

Brotherton Sunday 25th April 2021

The Yorkshire 4 x 4 Family Club adhered to the Covid and social distancing Government guidelines as of April 2021.



Our off-road day at Brotherton dawned a bright sunny day, though still chilly first thing. Members came far and wide to come to this small challenging woodland near Brotherton, the dominating presence of the well-known power station just down the road.

While we waited for the others to arrive, the early birds greeted each other with laughter and smiles, remembering to keep our distance from each other. It was great to see one another again in the flesh rather than on a computer screen via Zoom, being able to catch up and chat properly. We waited patiently while vehicles were visually scrutinised and courses set out under the new covid secure rules. Finally, everybody had arrived and after explaining rules and to remember to keep to our vehicle/family bubbles, we headed off to our first challenge.



The Egg and Bonnet game is relatively new pastime that we have devised. Simple in its design, it's basically a shallow dish stuck on a bonnet and a fresh egg placed in it. Then the objective is to drive around a slalom course, marked with bamboo canes and manoeuvring over natural obstacles all in the quickest time with egg still intact.



James was the first to step up in his Discovery. He headed off confidently, negotiated the first hurdle - a little dry ditch, enough to dislodge an egg, through the undergrowth and approached the hump of earth opposite. It was here that he managed to beach himself, (though another 4 x 4 had tested driven the course) unable to go forwards or backwards. As usual, another vehicle came to the rescue and gave us an early opportunity to test out the new recovery protocols and gently pulled him off: he had another go and flushed with success, scooted around the remainder of the course completing it in a time of 5 mins 28 seconds including rescue.

The next off roader was sent on its way, negotiating the hump easily now that James had shaved the top of the hump off. There was a queue starting to form. Lauren, who has recently passed her driving test and never driven her partner's Discovery before, did the female members proud with a brilliant time of 3 min and 5 secs – she got a huge whoop and cheers. The average time was now coming in around 2 minutes, until Josh, one of our younger members decided that he could blast us all out of the water. Josh is a lovely lad, but likes to prove himself with the older, wiser chaps. We all take the mickey out of him, which he takes with good grace (the whole Club is based on banter, gentle ribbing of each other and great humour, but knowing we all support and help each other). We knew he would push his vehicle around the course as quick as he could, and no doubt be successful. Nodding sagely, we flagged him off.



Of course, he shot around in a minute, egg rolling gently in its bowl and setting the bar high. Soon various 4 x 4's were lining up for a second run, their owners spurred on and determined to beat the young whippersnapper.

The times tumbled as the drivers got used to the course (there was a lot of reversing on the first run) and the eggs also increased. John did the fastest two egg run at 41 seconds, followed by Paul and Chris at 55 seconds and 51 seconds, respectively. Josh went around a second time with 3 eggs with a time of 47 seconds but incurred a 15 second penalty for a broken egg which took him over a minute.

Having exhausted this popular activity, everyone decided to head off into the woods independently and the numerous tracks for a bit of off roading and a bit of a play. Brotherton has mixed reviews – it is a particularly challenging course, especially when it has been very wet and seems to have a special type of magnetic tree, which makes off road vehicles gravitate to their trunks with a dull, but damaging thud. It's strangely disorientating as well, with all the trees and you can feel that you are really lost and really far away from base. It is full of gullies and ridges, dead ends, and steep drops too which doesn't help either, but in reality, it's probably quite small in acreage, but seems much larger. With a recent extended dry period, there shouldn't be too many incidents, accidents and nursing of damaged vehicles or pride.



We reconvened for lunch, munching our packed lunches, leaning on our own vehicles chatting adapting to this new world of social distancing! A couple of the chaps came in with mud splattered up the sides, dripping off wheel arches. They have found a mud pit and been happily playing in it. They look incredibly happy with themselves. We have about half a dozen younger members who with their parent consent and encouragement borrowed their parent's 4 x 4's for a poodle around the woods, gaining off road experience. There were a couple of under 10's, brother and sister content with playing with what the wood could offer, under the watchful gaze of mum and dad. But the cutest, is the two year old, dressed in a John Deere boiler suit, following his dad around, head in the tool box and learning all the names of the tools. He manages

to melt the hearts of most of the group.

Soon, another challenge was declared, and we all headed over to another part of the woods. It's situated in a small valley – a very steep slope on one side and a track disappearing up the other side with a large muddy gloopy puddle nestling in the bottom. A small trials taster course had been set out, with bamboo canes and tape, weaving in and out of the trees – up and down, twists and turns.

The beginning of the course was at the far end of the muddy quagmire. Another Chris lined his vehicle up, took off the handbrake and plunged in, holding steady revs as his wheels sunk in. A steady pull saw his Land Rover climb out, cross the track and zip up the hill, only to plunge down the other side. A particularly steep part proved an excellent viewpoint for the budding photographers of the group to catch dramatic shots as vehicles appeared, rearing up, as their owners gunned their engines.

There was no timing on this one as its just designed to give a taste of trialling, but if you failed to get up the very steep hill in two attempts you failed the course. A couple of vehicles slithered back down the hill, not quite making it – but with a little more power, they were up. Josh appeared with his Discovery, driving through the quagmire, flicking mud everywhere. His old nickname was “More Power” and he certainly was living up to it. He arrived at the bottom of the steep hill and we all expected him to whizz up with ease. He nearly got to the top but slithered back down. He readjusted and repeated, but again, with tyres fighting for grip and the engine powering, he slunked back to the bottom – his current nickname being “One More Time”. Taking some timely advice from the older, more experienced chaps, he was successful in his third effort, but sadly out of the competition.



Everybody had a go, most of them climbing up the incline with ease. Some of them ended their run with a celebratory run back into the muddy pond, slipping and sliding. One needed a strop and a gentle tug out backwards when they managed to dig themselves deeper and got stuck ,wheels spinning. Laughter and teasing echoed through the trees.



Chris’ Land Rover limped back, his bonnet soon up and he’s peering into the depths. Typically in our club, most of the members are mechanics or at least can work their way around a Landy engine – Chris needed a second opinion, so

one by one, they had look and offered their solutions. Chris tried to fix it, but it was proving more difficult than first thought. Cups of tea and cake appeared as others watched from suitable spots and offered far flung advice from a distance. The Land Rover was patched up and limped back to base. Luckily Chris lived not far away and with an offer of someone following him to see him home, we started to wind things up for the afternoon. A member’s dog had a lot of fun hoovering up dropped bits of food and the more dog tennis ball down the track for him to all our chairs, tables and other vehicles, tidied up and had one last leaving with waves and virtual hugs. – the sun had shone, nobody had and we had really great fun. It was still can’t quite hug each other. An the current covid rules.



friendly members kicked his chase. We started putting equipment back into our hang around to chat before It had been a successful day suffered any lasting damage nice to be back even if we event run successfully under