldn't have wanted to attempt them :-). Unfortunately the rain came down hard after the first lap, a bit like the EFA trial we had there a few months ago. It made the hard sections super hard but a great turnout.

Marc

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SCOTTISH PRE 65

Out of more than 100 days in Scotland in the six days and the pre65 trial, the first day in 2024 had been my best day ever. I lost two marks all day, hanging on a lot of the time and riding my luck. The bike was brilliant and towards the end of the day I was doing deals with God, along the lines of, if I got to the bottom of the big steps feet up and straight, I would just wind it up and point it at the end's cards, and it kept working. Margaret summed it up in the van on the way to the hotel, that day would have been a good day for me to buy a lottery ticket.

2025 would be my 35th ride in the Pre 65 trial, Margaret, her daughter and two granddaughters were going to be at the trial and staying in the same hotel. We knew parking in Kinlochleven was going to be chaotic as the club could not use the aluminium works site for parking, I think this mainly affected spectators as they were advised not to try to park in the village. On Thursday evening after scrutineering, signing-on had nearly caught us out as for the first time ever with the ACU Sport80 system we were all asked to provide proof of our ACU licences. After I while I was able to find proof for

myself and my normal travelling companion, Matthew Neale, who was riding the trial for the 25th time again on one of his father's Ariels.

With numbers together, as number 62 I started on Friday morning and headed to a new group of sections on the north side of the River Leven behind the village and then back around towards Lower Mamore before climbing up to the Mamore Lodge. We were both having steady days but losing too many marks. The Mamore Road groups of sections were quite hard and for some reason I was really tired and riding badly before the Callart sections and the long diagonal goat track to the top of Callart, at nearly 500 metres above sea(loch) level, and over the top back down to the lochside road at Callart Cottage. The sections near the road on the north side of the loch were more rideable and then back to the van in Kinlochleven to refuel bikes and riders.

As we set off along the south side of the loch the time was a bit tight, but for me it was a mixture of rides, a clean on Pollock Hill, followed by a five on each of Caolasnacon and Lower Cameron Hill, overall, not a good day for results but no dramas and we got in with three minutes to spare of the six-hour allowance. I seemed very tired from along the Mamore Road and did not seem to recover as I would expect. We had only seen the girls at Lower Mamore, where the photographs were taken, and when asked they said they thought trials was boring.

On the way back to the hotel we stopped to wash the bikes in the normal garage, it is a bit of a pain to unload the hire van, but the next morning it does feel worthwhile if you have any work to do on the bikes. I had a quick swim at the hotel before meeting up with everybody for dinner. Our results were not brilliant and Matthew had a 20 mark penalty for missing the first section on Lower Cameron Hill, when although not continuous it was difficult to ride the second without riding the first.

We were a later start on Saturday, not too much fettling, I changed a front brake lever that had bent during one of my fives and

Matthew was worried about the Ariel clutch slipping, there was nothing we could do with adjustment and when it was warmer it was ok. We had a quick chat with the trial secretary, Anne Gordon, about Matthew's missing section, she said she would look into it as he was not the only one, this was later resolved.

Due to the parking restrictions this year in Kinlochleven there was very little atmosphere before the start, the time limit for Saturday had been increased from the published five and a half hours to six hours, making it the same as Friday. We started and headed to the sections behind the old village hall, these were steady for two dabs and then a loop behind the village to Aluminium Works. In the first section I had an unexpected crash just before the ends in front of the trial's guest of honour, Mick Wilkinson, who I have known for many years, I am sure he would have laughed.

Pipeline was next, and it appears we may have ridden it for the last time, due to an access road being built on the section route.

Originally in the Pre65, Pipeline was three sections, with a long walk and long queues, which, without a delay control caused a lot of time stress. Then the same length of hill was reduced to two sections, and then more recently to a single section. We park in the trees half way up, the begins gives a long enough run up to ride the step in second gear. It makes the walk shorter but still hard work as you get older. Somebody asked me how far up I was going to walk, I said only as far as I thought I would still be steering to a particular line. Nearer the top, in second gear, you tend to be steering wherever the bike wants, this means at the top anywhere but in the middle. The girls gave me a bottle of drink walking up the section and I threw them the empty bottle on the way down. I managed to get the speed right, up the centre of the step, then up the right side, before back to the middle for a few steps and then fire it at the ends card, for a clean, for the second consecutive year. I do not like unpaid advertising but I do think the new REH forks fitted a few years ago really help, in reality you do not have to ride every rock. Matthew had a few dabs, not too bad, as it was on Pipeline he broke his right

leg in 2024, having broken his left leg whilst walking the very last section of the trial in 2019.



