

## **RANDOM ROUTE IN THE TRAILS – FANCY A CANTER? PART 1**

There have been a few times over the last year when people have either said to me that the trails are “all hard tracks and forest roads” or have asked on facebook where the faster routes are. Well, I can tell you that there are plenty of softer tracks or ones with softer edges or growing in nicely in the middle.

So, instead of doing what we’ve done before and writing a piece describing a single colour route, I’m going to do a couple that include as many softer sections as I can. They may be linked by harder sections and they may not be the shortest – but you can do bits of it and I’ll try and keep it simple. This is the first one.

If you want to keep it really simple and maximize soft tracks I would suggest the Orange route.

### **Route 1**

From Hendre Car Park at post 17 turn right to 18 and head through Parc Llwydiarth going past 20, 21 and Hendre Dyfnant cottage following the Indigo (lilac) arrows to post 35 – when conditions are right, this surface can be lovely and smooth and not too hard.

Right at 35 and follow the route out of the forest towards Ddol Cownwy. This is actually road (so we can’t do anything about the surface!), but it’s tiny and hardly any traffic, great views.

At post 54 you turn left into a small open space and the track heads up hill from here, and I mean uphill. If you have a monster that bucks when you start cantering, this should stop it pretty quickly! It’s long and has a slight dip in the middle, then climbs up again and round a left hand bend past a picnic table where it opens out to great views again. If you are still cantering right at the top, your beastie is fit and well done!

From the top it dips down a short way to post 39 and you can either go left to 38 and then 37, turning right at 37 to head to 48 (sometimes smooth and soft enough to canter, depends on the conditions).

Or you can go right at 39, down the hill, up the hill (again, depending on conditions I’ve cantered up here) to post 40 turning left and heading to 47, left again and you’re at 48. Either way, from 48 head to 49 and turn right (I love this section, it’s got real atmosphere for some reason), again depending on condition, I’ve cantered all the way along.

You’re still on Indigo here. Past 55 to 56, where the track goes left up a soft section, it’s clay so watch out for slipping. It’s also quite twisty and the turn at 56 is sharp left.

You can canter down the middle here to 58. Turn right heading for 60. This is growing in nicely so you might get a sensible canter up it – be careful though. At 60 you’ll be heading left towards 61. This is long, soft and good for a belter. You can do it in either

direction if you're confident about gentle slopes down. At the right time of year the heather makes this a purple corridor – it is amazing.

At the end, 61, turn right and look out for 59 where you will go left – it's soft and you can canter, but be careful if your pony can get out of hand, as it is very steep down at the other end – you can canter up it the other way and take some steam out!

At the bottom, 65, turn right and then left – there is a short cut across the corner, it'll be obvious once you're there, shortcut stony.

On to 67 where you turn left onto a long soft trail, they should be nice and tired by now so go for it if it's not too wet and slippery. At the end turn right and go past 26 to the bottom part of 5 ways, where you kind of go straight across.

Basically you get there to the end of the track you're on, go past the entrance of the next really wide one on your left and then you're off down the next one. All the way down here back towards Hendre –

Or, for more softness, head up the one after that one, up hill, and to post 12 and ride the orange route back to 28 and down to Hendre.

**As with all these things, just be careful. If you're going faster, have poor brakes (me!) and don't know the track you need to be thinking ahead. I've done my best to describe where turns, dips and slopes are but I can't guarantee not to have forgotten something – I am starting to get on a bit.**