

WHO IS THE GUY IN THE AXIAL T-SHIRT

Now the title of this report may be an in joke that most who attended the event will get right away, but coverage and reviews of the latest crawling and scale rigs is always something that RRCi likes to be at the forefront of, and help spread the word that going slow can be just as much fun as flat out. With most of the team still very much hooked on this sometimes very technical and misunderstood aspect of the hobby, we decided 2011 was the year to host the UK's first ever scale Nationals at Bracken Rocks in Derbyshire. At the same time we wanted to raise some money for a good cause, namely the Pluto Appeal with great support from CML, Axial, Pro-Line, FastTrax, Novak, Horizon Hobby, HPI, RadshapeRC, Modelrcshop.com, Losi, Logic RC, Castle Creations, S-M-D and Ansmann Racing.

WHAT IS THE PLUTO APPEAL?

The Pluto Appeal aims to raise one million pounds towards the £1.5 million it will cost to purchase a much-needed multi-arm surgical robot used to perform intricate and often life-saving surgery on children. Pluto is remotely operated, with specialist surgeons undertaking hours of simulation and practice before ever using the robot in the real world. So you can see that this appeal has very relevant tie in with R/C, and something very close to our hearts at RRCi, as many of us are recent fathers of youngsters ourselves. Speedy Steve, a RRCi regular, works in this industry and has very close ties with the company that developed the laser arm for the Da-Vinci robot that Pluto is based on.

I urge anyone who wants to help the appeal in any way to head over to their website and find out more and make a donation however big or small to this very worthy cause: www.theplutoappeal.com RRCi is currently working on other R/C related ideas to raise further funds for the appeal, so keep an eye out in the mag for more updates on this.

A TEAM EFFORT

The two-day event took place over possibly the hottest 'winter' weekend in October that I (and records) can ever remember. Instead of wrapping up against the chill we were all sporting T-shirts, shorts and sunglasses, and it actually felt like the height of summer.

Just the day before Peter Gray, Speedy Steve and John Barnicoat aided by Chris Dickinson of RadshapeRC, Frank McKinney from HPI and John Wasley a crawling/scale comp regular set out four varied and challenging ten gate sections at the now legendary Bracken Rocks motorcycle trials park venue at the heart of beautiful Matlock, Derbyshire. No one was allowed to run any of the sections until the actual event, with a large 'practice area' set up allowing the steady stream of competitors who arrived on Friday afternoon somewhere to fine-tune their rigs and test various set-ups prior to the actual comp the following day. There were rumours that a late night trail run was undertaken by those camping on site, but they assure me that the courses were left untouched, and let's face it they had about fifteen other acres of woods to trail through! So I believe them!

WHAT A TURNOUT!

At 8 am on day one all rigs were booked in, categorised and then in a change from normal competition procedure, all were photographed against white boards to create a record of each from three angles.



Above: The three finalists for concours line-up... with the Land Rover of Steve Day taking the much-deserved honours



Above: If it wasn't for family and friends in the background these could almost be 1:1 rigs parked up!



Above: Snap! John Barnicoat and John Wasley were two of the guys in the Axial T-shirts...

Below: Frank's saying: "I'm taking a picture of you, taking a picture of me..." His must have turned out smaller... I had the bigger lens fitted!

This was so we could showcase the work that had gone into each build with a gallery being created as I write this on www.radioracecar.com and have a visual reference point for awarding scale points that could act as a tiebreaker in the event of two rigs finishing on the same score.

New faces mingled with those previously seen at crawler events, and it was really good to see so many people with as much passion and commitment to this aspect of the hobby.

Scale builders tend to add so much more detail than any other in the hobby, and take the hobby back to its true model making roots. Instead of just running a stock rig, scale model making techniques are also employed to give each rig as realistic an appearance as possible while still maintaining a lot of the capabilities of their crawling and trail rig cousins. The attention to detail on many of the rigs entering the event was nothing short of amazing, with driver figures, full interiors, roof-racks, winches, lights and even a trailer pulling a 1.9 crawler! It almost seemed a pity to get them dirty, scratched and possibly worse during the two days of competition! But hey, that's what we were here for, and everyone seemed really fired up and ready to hit the sections. A 'No Shelf Queens Allowed' rule was implemented, and if you wanted to enter concours on the last day... you had to have run the rig in the competition to qualify!