From Pipeline we followed the road to the dam via a new group of two hard sections on the left of the track early on and then the normal slabby group on the right when on the top of the moors towards the dam. We passed under the dam and then on the north side virtually straight up the hill, this route has not been used recently and was open grassy moorland, if it had been wet it could have been tricky. We did one group on the way up to Meall na Cruaidhe and one group on the way down to

Loch Eilde Mor. Today I seemed to

be much less tired on the cross country, Leacan Na Fair was next, a traditional slabby climb into a tight stream, I think I cleaned it, it was the scene of one of my two dabs on the first day in 2024. Then there was a new section as we followed the track towards Mamore Lodge, a single sub starting on the track which looked much trickier than it actually rode.

Back at the van for refuelling we realised time was not as tight as Friday. I had a much better ride than on Friday on the nine sections south of the loch. I think on the Friday the six sections on Friday took me for thirteen marks whilst the nine on Saturday took only one dab, cleaning the last section at Camas Na Muic in front of the spectators always makes a trial seem better. Back at the finish there was a few riders to chat with and then I was approached by a journalist, this is how John spotted the picture in Classic Bike, I think he was the same person who a few years ago talked to my friend Darrel Glover at the Talmag, who was riding my Douglas.

Again, we washed the bikes on the way back to the hotel for a meal in the bar, ready for a quick turnaround back to Kinlochleven for the awards presentation. I am not sure why, but the presentation evening seemed less well supported than normal, we stood talking to people we only see once a year and before we knew it, we were virtually the only ones left in the hall.

There did not seem much reason to wait around on Sunday morning, as the girls were travelling separately, we did not have to drop Margaret off at Glasgow Airport, so we set off for the 500-mile trip home, another year completed without a retirement.

I first rode the Pre 65 trial in 1985, dad decided to enter me on the Douglas, 1984 was the trial's first year, the trial was on the Tuesday as a diversion for six-day spectators. I could not have ridden it as I was busy working for Ford, and I had not been working I would have ridden the six days. People often ask me has it changed, is it harder? The trial became a two day trial in 1997 and went on the road in 1997. I have a big spreadsheet of my results but is difficult to judge as I am now twice the age as when it started. I rode the original Norton 500T from 1986 to 2014, my scores per day of 30 sections were about 30 marks with the lowest being 12.5 in 2000 in 51st place. The marks per day went up gradually until in my last year on that bike, 2014, I lost 80 marks per day in 134th position. I had been building a replica 500T since 2007, other paying jobs kept getting in the way, so for three years 2015 to 2017 I rode



the replica bike. It was easier to ride and in 2017 I had what I considered to be a good ride losing 65 marks per day in 137th position, winning for the seventh time the Mick Andrews Trophy, for best rigid over 250cc. it was first presented in 2003. At the time I was 59 years old and decided I would be too old to ride a rigid again, in other words to fight three hundredweight of scrap metal for 6 hours a day for two consecutive days.

2018 was my first ride on the Francis Barnett, I bought it basically brand new, it was a friend's unused spare replica bike. Since then. I have ridden it 6 times, two years missed due to covid, results have ranged from 20 to 40 marks per day average for the trial, and 66th to 124th position.

There is a lot of discussion about the trial, are machine eligibility rules correct, is it too hard especially for more senior riders, should younger riders not be allowed?

With regard to machine eligibility, we cannot go back in time so the best we can do is maintain the authenticity we currently have. The rules are the basis for many centres, such as my local Eastern Centre, where we try to maintain some machine rules for our centre championships. Whatever the rules may be, Scotland definitely has the best scrutineering of any event in which I compete.

Without doubt the sections have got harder over the last 40 years or more, even though some of the section group names are the same the actual sections have changed. In addition, although we still ride 30 sub sections each day, we actually ride longer sections, this must be the case when what was previously two sections is now reduced to a single section. This year I think over the two days there were a maximum of two double sub-sections. There are some good examples, for example Aluminium works used to be two sections only in the bottom half, now it is still a two-section group but the lower is a single section as is the upper. Another good example is Meall na Cruaidhe heading uphill westwards, the opposite direction from 2025. Originally this six-section group was three double subs up the path. Recently perhaps we might do the lower and upper

double sub as a single section each, then four sections in a stream nearby. You still need to ride the path plus four additional sections. This gives more scope for the clerk of the course to take more marks from the better riders but makes it more difficult for the more inexperienced and more tiring for the more senior. One of the unique aspects of the Pre 65 and Six Day trial is the fact there is only one route, I think this should be retained, even though this might make the job of the clerk of the course more difficult.

