

Elgin Endurance Club - Fun Hare & Hounds 29/12/2013

Birkenhill Wood and Linkwood Farm once again were the location of EEC's traditional end of year Hare and Hounds event. As always the club is very grateful to Mr and Mrs Simon Jackson of Birkenhill and Mr & Mrs Ian Robertson of Linkwood Farm, without whose continued support these events couldn't take place.



The second half of 2013 appeared to see a resurgence of interest in our sport, certainly in the North East. A large turnout at the 2014 championship opener at Lochhouses recently also suggests that things are looking a bit more positive for the New Year. An entry of well over 100 riders arrived in Elgin from all over Scotland and beyond with Mark Ritchie possibly, once again being the furthest travelled coming from Newcastle. The riders were treated to the best possible race conditions with blue sky and cool temperatures for the whole day.



The course was the most ambitious yet. The trails through the woods are fairly well known now but Kevin added a few new loops to keep things interesting. The bus boys from Nairn are the field specialists and within minutes Keith and Alan were roughly staking out both sides of the massive field. It didn't make a lot of sense at first but once the arrows were up and the corners were taped a superb track was revealed. The field section measured over 2-1/2 miles giving a total loop of around 7 miles. All classes were well represented with the Sportsmen making up around roughly 50% of the riders. All the classes apart from the sportsmen were given a sighting lap of the field. This was more to mark the lines properly as there had been very few bikes round the course. The race started at 11 am with a staggered start for the different classes. The start straight is long and very fast, particularly for the sportsmen starting at the back. The relatively firm going of the start straight and the fast right hand turn at the end of it quickly gives way to a muddy, rutted section that slows things down a bit. Another right turn takes the riders onto some tight and twisting stubble park and on towards the flat out section that crosses the access track to the paddock. The second half of the field section offers even more flowing turns, boggy sections and the fastest straight of the

whole course with many riders running out of revs before the braking zone. A short straight takes us through the pit area and then the left hand turn across the field section takes us into the woods where the frantic rush of the open section is replaced with measured concentration. The roots, stumps and trees, as always, have the ability to ruin your day. The woods ride superbly with lots of grip and no particularly wet sections, though as 100 plus bikes put in lap after lap the roots start to get nasty. The field improves throughout the day with some nice berms forming on the turns.

Ricky Mair was a fairly convincing winner in the expert class being the only rider to finish on 11 laps. Ricky was also the only rider to put in a sub 17 minute lap time with a superb first lap of 16:29.

The over 40 class went to Grant Smith on 10 laps.

Lewis Bell was the quickest of the Clubmen also finishing on 10 laps.

Gordon McGregor continues to impress on the KTM in Clubman B taking the win on 9 laps.

Gavin Lowes was the quickest of the Sportsman and the only rider in the class to manage 9 laps.

Thanks to all the riders for making the event the success that it was.

As always this event couldn't take place without the help of all the volunteers that give up their time before, during and after the race. Thanks go to the ladies lap scoring, without whose concentration and diligence there would be no results. Colette, Ruth, Frances and Tricia are the stars behind the clip boards. Thanks to Colin and Ruth Ross for providing the means and expertise to accurately time the event. Travelling and static Marshals provide a vital role in these events and Angus Donald, Allen Topp, Dave & Sam Bliss did a superb job on the day. Special thanks to Charlie MacKenzie for once again choosing to forego his chance to ride and offering his enthusiasm and expertise as SACU Steward. Keith Wescott put in a lot of time setting up and taking down the course and performed the vital but tedious task of cleaning numbers for the lap scorers.

Kevin and Barry are at the heart of what the club does and without them there would be no events. I'm sure all would be happy to congratulate them on another superb days racing.

There will be people who I've not mentioned that are equally deserving of thanks.

All at Elgin Endurance Club wish all riders and supporters a Happy New Year and successful racing in 2014.

Report by Brian Donald