

CLASS B CUPS AT THE EDINBURGH TRIAL 2023

Suzie Prevett

What a fantastic Edinburgh Trial 2023 was: It was definitely a challenge but Team 'Class B Cups' made it through as a team, despite a few technical issues along the way! However, I always feel the challenges that these long-distance trials throw at you make them more memorable events, and the finishers certificates even more meaningful.

Clare, Martha and I met up en route to the start, with Jack (Kemp) and Rik (Griffin) accompanying us as well. My husband Kelvin and our good friend Andy had gone on ahead as their start time was 30 mins before ours, and we caught up with them again there.

At the Lichfield rugby club starting point there was a sea of bikes already waiting to start, with a few of the cars.

The first stop was to get through scrutineering, which thankfully we all passed swiftly without issue. The best bit about the start was being able quickly catch up with fellow competitors, and some good friends Mo, Rob, Steve and Jennifer, so the time flew by. The amusing part about the start was the bingo party going on in the same building with lots of people milling round in fancy dress, some of whom were determined to get 'a backie'. I don't think they got one!

Our team all started on time with Clare starting first as

number 88, Martha as 89 and myself as 90. We were off! Clare led us using the MCC road book, Martha had her GPS and I was using tulips being a much more visual person and a slow reader.

Unfortunately, our first challenge hit us within the first 5-6 miles of the trial. I felt my bike was struggling a bit and all of a sudden I was forced to stop. I tried to find my horn to indicate I'd stopped to Clare and Martha, but was a bit slow off the mark. I stopped on a very curvy part of the road and they'd gone around the corner only a few seconds after my abrupt halt. Fortunately, Martha had waited a little further on and the next lot of competitors let her know I'd stopped. Unfortunately, Clare hadn't seen this, and with competitors coming up quite quickly it was very hard to know



who the headlights belonged to, so she'd carried on for a while before she realised those headlights were not ours. She backtracked but couldn't find us, so assumed we'd passed her. The good thing was we all knew where we were heading, and a reconvene at Tissington Ford would be the most sensible option.

In the meantime I needed to work out why I'd stopped. The front wheel wouldn't move and I realised the front brake had seized on. When Martha got back to me she whipped out her screwdriver and tried to prise the brake pads open. Unfortunately, it wouldn't budge, and then Rob (competitor 102) stopped to help and he was able to get the screwdriver in and prise it apart. Not long later Jack and Rik got to us. They were quite confident if the wheel was now free to move then it shouldn't happen again, but I proceeded with some caution, and I was very thankful my trial wasn't over before it'd even started!

We all managed to catch up again at Tissington as hoped, and after that we managed to stick together, and our combination of navigation styles worked really well.

When we reached Haven Hill we were met by a rather sizeable queue, so it was time to crack open some sweeties, and also do a bit of moon-gazing. That lit up the hillside brilliantly, and we were able to watch people squreling away from the start line on the slippery rock and mud. It was definitely a challenging section, but it was good to feel like we were definitely getting under way, and despite the long wait, we were able to catch up on time over the next few sections.

By the time we got to the petrol stop the fatigue was definitely knocking in a bit, and it was time to onboard some caffeine! Martha was definitely struggling with the tiredness, and it's normally the time in the trial I really struggle but oddly I didn't actually feel too awful, and we all kept each other going.



Martha and Clare greeting the dawn taken by Suzie Prevett

The next mechanical issue was at Tumbletrees. Now it was Martha's front brake's turn to have a problem. This time it was at the lever end, and a bit of plastic from an old handguard had wedged itself in the hinge of the lever and jammed the brake on. Fortunately, Martha and the two super friendly marshals at the top of the section were able to eventually free the lever and resolve the situation, so we were off again.

Fortunately, as the sections went on and the light started to appear again, we all felt a little more revitalised. It's amazing how the dawn can bring you more energy.

Only two sections later came mechanical issue number three. It was my turn again. As I annoyingly stacked the bike at the restart on Haydale, I got ready to set off again and the bike wouldn't move. The chap was telling me I had the bike in the wrong gear and to make sure I had it in first. I checked and it was. I tried again. Hmmm, bike still not moving. They beckoned me to give it some welly so I tried again and no joy, but then someone shouted 'Stop!!' I stopped trying to pull away and then I was told my chain had come off. A chap called Lee and another man came over and tried to sort it out, but with my minimal tool kit it wasn't possible. They rolled my bike down to their truck and promptly proceeded to sort the chain out. Amazing! I was so grateful as it was the second time I thought my Trial was over. As I'd already failed I was then waved through the

section, which was no issue this time, and I caught up with Clare and Martha.

Stopping for breakfast at The Duke of York was a welcome break, and also time to catch up with several other competitors and discuss the trial so far. Some of the first sections had definitely been a challenge for most and the only one with a clean sheet was Jack.

