

North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

Flight of Fantasy Run – 1st September, 2013.

The weather forecast was good and I arrived at Tony's Diner at 9.59am to find a gratifying number of gleaming machines already assembled with their respective owners enjoying the morning sunshine. I had printed 25 route sheets thinking that this would be sufficient, however some 27 riders signed on, an excellent turnout.



Bikes at the start and Paul Harris with his 1930 Sunbeam Model 8 350

The route pretty much followed last years, with the exception of not finishing at the Classic Bike show at Lacon Childe School which this year is on the 14th and 15th September. Leaving Tony's, we headed onto the A458. Going up the hill I settled in behind Dave Roberts on his splendid Matchless vee-twin just to hear it waffling along. We continued out towards Criddon, Upper Netchwood and Holdgate. There were some sharp climbs, up The Hope towards Clee St. Margaret. Last year, Brian and Pat Empsall, in the vintage Triumph outfit uncharacteristically broke down early, and even more uncharacteristically were unable to effect a roadside repair. No such problems this year and the reward for the climb was a magnificent series of views across towards Clee Hill and beyond, followed by a long decent to Hopton Cangeford. Last year, the hedges had not been trimmed, restricting the views, but not

so this year allowing us to appreciate the wonderful countryside on our very doorstep.

Some of the roads had been resurfaced since last time and some had deteriorated further, giving us the opportunity to negotiate bands of gravel and grass growing in the centre of the lane. No coffee stop, we rode on to skirt around Clee Hill and to the Crown at Hopton Wafers for the Flight of Fantasy judging. Brian and Pat arrived about ten minutes after me, I think that some of the riders on more modern and not so modern machines had been cracking on a bit.

The Crown is nicely placed and well-appointed for us, but their menu is rather pricey. I had the roast beef, and whilst it was excellent fair, I would have been happy with half the amount for half the price. Pensioner's Lunches?



Most riders will know that the Flight of Fantasy is not a concours event but a riders award for the machine that they would like to take home, other than your own of course. Often, voting is very close and in the event of a tie, I have the casting vote, however it certainly was not needed this time as the runaway winner was Dave Roberts with the magnificent Matchless.

I tried to get a picture of Bill Danks leaving on his Francis Barnett but as usual, he was traveling too fast, hence he is blurred!

Next time I will try to put in a coffee stop and a more scenic route back to Tony's. Thanks to everyone who rode and helped make it all worthwhile.

Trevor



Julian's Excursion – 8th September, 2013.

On arrival at Patshull Park the lodge office was already busy with fishing teams booking in and being taken to their boats. At 9.50am the first rider appeared, Peter Gray on his Triumph Tiger 100 followed by a steady stream of other riders, 20 machines gathered in the car park with riders meeting up with 3 machines from the Triumph Owners Club. Paul Harris arrived on his 1914 Douglas the oldest machine on the run today, closely followed by Ian's Harris's 1927 Sunbeam.



At the boating lake, Ian Harris and Martin Ayres sampling the tea and bacon baps.



Paul Harris' 1914 Douglas, it was great to see a Veteran machine out for the day.

We set off around 10.30am heading towards Pattingham, then north towards Gnosall. Due to the rain we had on the previous Thursday I was more than concerned that a small section of the road in between two fields would be severely flooded as there was 3-4 inches on my test run two weeks previous. Maurice Trupp must have been tipped off as he arrived in his wellington boots and overtrousers. From Gnosall we headed out towards Haughton then turned off on much quieter lanes through Ranton, Ellenhall, then skirting the outside of Eccleshall onto "highlanes" climbing steadily with lovely views to the west before reaching the farm and turning west onto Croxton through a narrow sandstone cutting heavily overshadowed by trees. We then travelled south to Bishop's Offley, then turning west onto Cheswardine to the coffee stop.

On arrival a full military memorial service had just started at the church opposite, consequently the car park was virtually full on our arrival.

Riders
arriving at
the coffee
stop in
Cheswardine



After suitable refreshments we headed out west again crossing the A41 towards Stoke on Tern and Stoke Manor before heading due south to Great Bolas.

The area was full of farms local to the Crudgington Dairy Crest creamery less than 2 miles away.

We then crossed the river Strine and headed on down to Kynnersley before heading east onto Lilleshall. After crossing the A518 with Lilleshall Old Hall on our left we then headed south into Sheriffhales with the manor house on the right hand side, then onto Burlington where we crossed the ford then down to the main A5 crossing.