Like myself, this makes it more likely that more senior riders, who liked to ride more original bikes and experience the trial, have to make a decision whether to change bikes or not ride the trial. In my case I decided to change machine and carry on competing.

If we are lucky, all of us are aging, this applies to both riders and spectators, and much of the atmosphere of the trial comes from the spectators who are becoming more of the link back to original machines, especially the larger pre-unit ones. Therefore, if we want to see these pre-unit machines being used competitively, we need to have the younger more capable riders, and perhaps we should be tolerant that when they get offline, they decide to use a modern technique to continue rather than losing marks.

I hope you found this article interesting it finished much longer than I expected and John may even decide to spread it over two editions. For those of you interested in trials that have never been to Scotland for the Six days or the Pre65 trial it is well worth the journey and I am sure you will meet other trials enthusiasts you had forgotten you knew.

Clive Dopson

ENFIELD TO EVEREST

Continuing with the fourth chapter of the epic adventure undertaken by Ian and Syliva Preedy in the summer of 2001. Travelling by motorcycle from Kathmandu to Lhasa via the Everest Base Camp.

4. LHASA HERE WE COME!

Rumbuck is situated at sixteen thousand feet and with all the party suffering various problems connected with the altitude, it was decided that after taking photos of the five Enfields at base camp, we should descend as quickly as possible.



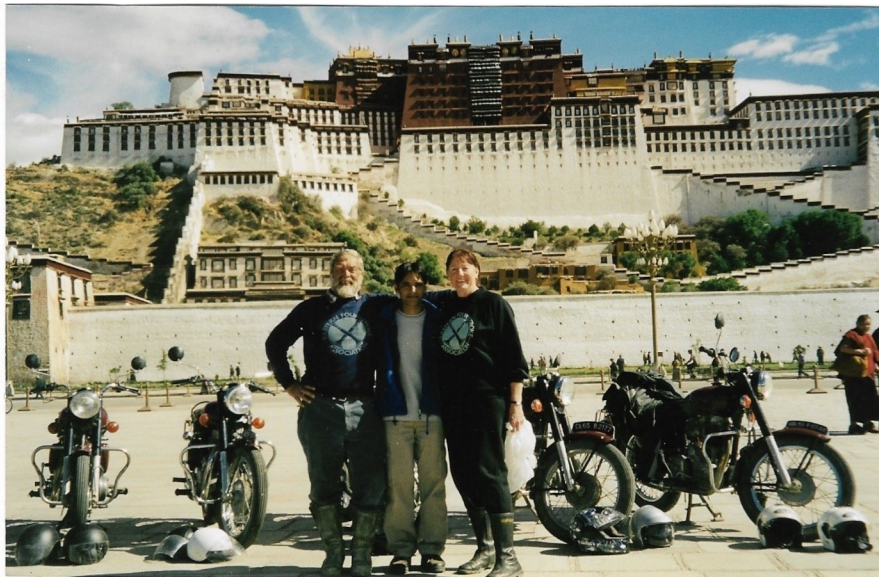
With only the Canadian, Dave, and Patrick, our guide, fit enough to ride, the rest of us were helped into the Land Cruisers for the descent. When we reached thirteen thousand feet we, Sylvie and I, both recovered very quickly and had no more altitude problems for the rest of the trip, even though the entire trip was spent at or above thirteen thousand feet.

That day, as we talked over the various events of the journey, we both felt somewhat elated to think that we had travelled all that way and had fulfilled one of our lifetime ambitions. To actually look at Mount Everest in real life and not in a book or on a screen, but to be there in the Himalayas and see it in all its glory. We were extremely lucky with the weather and there were no clouds for it to hide behind. We both thought how beautiful it was but also how deadly it can be to those brave enough to climb it.

That evening we arrived at Pedow for our overnight stay. It was like a small border town from a spaghetti Western. As we stopped we were surrounded by the local people and lots of children, curious to look at the strange people who had arrived with motorbikes. As we

sat in the large communal bedroom cum dining room of our guest house, one of our party came into the room and excitedly announced the toilet had a door! Add to this the additional luxury of a large piece of wood, about four by four, with which you could keep the door closed by wedging it against it. You could though, if you so wished, take a friend along with you as, again, this was a double hole job! The Tibetans obviously do not consider going to the toilet to be a solitary job. They obviously like company along!

In the evening, our head Tibetan guide cooked dinner for us, a lovely potato curry. You might think that this sounds a bit ordinary but after Tibetan pot noodle it was a culinary delight! The only problem was using chop sticks to eat it with. All very well if you happen to be good at using them but if not, you seemed to be forever chasing little bits of spud around your plate, much to the



The Deli Lama's Palace

amusement of the others. We managed it in the end though.

