

Firstly, an apology. My reports have been conspicuous by their absence over the last couple of rounds – I'm sure there has been a huge black hole in all your lives without them..... I didn't race at Batcombe (Rnd 5) or Gosfield (Rnd 6), so perhaps I have an excuse for not being fully up to speed with the action on the track and gossip from the paddock. But for Maylandsea (Rnd 7) I was there and racing. However, I was also Secretary of the Meeting for that one, and to be honest, it is so much work prior to and on race day itself, that I was done with it. I am sure that anyone who has done the Sec of Meeting role will know exactly what I mean. Don't get me wrong, it was a fantastic day, the racing was top drawer and everything ran like clockwork, but my get up and go after the event had got up and went.

Enough of my disgraceful and indulgent self pity, I will make it up to you all with a bumper report from Mortimer, that turned out to be an eventful meeting to say the least.

#### **Round 8. 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> September. Ameys Copse. Mortimer Classic MCC.**

Our second visit of the year to Ameys Copse was something of a special meeting. Saturday saw the final round of the British Classic MX Championship, so a chance to see the very best riders in the country battling it out on one of the best tracks, on superbly presented machines representing the usual Pre 60 to Pre 74 classes. Quite a few of us (me included) decided not to race on the Saturday and instead take the opportunity to soak up the sights, sounds and smells of this awesome spectacle. Jeez, those boys are quick!

The weather was always going to play its part over the weekend, with heavy rain forecast. It turned out to be better than expected, but the woodland section at Ameys Copse is notorious for holding water. The outfield can be dry and dusty whilst the woodland section remains a mud bath, and that is exactly what we were faced with today. I'm not sure which is the worst bit - fighting wheelspin to get up the hills or slithering down again with rear wheel locking up! I saw Jordan Ansell as he came in after first practice on Saturday and his exact words were 'Alright Paul, you'll not get up the hills on your Hawkstone!' So I guess a good decision not to ride after all.

With a number of riders stuck in the mud blocking the track, safety concerns took priority and quite rightly the decision was made to cordon off the wooded section. There were still some hairy sections though, and we had great fun watching the top riders flying over the humps on the top straight and landing in what can only be described as deep slop. More rear end wobbling than a night at the Moulin Rouge! It didn't seem to slow these guys down though, despite some brilliant (for the spectator) 'squeaky bum' moments.

By the end of the day, and with the forecast rain holding off, the track was riding superbly and everything looked set for the real main event, the DHGC on the Sunday.

With the woodland section now back in play, and the track running in the normal anti-clockwise direction (which is a little easier in wet conditions), there was some debate as to how much the woodland could have dried out overnight. The practice session provided the answer, and it was not much! It was still very slippery and sticky but do-able. On the positive, the outfield was

absolutely 'Goldilocks' – not too hard, not too soft, not too wet, not too dry. So, game face on and LETS RACE!

The first Greeves race of the day had a little 'Brucie Bonus' attached to it in the form of the BluMarine Challenge trophies. You will recall that Craig McCoo at BluMarine very kindly funded some one-off trophies for the first Griffon, first Challenger and first Hawkstone over the line. One race, one trophy for the best in each racing class. The idea was that Craig and his son Josh would come over from Northern Ireland with a couple of bikes in the van to race with us and use the opportunity to present the awards. But work commitments scuppered the plan, and Craig had to drop out at the last minute. Perhaps we will see him for the final round of the Championship as we did last year – the kettle will be on for you fella.

The trophies went to Jordan Ansell, today on the 250 Griffon, who was absolutely flying in the difficult conditions. Andy (Stan) Green took the Challenger award on his 250 MX1, ahead of Mike Bell. On the subject of Stans, it was great to see Steven (Stan) Bowles back on the bike after breaking his foot at Maylandsea earlier this year. If he was taking it easy, it didn't show – he took two 3<sup>rd</sup>s and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place on his 380 QUB.