The first section after the breakfast stop was definitely a challenge, and despite deciding I'd go low on the section, I somehow managed to stop right in the middle of the lane in the restart box due to poor concentration...big mistake. It was as slippery as anything and I spun out. Doh! That's the whole challenge though, managing these sections whilst being tired and cold (and fortunately not yet wet at this specific time). At least I managed to stop in the right restart box, as it being the only red restart for class B, it was definitely one that could catch you out if you weren't paying attention to the instructions. To our delight, due to the lack of recent rain, Clough Wood and Clough Mine were relatively dry and we all made it through without getting thrown off in slippery, slimy mud.

It was not long later that we made it to the timed tests, and I made a bit of a balls up. I was talking to the marshal at the start who told me about how the timed sections worked, and that there was a chicane in it, and then to stop astride line B and C. Fortunately I knew this, but what I'd totally not realised was that these two tests were one immediately after the other. Being shattered I wasn't concentrating and then noticed another B board. I was very confused and then stopped astride the final line and told the marshal about my failure of observation. Damn.

Hollinsclough village tea stop was a real delight and much needed. The rain had kept at bay, so we were able to sit outside and eat our cake and drink our tea. I had the ginger cake and it was absolutely delicious, plus the staff were wonderful. The time passed swiftly by and we were off again. We bumped into a lovely lady marshal (Claire Oakes) at Booth farm who took our picture and then explained what we needed to do. The view from this section was stunning, despite the rain that was starting to come in.

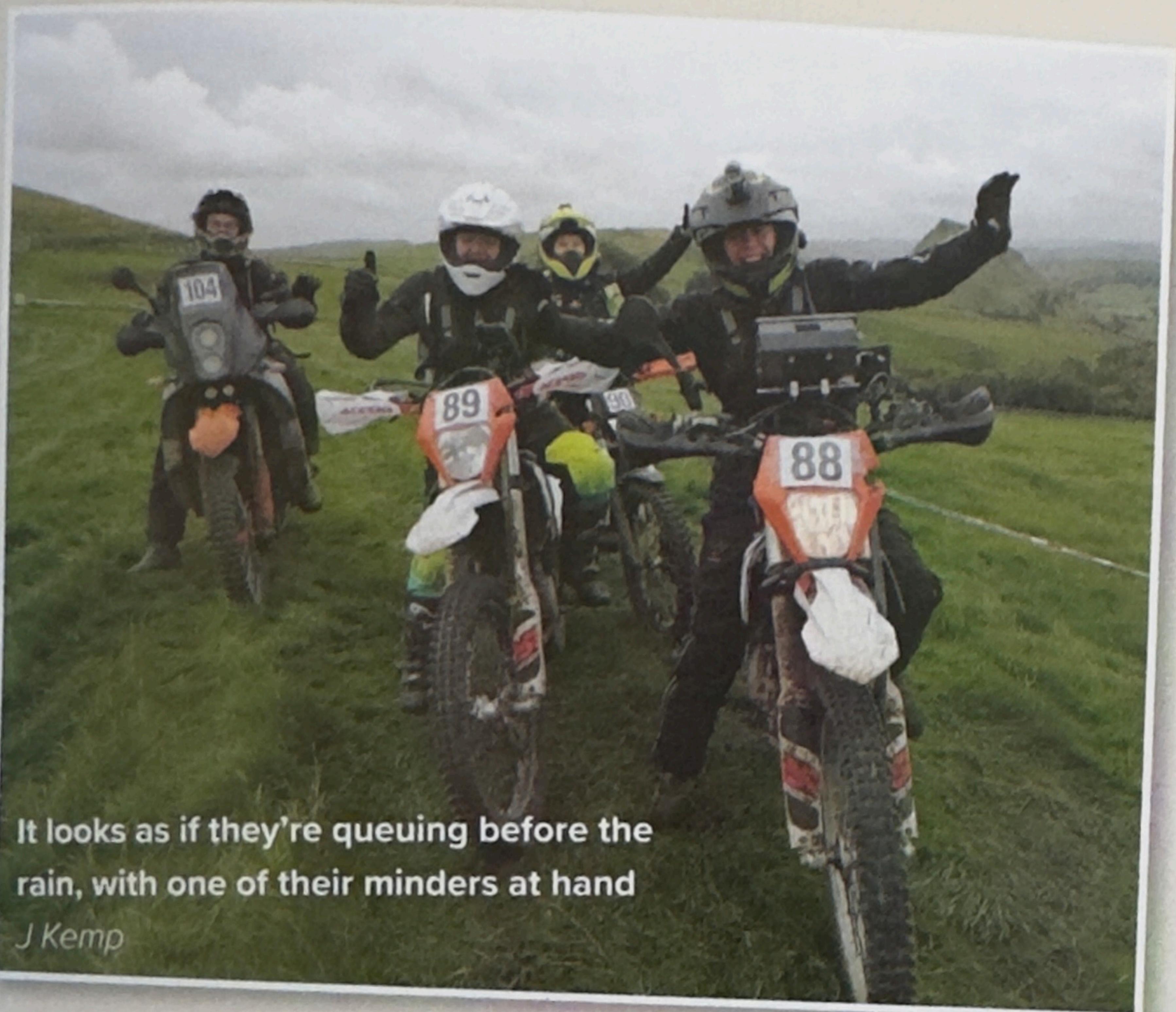
By the time we reached Corkscrew it was absolutely bucketing it down, and the queue for the section seemed to take forever. It was sooooo long!! Eventually it was our turn and we all tackled the section and all made it to the top one way or another without any major dramas. In fact, I think it was personally my favourite section. The only slight issue was that my oil cap/dip stick was spinning in its holder and oil was coming out with big bumps. Rik or Jack had some tape so they managed to get it so that it would at least stay in place temporarily, and then we all headed off to Litton Slack.