With the first part of our journey complete, we now looked

forward to the remainder of the journey to Lhasa which apart from the last forty miles was all unmade rocky tracks with rivers and high mountain passes that we had to contend with. Jim who lives in San Francisco was heard to mutter, "will we ever get to somewhere with running water?", a sentiment shared by all of us.

Next morning I was back on my Royal Enfield and managed to complete the six hundred miles to Lhasa without problems of any kind be they physical or mechanical. Of the rest of the group. Jim is the keenest photographer and after only one day's hectic dash on a Royal Enfield, decided to put the bike in the truck and do the whole journey in the Land Cruiser. This he really enjoyed because of all the photo opportunities. The landscapes and the terrain make the place a photographers dream. Also because of all the wonderful wild flowers, Irises, Poppies, Rhododendron, Gentians, Potentilla, to name but a few, a botanists heaven. Also because of the various rock formations and strata, a wonderful holiday for a geologist.

Ross, who comes from Kent, is a veteran of Patrick's trips but really suffered with the altitude but after about three days he also was back on a motorcycle.

Cary our young woman rider who did so well to ride up to Everest base camp, completely exhausted herself and was only able to ride once more. Unfortunately she felt weak and unwell for the rest of the trip. The Royal Enfields were 500cc Bullets which are made in Madras in Southern India. They are a copy of a British Royal Enfield of about 1956.

In our party we had two mechanics who kept these machines running for us. Every evening they repair any damage or do any maintenance that was required. One machine broke its frame. The main tube had a gap of about 4 inches in it under the tank. The rider said they thought it was handling a bit funny!!! My front forks shook loose and caused me to go on a mammoth wandering session - not to be recommended when you have sheer drops either side of you for a good few miles! There was also a broken hub, odd missing spokes and other minor breakages.

On the way to Lhasa, one of the highest passes, was Karo at about 17,000 feet. When we got to the very top we encountered a small crowd of Tibetans, adults of all ages and children from babies



to teenagers. They were there to worship at the few shrines that were there but once we arrived on the scene all heavenly thoughts flew away and as they crowded around us they chattered excitedly. We were obviously a very rare sight. The children were very eager to touch and feel everything and everyone. Patrick and Ian ended up giving them rides three at a time, one on the tank and two on the back. We were not allowed to leave and continue our journey until everyone who wanted to have a ride had done so - including the grown ups!! After about an hour with these delightful people, it was time to descend as I was getting a bit of a fuzzy head.

Our last day on the motorcycles was going to be a long one, in all over 160 miles. After over a week in the saddle we were all a little fatigued, even before we set out. It was a hot day and the journey seemed to take forever, finally in the distance, way below us I saw a

tarmac road. At first I thought it was a mirage but it turned out to be the road to Lhasa and the last forty miles were tarmac.

We stopped at the beginning of the tarmac and sat on the grass verge by the side of the road. I asked Sylvia to get some cold water and pour it over my head I was so exhausted. After a short while we were all feeling a lot better and with Sylvia now back on the bike we set out on the last leg of the journey to Lhasa.

As we approached Lhasa, the traffic gradually got worse and the last few miles we were on a three lane carriageway. About a quarter of a mile from the hotel we were negotiating our way through the traffic quite enjoying a different type of excitement for a change, when all of a sudden the engine died. Add to this the fact that we were in the middle lane at the time and you can imagine that I had to make a very quick decision or two. With Sylvia making various hand signals and daring anyone not to stop and let us through, we made our way quickly into the relative safety of the near side lane. Very exciting!!! We had run out of petrol!

The first time anyone of us had done so in the entire journey and it had to be me and in the middle of all that traffic! I switched on the reserve tap and just had enough strength left to kick-start the bike, join the rest of the group, who wondered what on earth we were doing and very unkindly thought our predicament most amusing, and set off with them all to our luxury hotel. At the hotel we lined the remaining Royal Enfields up in the courtyard. What fantastic old work horses they had been - they had done everything you could ask of a motorcycle and more.

SCOTTISH PRE 65

A month back from the Pre 65 Scottish, time to reflect on the weekend and the trial.

For more years than I can remember the Pre 65 Scottish has always caused debate, often heated, the ballot, then increasing severity, and of course the ever evolving Pre 65 machines.