I took the Hawkstone award after a brilliant demonstration of top-class riding, with man and machine working in perfect harmony to provide an awe-inspiring display of skill and bravery for the huge crowds that flocked to the track to see me in action. And then I woke up from my cheese dream to realise I'm the only Hawkstone entered on the day, and all I have to do is wobble

round and finish to pick up the trophy. In my own defence though, just finishing was a tough ask on the little 250. With so little hp to work with, keeping momentum in the thick mud and maintaining enough drive to get up the hills wasn't easy. Dropping down to first gear, revving the nuts off it, and slipping the clutch to keep engine revs high but not spin up the rear wheel was the only way. Not exactly text book technique, but you've gotta do what you've gotta do. Talking to the boys, it was tough enough for the smaller capacity Challengers and Griffons to cope in these conditions, so I think as the only Hawkstone, I've earnt some bragging rights.

Terry Sewell, who was on his traditional commentating duties for the weekend, kindly agreed to present the awards. But there was a final trophy to give out that we hadn't publicised. This was to be the 'Greeves Hero' award that could be for anything – heroic failure, most dramatic crash, best sportsmanship, or just going above and beyond to help and support others. It was my pleasure and honour to present the trophy to the man himself, Mr Terry Sewell. The look on his face when I called his name was priceless, he had no idea it was coming and he was absolutely made up, but it couldn't have gone to a more deserving person. For many years Terry has supported Greeves and other riders through his TDS company, was ever present at race meetings with his van full of spares to get us all out of trouble, and is always happy to share his



*Classy trophies courtesy of Craig at BluMarine*

wealth of knowledge and experience with those that need it. Understandably he is slowing down a bit nowadays, but he gets to as many meetings as he can to fly the Greeves flag. I'm sure I speak for all Greeves Championship riders past and present when I say a huge thank you for all the help and support you have given many of us over the years. Cheers Terry, you're a diamond.



*L to R. Jordan Ansell - Griffon 1st Place, Terry Sewell - Greeves Hero Award,*

*Paul Hughes – Hawkstone 1st place, Stan Green Challenger 1st place.*

It's all getting a bit emotional now, so I better get back to the action on the track. With improving conditions, races 1 and 2 ran to a familiar script with Jordan and Dave Watson at the sharp end – two wins for Jordan, two 2<sup>nds</sup> for Dave. Close behind was Stan Bowles with his two 3<sup>rd</sup> places. Behind them, Clive Stevens, Tommy Cooper, Ollie Shanks and Mark Larter (all on Griffons) had a proper tussle, with Clive just getting the better aggregate points tally of the group. Stan Green was first Challenger home with two 8<sup>th</sup> places.

So far so predictable, but this brings me neatly on to the final Greeves race of the day (or the Battle of Bennetts Hill as nobody is calling it). Scheduled to run well down the race order, we knew there was a chance of the forecasted heavy rain to come rolling in and effect the racing. It did come rolling in but did it effect the racing? You bet it did! Numbers on the grid were reducing quickly by this stage of the afternoon, with some races only attracting 3 or 4 riders. Reports coming in from the track ranged from 'it's like an ice rink out there' to 'it's effing lethal!'. I'd spent a good amount of time through the day with score sheets in hand reminding riders where they stood in the various points tables and how close some of the battles were, so everyone was revved up to get out there and fight for every point that was on offer. I did jokingly suggest that we call it a day and take the average of the first two races as a score for race 3. The idea did get some traction, but we were never going to do that – we are hardcore.... Or just stupid.



So with 11 of the 13 Greeves riders on the line, it was game on. Incidentally, this was noted and commented on favourably by the Mortimer Club officials, so kudos to those that pulled on their big boy pants and got out there. On the line, a look to the right and the Starter points to the countdown clock, look down at the gate, the gate drops and we all fire off for the first corner. Slam the breaks on and the fun starts – it's like ice! Breaking seems to be almost a waste of time and legs fly out like stabilisers on a kiddies bike. We 'speed' through the first few corners, down the bottom straight and into the woods. Left hairpin, right hairpin - slow and steady - and on to the hard left and the approach to the Big Hill. Everyone guns it and makes the top, but I've lost too much speed on the approach. I give it everything but loose traction inches from the top. I manage to squirt the bike sideways so at least I'm not going to slide down backwards, and with no other option I make my way back down the hill with something resembling control. The Marshal there can see the problem and has already dropped the rope to allow me to take the low route out. Feeling slightly deflated at such an early fail, my mood was instantly lifted



*L to R. Mark Larter, Stan Green and Tommy Cooper discuss international politics with Kristian Keymer and the marshal*

when I saw the utter carnage a few corners along. Dave on the next hill but facing the wrong way, Mark nearly in the fence and wheel spinning but going nowhere, Stan Green slowly inching up



