



You have a trail bike? Then you must ride the Cambrian ...

IT'S a bold claim to make but if the Cambrian Rally isn't the best event in the motorcycling calendar then I have yet to see better. Bob Perring and Bob Jeffries pull off one of the cleverest tricks in motorcycling: they create an event with a real 'big occasion; feel and yet still retain the friendliest atmosphere you could hope to find.

The Cambrian begins from Llandovery rugby club with the town crier launching the riders into the event just as if it was a major international. "Hey, mum, look at me. I'm a real star!" Okay, so it's only pretend but the two Bobs create a wonderful image of wannabees.

Then there're a few miles of road work followed by five hours of pure, unadulterated fun in the Crychan forest area, and once again the sheer intelligence and experience of the organizers become apparent. The Cambrian is not unlike the TT course. Any competent road rider could manage a 70mph a lap on the TT circuit if the

roads were closed. But a 90mph lap? Now, that takes a lot of riding ability. As for 120mph, this is the realm of deities.

So it is with the Cambrian. Anyone who can ride a bike competently on the road can manage both the liaison sections and the special tests with no trouble at all. Apart from half a dozen snotty bits, amounting to no more than two miles in total – and then not all in one lump – you could ride round on a Honda City Express. But, and this is a big, big but, going quickly takes an awful lot of skill and the marriage equipment of a fit Hereford bull. If 100mph is quick on the road then it is awfully fast on a narrow shale road, ridden blind. Event winner John Deacon geared his 620 KTM trail

The Cambrian is a popular event; there were 204 starters this year ... and many more were turned away

bike for 110mph but didn't have it flat out – quite. And John does not dish out the bovine excrement.

I have already compared the Cambrian to the TT; to watch a really *Town crier launches would-be ISDE stars*



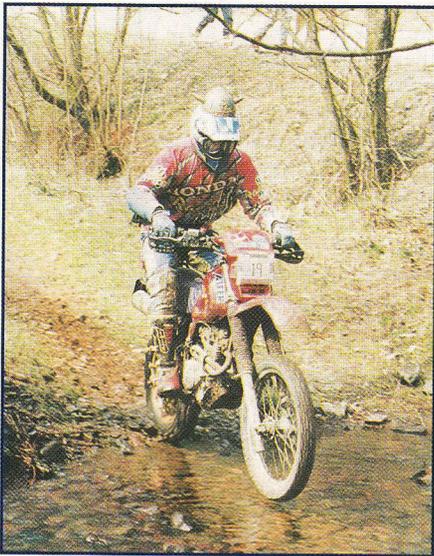
Cambrian Rally



Huw Ellis gets his DR350 smartly off the line at the start of the first special test

quick rider in both is a very similar experience. Deacon, who must be one of the most talented riders in the world at present, has a graceful, effortless style which makes the job look so easy that there is no apparent reason for him to go so fast. The truth comes home when you try to ride the same section a few minutes later – and end up with the bike tied in knots and a marked loosening of pilot's bowels.

This year, the course was better than ever with two long loops not only in Crychan forest itself but also on the MoD training grounds which were well cut up by the military. The use of the



Per Knudsen came from Denmark to play in the Welsh forest (note the 'Viking' helmet) and declared the Cambrian to be "wonderful"

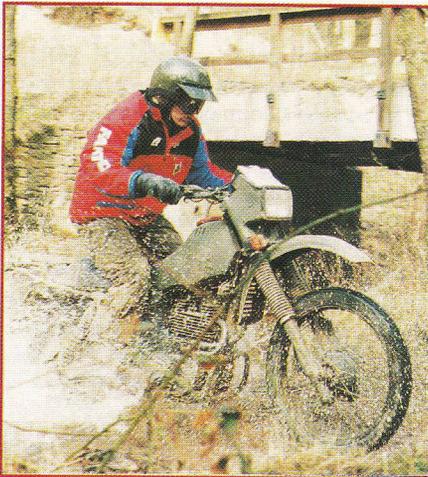
MoD land made for a better event in that the new section introduced a few miles of very easy enduro-type going, just like the Welsh Two-Days, which was eminently rideable by even the most hesitant beginner – and still a nice addition to the miles of shale roads which comprise the rest of the event.

For an old wrinkly like me, floating

the front wheel of Martin Crooks TS250 over the ruts, with the motor buzzing hard, the bright Spring sun shining and the short Welsh mountain grass still wet with dew, brought back wonderful memories of riding for the Crooks Suzuki team in the 1970s. It was a good time to be a young man, and the Cambrian helps keep those memories alive.

In essence, this is what makes the Cambrian such a wonderful event. The course is so utterly right, and every element of the event so perfect, that you can't help but be humble and deeply grateful just for being there.

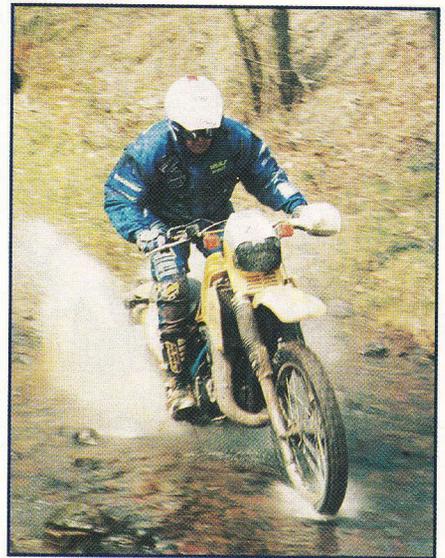
The Cambrian is still a social event, with gossiping being as important as racing. But it is changing. Better riders are entering on faster bikes and now



The army was well represented; here Cpl Cowling presses on with his Armstrong

only the really competent riders are going to take the awards. Yoshi Adams, who finished a fine second to Deacon on his little 200cc KMX Kawasaki, reflects the new determination to win. "Very radical indeed," mused Bob Perring, "he's going to go back in a bin sack before long!"

Mike Jones is also breathtaking to watch on his Yamaha Ténéré, and any of the top 20 runners are now seriously quick and riding competitive machinery.



Melling on Martin Crooks' little Suzuki

This is upsetting some riders – example: a letter from Chris Kelley – but for most of us it makes no difference. I rode with full-blown 'flu and knocked my knee out of joint just before the start but still had one of my best-ever day's riding. With a 40-something place finish I was well pleased, too. Even so, I would like to ride the Cambrian on a quick 600 just to see what the event is like at Deacon speeds.

If you have a trail bike, you *must* ride the Cambrian – but get your entry in early. This year there were 204 starters from as far away as Denmark and a stack more were turned away. In these days of ever-decreasing entries for every form of motorcycling, this is the most lucid testimony to the success of the Cambrian.

FRANK MELLING

MAJOR AWARDS:

1st overall: John Deacon, 620 KTM
 2nd overall: Yoshi Adams, 200 Kawasaki
 Best Sports Bike: Phil Gunn, XR600 Honda
 Best Over 700cc: Pat Tighe, Honda Africa Twin
 Best Lady: Gill Myers, 350 Yamaha
 Best Lady Sports Bike: Dot Jones, 250 Yamaha
 Best Over 50: Mike Gibbons, 620 KTM

John Deacon (620 KTM) blasts through the water