I last rode back in 1999 with Percy and John Kendall on my Ariel, so whilst the highlight of cleaning pipeline back then stayed with me, circumstances dictated for the ensuing years it would be tricky getting to do it again. When Gary Baker tempted me after the Leven trial I decided why not, the Leven had been great and I had enjoyed the company of Gary and Brad another trip to the highlands beckoned. I had heard on the trialing grapevine the ballot was easier, in fact whether its true or not.. rumour had it, due to the rise of other must do events around europe, the trial was often short of riders. So enter I did, I was accepted, the Cub although sporting pieces very un pre 65 which were accepted, we did have to change the Delorto,

and have some new bash plates made incorporating a false tube. This is somewhat bizarre, of course in my view...and in fact no one said anything or even bothered, accept the machine examiner looked at both mine and Garys cubs, tick and then pulled Brads for no real loop on the frame, to which Armacs are exempt.

The trial itself, I thought it was hard, of course if you look at the first page of the results it gives a differing opinion, however a lot of good riders lost a lot of marks. I must add, a split tyre on the second day stopped my participation after 5 sections. I was docked 30 marks also on the saturday for time, now I cannot remember the last time I even had an issue with time in a trial. My fault, not paying attention, and bumping into old and new friends and spending too much time catching up. The trial lacked real atmosphere, the good top top riders all out to win, paddock gossip that when in difficulty, deliberately asking for baulks, protests going in for marks they didnt have etc etc.. A Scottish friend messaged me a few days

after for my thoughts, and he remarked, which I reflected on and agreed, the top top younger riders add 25 pct to the trial but take 75 pct away, from it, by the fact it has to be so tough, and the organisers wish to find a winner in the sections.

So it may well be another

twenty six years before I head back, added to the fact ,the joy of trying to clean pipe line will no longer be possible due to recent works.

Thanks to Gary for preparing the bike ,and both him and Brad for the laughs..

Hamish

TOWARDS "SECTION ENDS"

With the exception of riding a borrowed Ariel 500cc for grass track racing, and my early days in trials on a Triumph `Tiger Cub`, all my previous competition work had been done on two-strokes. Looking round to get a 250 racer to go alongside my 125 Bultaco, I rather fancied a Ducati – a `Mach 1`. These bikes were Italian and were a force in lightweight international road racing. Indeed when their “desmodromic” (No valve springs) 125 had its first major outing in the Swedish Grand prix – it lapped the entire field! The `Mach 1` was a really a 250 four-stroke road bike but had a decidedly sporty overhead camshaft engine and had done well in British home race meetings. Vic Camp of East London, was the importer, I

recall.

I certainly could not afford a new one, so again, I looked week by week in the ads for any second hand ones and fortunately one came up. Myself and colleague Nick. went up in my Bedford “Dormobile” van, to Huntingdon to have a look at it. A very nice chap who was the Uncle of the actual rider, welcomed us and explained his nephew worked abroad and whilst the bike was in full racing trim – complete with fairing, it had not actually done any racing – only practice sessions. It did look nice and naturally a little taller than the Bultaco but I wondered about the engine. Would it put up with racing stress?

As ever, Nick had a relevant comment. After looking at the bike, he remarked: "With that engine, it looks a bit like a Manx Norton..." I think I bought it on that reference alone! The words: "Manx Norton"...who wouldn't? Or it might have been the twenty-five quid reduction when I nervously made a lower offer. Almost two-week's wages. To my surprise The Good Uncle took it and triumphantly we loaded the little "Duc" and brought it home. It proved to be a good move. In combat, the bike never let me down and I had only one bad incident, ending up on the grass at a Cadwell meeting. There was a fault however. The front forks were hopeless and felt as if they were made of liquorice, flexing, even on quite minor bumps and making it difficult to follow a precise line. We tried everything to correct it and it was only then I realised just how good at the time were the Norton forks I had on my Cotton racer earlier. Yet the engine itself was magnificent and took all the stick I gave it.

Indeed, I have always wondered why the Ducati 250 engine was not used more in off-

road sport. Our own Don French, past Centre trials and 250 scrambles champion, did indeed make up a trials special, coming out with a very attractive looking bike with a 250 Ducati engine duly slotted in. Anything Don turned out was well made. I did have a brief ride on it – and at the time, thought it had very good prospects. Yet for some reason, it did not deliver the high hopes for the project. It might have been ignition difficulties – I think Don may have used a self-energising system, such as the notorious, Lucas: "Energy Transfer". For racing, I had always used a battery. I wonder also if perhaps a heavier flywheel might have been necessary for trials.

What ever, the Ducati trials special made very few appearances which was unfortunate. Meanwhile on my road racer version, I had a jolly good time – but as ever, usually finished as an: "also ran"....

Sidge