*A puff of blue smoke and Tommy (Skidmarks) Cooper can finally get moving again.*

the hill until gravity took over and he's down in the mud. Barry Keymer almost at the top but man and machine not sharing the same location. Best of all, Tommy on his back and sliding headfirst down the hill ploughing a trench in the mud. Handy for Dave, as once he's got organised he uses this same 'clean' line to get up the hill with some ease. Barry's son Kristian was

spectating, and straight over the ropes to help Barry get on his way. Unfortunately for Kristian, he now felt obliged to help everyone else out! I'm sure he got more of a sweat on pulling, pushing



and kicking over our bikes than he did racing earlier in the day! A heroic effort sir. Also in trouble is Mike Bell who loses traction but just about manages to keep upright and get down the hill backwards but in one piece. Luckily for those that like a good laugh, Mike had his GoPro on throughout the chaos. So click on the link below for some of the most chaotic race footage you could wish to see.

<https://youtu.be/nYJIXgcS0o>



Mike nipped through the ropes to get out of the woodland and made it round for another go at the Big Hill, but came a cropper exactly as I had done, tantalisingly close to the top, and his race was over. Everyone else in this group got moving again but only Barry made it to the finish line. So lots of DNF's. But a round of applause to the finishers – Jordan Ansell, Stan Bowles, Clive Stevens, Ollie Shanks, Dave Watson and Barry Keymer. Deserving of double points I think.

*Above. 'When I nod my head, you kick it'. Kristian Keymer gives his right leg a serious workout whilst I tickle for England.*



*Right. Mike Bell looks pretty pleased to be back in the paddock after the 'tow of shame'.*



*Left. Top performance from the marshals, still grafting when most of the riders had packed up and left.*

To add insult to injury, Mike and I (along with a guy on a CZ still stranded from the previous race) couldn't get our bikes going and needed a tow out. Problem was, the 4x4 couldn't get anywhere near us for fear of getting stuck too, so we all had an epic push with wheels locked up with thick clay and mud, just to get to a point where we could get a rope attached. To add insult to insult to injury, we could hear the transponder guy over the speaker system berating us for not returning our transponders! You couldn't make it up.

After a lot of huffing and puffing (and quite a lot of effing and jeffing) I finally got back to a now virtually empty paddock about an hour after the Greeves race had ended, and just in time for the weather to change from steady drizzle to a rainstorm of biblical proportions. I didn't know you could get more than soaking wet, but I now know you can! I suppose it did wash a few molecules of mud off the bike but not as you would notice. Looking across the paddock, there was Barry and his lads, Justin and Kristian, desperately trying to jump start their van. With all that rain bucketing down, I've no clue how they avoided getting a cheeky jolt from the battery. Never has the phrase 'it never rains but it pours' been more appropriate. What a day!

So points were won and lost, but what does all this mean for the championship? Jordan and Dave now look cast iron certainties to hold their respective positions of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in both the Championship and the Griffon class come the end of the season. There is more jeopardy below them though, with Clive just leading Mark, separated by 25 points in the championship but only 7 points in the Griffon class, so there is a real scrap for the 3<sup>rd</sup> place on the Griffon podium. Below them, Tommy and Ollie are separated by just 3 points in the championship and 8 points in the Griffon class, with Tommy just ahead in both. This battle has been tight all season, with Tommys' commitment to losing some weight paying dividends with a definite improvement in performance but balanced by Ollie really getting to grips with his 380 Griffon in a very impressive first season of racing.

I'm comfortably ahead in the Hawkstone class as Colin Freeman and Luke Mullender were late to the party this season so can't catch me on points. I won't have it so easy next year though.

The top of the Challenger class sees Mike just 20 points ahead of Stan. A betting man may say that Stan will pull back those points in the remaining two meetings, but there are a lot of variables that could come into play, and this could be the tightest result of the season to call.

So with Foxborough on 28<sup>th</sup> September and the final meeting at Marks Tey on 19<sup>th</sup> October, there are still trophies to be won and lost. Just to remind everyone, we will run two scoring races in the morning at Marks Tey, with trophy presentation in the lunch break, so there are only 5 more scoring opportunities this season. It promises to be a fantastic end to what has been a very entertaining season so far.

See you all trackside, *Paul Hughes*.