The rain was well set in by the time we got to Litton and we were warned that not many were managing to reach the top now. I was asked if I wanted to give it a miss, but despite my dislike of mud, I really wanted to give it a go at least. Martha did well and got past the 'A' boards, as did I, so we were chuffed with our effort. Clare managed to make it almost to the top, which was such an amazing effort given the conditions, but sadly she couldn't quite get to the end so had to return down the hill. We'd been told New Lane was cancelled for class B so at least we could now all make our way together to the end having all ended up on the same 'failure' exit route from Litton. It was a great sight to see The Duke of York in the distance and we were unbelievably happy to have made it to the end despite the challenges. Those were some well deserved finishers' certificates and mine will definitely be taking pride of place on my office wall.

It was a great event and lovely to catch up with friends and familiar faces as always. These MCC long distance trials are something special. Thanks to everyone involved, the organisers, the hardcore marshals, the fantastic people selling fuel at silly o'clock in the morning and those providing food at the breakfast stop and the cake stop, and anyone else I've forgotten.

Edinburgh Trial 2023 - Now Clare's thoughts. Clare Griffin (rider 88)

It was fantastic to be part of an all-woman team! Although we'd never ridden together as-a-three before it worked brilliantly, with lots of mutual support and never a cross word spoken, even in the doldrums of the night ride. Al fresco wee



It looks as if they're queuing before the rain, with one of their minders at hand

J Kemp

stops

took longer than when riding with men though, as we needed to scout suitably discreet locations with no headlights visible, to avoid confusing other competitors by the rising of several additional full moons.

The lowlight for me came within the first 10 miles when, on my first go as lead Navigator, I lost the rest of my team (poor skills by me!). Massive thanks to 'Proper Job' Rob McIntosh for his cheerful assistance!

The highlight was everything else about the trial – wonderful marshals (too many to name individually – you're all amazing); superb sections and a really enjoyable chat with Nicola Butcher at the breakfast stop about the joys of female-only teams.

It's probably fair to say that we weren't wholly unsupported: Suzie's account details the help we received from others and Rik Griffin (my husband) and friend to all Jack Kemp caught us up several times and rode near us until they were re-set at time controls. Jack's support consisted of being endlessly cheerful and encouraging; showing us up with his vastly superior skills and leading the wider team off down wrong turns whenever he got the chance.

I do wonder what the ABBA-themed Bingo players at the Rugby Club thought we were up to. Serious-faced people vanish into an upstairs room, everyone emerges holding a number. But

no-one shouts 'house'. Maybe a separate biker gang/classic car bingo to which they weren't invited?

Edinburgh Trial 2023: Finally Martha's thoughts.

So what can I add to what you have read already? The Edinburgh was my second MCC trial, after the Land's End earlier this year, and I am so glad to have participated. The event was really well organised, and I loved that it had consistent off-road stages from start to end - it really helps fight the fatigue! (well, that and the consistent sugar and caffeine).

I couldn't think of a better way to dabble in LDTs than with the support of my comrades in the Class B Cups and the safety net of Jack and Rik setting off behind us in case disaster struck. I'll be honest, a part of me thrives off the challenge when something unexpected happens and the Edinburgh was no different. We had challenges from start to finish that had very little to do with the course or terrain but the only memories that really stay with me is that every time we stopped we were greeted by a friendly face. Seeing the sunrise (which Clare had prepared us for by sending through extracts from "The Motor-cyclists diary – Motorcycling for Women" published in 1928) that informed us best to take whisky in a thermos; spare gloves for our partner in case it rained; and the mantra that it was "well worthwhile to ride all through the night in order to see the first pale streaks of dawn and the beauty of the sunrise". I'm sure you'll all appreciate our modernisation of these three elements to be: navigation champion in front (thank you Clare); spanners and snacks in the middle (that'd be me); and our very own previous gold medallist Suzie bringing up the rear with expert navigation that even kept our champion Jack Kemp in check for the once or twice he took us on an unintended diversion and still managed to win.

With thanks to all for another test of endurance and character – long live the MCC trials. ■