The turnout was so good, and the diversity of rigs so unexpected that the planned three classes were quickly amended to add a fourth. As there was a healthy turnout of the new Axial Wraiths in attendance, and these are so different in both capabilities and sheer size, it would be impossible to run them against the more traditional 1.9 or 2.2 scale rigs on fair and like for like basis, so the fourth 'Wraith Only' class was born...

The rigs were split as follows:

- **Class 1 – Based on street legal, daily drivers, mildly modded for trail use**
- **Class 2 – Performance trail trucks, not necessarily street legal**
- **Class 3 – TTC/King Of Hammers/extreme/unlimited trail trucks**
- **Axial Wraith Class (it's that unique a rig!)**

I'm not going to go into the full classification and requirements of each class here but a full list of the current rules of scale competition will be available on the RRCi website as this magazine goes to print. Seeing so many scale enthusiasts together in one place really made the team feel staging the event was worthwhile and would show the industry as a whole that scale is a much bigger scene in the UK than we may think, and even though competition crawling seems to have gone through a bit of a tough time lately, with the accusation that it's become too commercial and expensive to be really competitive, the scale scene seems to have remained grounded and accessible to all. And it's fun, and that's the important factor...

The banter was light-hearted and the whole event felt laidback and as much a social gathering of like-minded R/C fans as a serious competition. We even had the USAF in attendance with Scott Curling using some of his leave while based here in the UK to come and compete with two rigs. We actually bumped into him the night before at the motel the RRCi crew and families were based at. His enthusiasm and attitude towards this, his first ever scale event, really set the tone for the whole weekend, and everyone we met seemed to be in the same frame of mind, aided I'm sure by 'bonding over a few beverages' each evening and helping each other overcome our 'mild hangovers' each day!





Above: Pete on course three, day two... getting some video shot by Scott Curlin of the USAF, he's the other guy in the Axial T-shirt!

WOODLAND, HILL-CLIMBING, ROCKS AND BOGS

To help mix things up a bit the main group was split into two smaller ones with a good mix of all four classes in each. This was so to make it as interesting for the spectators, as the competitors themselves. Rigs ran in turn, with each group completing two sections of the four we had laid out each day. Timing and scoring was strict, with a ten-minute time-out if competitors took too long to complete each section. Gates were marked by numbered red flags instead of the more usual markers of half tennis balls and directional arrows. Gates were designed to be varied and challenging, this wasn't just an amble through the woods here, this was a full on competition designed to level the field and throw a few surprises at the competitors. We even had an appearance in the woods from the 'lesser spotted Jamie Booth' and his son to see what scale was all about and wish us all luck with the event. I think he got it, or at least had a better appreciation of a slower form of competition. Who knows, we may even tempt him to compete in our next planned comp with an RRCi review rig?



Above: Frank McKinney course two, day one... concentrating up the hill climb ahead, funnily enough, he wasn't wearing an Axial T-shirt (yet!)

Below: Speedy Steve's winning SCX10 based rig. The Exo-Cage was hand-fabricated, the body is a cut 'n' shut of two others! -39 after two days, he was in the zone





Rich Cahill's Axial Wraith attacking a rock section... and getting 2nd place in the class for his efforts

THE FOUR COURSES DISSECTED

Offering you a blow by blow of the event would take me whole issue on its own, so here I will concentrate on describing each of the ten gate sections we had set for competitors.

COURSE 1: SOGGY BOTTOM

As there had been some of the highest temps on record in the days running up to the comp, our planned muddy area was more 'damp' or 'soggy'. Nevertheless the lowest lying of the four courses was hidden under a dense canopy of trees and away from the sunlight. LED lights looked amazing on all the rigs in this low light environment and with a mixture of dug out tree roots, natural inclines, drop-offs, boggy channels and leaf covered transitions the course itself was both fun and at a level that would still challenge every competitor. It culminated with a large rock gully that had to be attacked uphill and threatened to jam any rig by its cab (or rock sliders where fitted) if the wrong line was taken. Once successfully negotiated you then had to turn sharp right and pass through the last gate and off a drop-off as high as most rigs' wheelbases!

The Wraith class struggled to negotiate many of the tighter features with a much bigger turning circle and track width than many of the 1.9 or 2.2 based rigs, but relished the gates that required a higher wheel clearance. Axial SCX-10 based rigs seemed the best suited to this terrain and for those with winches fitted; there was plenty of opportunity to use them tactically to get up and over difficult obstacles even if they incurred a small +1 point penalty for doing so.

For those without winches, an occasional reverse to get a better line was required. Even an occasional 'hand of god' to turn over a stuck rig, or to move it onto the next when a gate proved too much and threatened to cause the driver to time-out. Better to complete the whole ten gates and enjoy the experience, than get stuck on gate two and spend five minutes trying to get up and over it! Spectators and drivers all laughed and cheered along with each other during every run. Clean runs and excellent driving was greeted with a round of applause, and funnier moments or perseverance and then triumphant gate conquering with even more applause mixed with copious laughter! We even had a frog appear at one point and hold up a run! We fell about as John Wasley safely escorted it away from the course.



Above: 1.9 based rigs had an advantage over the bigger Wraiths, they just slipped through gaps without getting hung up



Above: Even in stock form the RTR Wraith coped well with the terrain, just needing a little weight adding to the front wheels to alter the bias and help pull itself up and over obstacles



Above: All sections provided a varied challenge, but were designed to really test driver skill



Above: Rich Cahill goes over the top and clears gates four and five on course two

COURSE 2: THE HILL CLIMB ZIGZAG

Course two was to become a favourite of many of the competitors. It consisted of a very steep, loose surfaced, mud and rock incline with gates placed in a zig-zag fashion up the length of the 100 m long section. Rocks had to be climbed to reach certain gates, and there were loop backs and gates that had to be completed in an opposite direction meaning you had to plan your route to reach them. Linking the main uphill with the first zigzag was an off camber left turn then immediate sharp right up a rock ledge. This caught out a few rigs and caused them to tumble back and sometimes into the bracken below. Again a rock gully was one of the penultimate gates and this course finished with a steep climb up a huge rock and through gate ten. BUT you had about a foot to stop dead or your rig would fall over the edge and drop about six feet onto the downslope below. Most managed this perfectly; some didn't hit the brakes in time and paid the price... a choice few even drove off on purpose... JB you're a nutter!

COURSE 3: THE ANT'S NEST

Course three had the most varied terrain of the four we had set out. The first gate seemed like a simple shallow angle rock climb but caused a few traction issues and needed multiple attempts from some rigs just to get up and through. The course then consisted of climbing up, over tree roots, around trees, staggered rock formations, along a ledge overhung with bracken, across a bridge consisting of a partial tree trunk and rocks we constructed ourselves and that collapsed into a minor landslide during madpete's run! – luckily it was easily re-constructed. The final few gates consisted of a huge and very steep uphill rock gully that made most competitors break out the winch, and one even winch his rig straight up the left side of the gully almost vertically up and through the gate (a very clever line and use of a winch!) Gates nine and ten were stepped rock climbs that again, yes you guessed it, finished precariously at the highest point of the last rock and again in danger of a big drop over the edge if you didn't hit the brakes in time.

One thing that added an extra dimension to this course was the huge ants nest that erupted right in the middle of the course during day one! Now these guys had definitely been eating well as they were about five times the size of garden ants and would have made a good sci-fi 'B' movie... and man did they bite if you annoyed them! I even got worried they would gang up and try and carry off the RRCi review Wraith at one point, but we used madpete as a decoy and they attacked him instead! We laughed until we cried at times, with one competitor who will remain nameless (but does drive a blue 'ClumberRC' Defender!) launching it up and over the start and finish gates with the kind of airtime usually associated with a Short Course truck!

COURSE 4: THE PHOTO OP

The last of the four courses had the most natural rock as its obstacles. There were a few tricks up its sleeve as well, with dug out tree roots crossing the path to certain gates and trapping unsuspecting rigs. A quick reverse and a faster entry speed was required to almost slingshot the rig up and over the roots and hopefully cleanly through the gate. This was perhaps the most technical of the four to drive and required the right line and wheel-speed to go through gates cleanly.



Above: Paul Koolman's RTR Honcho heads up and through gate six on course three. Note the innovative use of skateboard grip tape on his scale sand ladders



Above: The boys from clumberrc.co.uk came in force, this Axial SC10 Honcho sporting a Jeep Rubicon body just one of the rigs competing



Above: Airforce 2? Scott Curlin's Honcho reaching for the sky but taking gate 5's flag with it!



Above: Going up... Course two was really that dry and slippery, both days! It was a balance between throttle control and picking the best line



Above: The Land Rover was a popular choice of shell, but the Lexan vs Hardbody debate reared its head... personally I think it's each to their own live and let scale...



Above: Another 'Defenderised' SCX10 shows what the rock sliders are used for!

At the middle of the course you were required to negotiate a series of sharp turns to line up for each gate and then an angled drop off. The last few gates consisted of a photo opportunity by a huge Axial banner, where stopwatches were stopped, a photo taken of each competitor and then once the rig passed the banner... started again! Then yet another series of climbs up ever higher, steeper rocks to the final gate. It actually felt quite sad to see the last competitors making their final runs.

The criticism that some have made at past crawler comps that you only got two five-minute runs in a day was totally forgotten here as most competitors took their time to negotiate each gate, enjoy the whole varied experience and got nearly twenty minutes running each day.



Above: We know who this guy in the Axial T-shirt is...

SO... WHO IS THE GUY IN THE AXIAL T SHIRT?

Being part of a group of like-minded people just adds to the sense of community at an event like the Nationals. Forums may come and go, but meeting up, shaking hands and running rigs together in comps or just for fun can't be beaten. There were no prima donnas present, no toys being thrown out of prams after a bad run and judging by the response of all who entered, the event has made many re-assess how they view competition and how things can get too serious at times. Life is about enjoying yourself and having fun, and this successfully blended this with the underlying feeling that we were doing good and raising money for charity.



Above: Will Koolman lives up to his surname and made gate eight on course two seem easy... others didn't fare so well



Above: It was quite dark under the canopy of trees on course one... LED's help light the way while negotiating 'Soggy Bottom'

After Speedy entered all the scores into his laptop, the XL spread sheet he created then calculated the final scores and results read out class by class. The winners in each category were presented a beautiful trophy that Chris Dickinson had designed and made himself especially for the event, his new laser-cutter at Radshape doing a grand job of cutting out all the trophies' individual components.



Above: Now this is a little different, and show the real diversity of rigs competing... it was also possibly the heaviest rig entered!



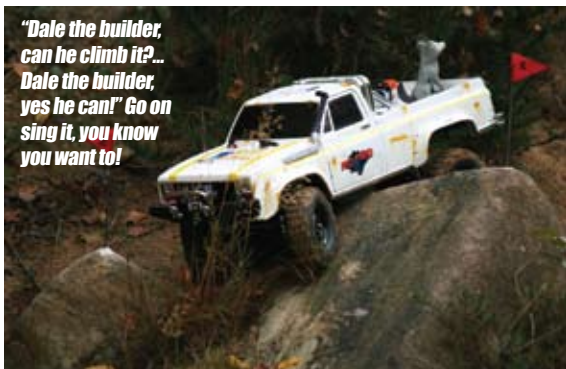
Above: Rich Cahill's class 2 rig... just points behind Speedy Steve after two days... he drove it like he built it... not stole it!



Above: What's that coming over the hill... is it a scaler?... a scaler? (sorry, couldn't resist!)



Above: A more traditional looking hard bodied Hilux really looks the part while negotiating course two



"Dale the builder, can he climb it?... Dale the builder, yes he can!" Go on sing it, you know you want to!

Right: Progress on gate eight, the review Wraith finished 3rd in its class... now the real modding and hop-ups can begin! Look out for part II in a future issue of RRCi





Above: "Some say he plays Fruit Shoot Roulette, others that he bites ants, but we know him as... Speedy Steve"

The Top three in each class were as follows:

- Class 1 Rigs – 1st Andy Smith on +81, 2nd Dale 'The Builder' (yes he did!) on +82, and 3rd Chris Robinson on +156
- Class 2 Rigs – 1st Speedy Stephen Allen on a staggering -39, 2nd Rich Cahill on an equally amazing -24, and 3rd Bruce F on -19
- Class 3 Rigs – Chris Foxell on -2, 2nd Scott Curlin on +144, and 3rd John Barnicoat on +394

Below: Onwards and upwards... into the valley of the dolls... quite literally!



Above: Scott C trying 'Shock and Awe' tactics on course three's final gate, the sticker in the back window says it all



Above: If only the plants were as scale as this Land Rover





Above: Why clean it when it's just gonna get dirty again? Wallaz does have a point... well I'm not gonna tell him he's wrong!

Wraith Class – 1st Royce on +23, 2nd Rick Cahill on +45, and 3rd Peter Gray on +51

The above scores just show how different each class actually is, and with twenty-two competing in Class 2 alone, that performing a few mods and a winch or two seems to be the most popular way to go with a competitive build.

If there were a 'Man of the Match' it would undoubtedly go to Rick Cahill. Not only did he give Speedy Steve a really close fought battle in Class 2, but he also came second in the Wraith Class too. If you don't know Rick, he's a great guy that uses a stick to aid him walking after having the lower portion of his leg amputated. Now for most of us competing it was a real struggle just to stay upright on sections like the hill climb and clambering up and over rocks and tree roots (I fell over about five times in two days! ED) Rick never battered an eyelid and his driving skills match his determination and strength of character in negotiating the four sections. To this end, Speedy Steve presented Rick with the Radshape trophy that he had won and gave him the win in Class 2. A true sportsmanlike gesture, and one that was greatly appreciated by everyone in the group.

CONCOURS AND CHARITY RAFFLE

Concours was the one part of the Nationals that we as organisers were dreading. You see how hard is it to single out just one rig to win when so much time and effort had been put into the builds that lined up ready for judging. Well in the name of democracy and fair play we got Frank McKinney of HPI to pick his favourite three, with the whole



Above: Steve Day takes the deserved win in concours and a Losi Micro Trekker for his efforts

crowd offering a cheer and a show of hands to pick the final winner. Take a look for yourself, the winner really did deserve it and won a Losi Mini Trekker for his efforts courtesy of Horizon Hobby.

We finished the day with a charity raffle with all lots donated by our official sponsors, the RRCi team itself and even competitors throwing items into the pot. Axial and CML had donated a SCX10 Honch kit, Horizon a Losi Comp Crawler and there were about twenty-five other items that all went to good homes. The RRCi team had also bought a large quantity of tickets, and we kept winning! But each time the prize was refused and placed back into the pot, much to the amusement of the crowd.

Dale 'The Builder' had had a similar fundraising event of his own on the Saturday night for anyone at the campsite. He auctioned



Above: How's that for a prize haul! And only cost them £400 in raffle tickets...



Above: Andy Smith takes the Class 1 win on +22 points



Above: Chris Foxell took the Class 3 win on -2 points



Above: Royce took the Wraith class win on +23 points



Above: Speedy Steve stepped aside to give Rich Cahill the Class 2 trophy on -24 to a huge round of applause from the crowd, inspired driving from an exceptional competitor

off various bits of his (and I'm sure others') R/C paraphernalia, with anything from small accessories right up to a pair of R/C tanks! The goods were then delivered by scale rig on the back of a trailer to the winning bidder! Hysterical for all that witnessed it, and helped raised extra funds for the charity... top job that man!

After the dust settled, all the sponsors' banners were taken down and everyone bar the RRCi team had departed, we had a little group meeting. With extra funds being pledged by team members donating their contributor fees, (thanks guys) and all the entry money added to the pot, we will have raised just under £1,000 for the Pluto Appeal and will be presenting them a cheque at the end of October.

I as editor of RRCi would like to thank each and every one of you for making this event possible. Everyone involved has started another snowball rolling here, and it can only get bigger and better. This scale event felt now like crawling did in its infancy, and it re-engaged something inside my brain that I knew was missing. Everyone left this event buzzing and talking about planning the next. Being laid back, and fun and accessible is the key, without too many rules stifling things.

Watch out for more RRCi Scale events in the very near future, and we have had one final good piece of news to share. The Club that owns and runs the Bracken Rocks site have stated that as I paid the rental fee personally for this event (my contribution), and it was for charity, they will give us the facility free for the next two-day event, allowing us to again donate the entry fees collected to the Pluto Appeal and swell the amount raised further... you are a bunch of gentlemen and RRCi thanks you!

So until the next event it's goodbye from the many people that were sporting an Axial T-shirt for this amazing weekend! Get yourself a rig built and come and join in...

Contact: rrci@traplet.com if you would like to be involved in any way with our next event, again funds will be donated to: www.theplutoappeal.com **RRCi**

Below: A great weekend, and the start of something more regular in the competition scene, watch out for more RRCi hosted comps in 2012 and roll on next year's Scale Nationals, we have a feeling it's gonna be huge!