After passing Shifnal to the west we then headed into more familiar scenery from Paul's ride a bike route taking us through Ryton, Beckbury, Burnhill Green onto the late lunch stop at The Boycott Arms Upper Ludstone where we enjoyed the afternoon sunshine, freshly made sandwiches with chips and to finish the day a nice glass of beer! As the skies darkened riders felt a pressing need to get off home before the rain arrived.

Many thanks to everyone who came out to support the run, with no breakdowns en route.



Julian

The Levis Cup Trial and Marjorie Cottle Trophy – 29th September 2013

The sun shone, the trophies glittered, the Severn sparkled in the background, the scent of new-mown hay pervaded the paddock and a galaxy of modern machines delivered the spectators. The scene was set for a truly memorable Levis Cup Trial, on the Centenary of the event. There was even a 1913 machine present – Bill Leach's Triumph Roadster. That machine could find its own way round any Levis course we could devise, it's competed so often. All Bill has to do is fill it with petrol and start it!

As an experiment this year, Bill Danks lengthened the morning route and shortened the afternoon one, eating into the lunch break but enabling competitors to get back to the start with plenty of daylight left. We thought he might have overdone it with 65 miles to Ludlow, but it did enable him to incorporate some new



hills! We even had a fuel dump at Check Point 4 for those flat tankers with very limited capacity. Fortunately, it was not required. As it happened, the only unscheduled top-up required was by a certain ex-WD Ariel-riding PhD laureate and author who forgot to fill up at the garage just before Ludlow! The extended morning also required some last-minute revision of the afternoon running order to give those on 18 and 20mph schedules time for a cup of tea and a comfort break.

53 pre-1946 Levis Cup machines (including four Levises) and seven, pre-1965, under 200cc, Marjorie Cottle Trophy entrants set off on a morning ideal for riding old motorcycles. Sadly, we had some early mechanical disasters, including one of the two back-up vehicles (now there's a luxury) but Les Hobbs in the second van completed a fault-free circuit! Our sincere thanks go to both him and to Hazel for their willingness to spend a long day navigating around roads that are scarcely wide enough for BSA Three-wheeler, let alone a Transit. An early casualty was Mike Stephenson, whose Ariel broke its gearlever not long after the start. Fortunately, he was able to find second gear and limp home the few miles to Stourport where he collected his Norton to be present at the finish. Cathryn Barton also hit transmission trouble with a failed clutch on her little BSA. Les enjoyed her company the rest of the way in the van.



Meanwhile, out on the course, Mike Walker on his immaculate 1934 500cc Moto Guzzi Model V was proceeding effortlessly and accurately, so accurately in fact that he won the Levis Cup. It is, I believe, the first time that a “foreign” machine has won the event. Keith Sams on a 1929 350cc H29 OK Supreme was runner-up on the tie-break (the Whitbatch Flexibility test) from Stephen Nutt on a 1935 350cc Levis A2. Three fewer penalties, and a Levis would have won the Centenary Levis Cup Trial – that would have been nice! Mary Roberts won the LeVack Trophy for best Vintage performance, despite kippering the Starter and the Secretary of the Meeting at the Lenchford start. It’s a good job we don’t have penalty points for emissions.

Jenny Hart and Francis Arrow in their 1930 BSA Tricar won the Alice Round Cup for best Opposite Class. The much under-rated BSA stormed up Whitbatch Hill on the Flexibility test, in one of the best performances of the day. Brian and Pat Empsall won the Rolley Newton Cup for best outfit once again. Pat opted for a little light exercise, walking up Flagstaff Hill, leaving Brian and the Triumph to their own devices. Flagstaff and Farlow Hills, as in the very first Levis Cup Trial in 1913, caught out several riders, including the owner of a very recently acquired Hinckley Triumph Thruxton. Insufficient revs led to insufficient go-forward, a bent clutch lever, scratched silencer and a pulled hamstring!

In the Marjorie Cottle Trophy competition, Paul Raybould took his little gem of a 1964 Honda CB160 to a well deserved win. His performance on Whitbatch was quite remarkable considering he only had 166cc at his disposal. His performance was bettered only by the winner of the John Greenwood Trophy, Roland Robinson, on his 1934 600cc OHC Ariel Square Four. A few attempts on the hill were disallowed when the riders threw in a cheeky gear change!

In the Marjorie Cottle Trophy competition, Paul Raybould took his little gem of a 1964 Honda CB160 to a well deserved win. His performance on Whitbatch was quite remarkable considering he only had 166cc at his disposal. His performance was bettered only by the winner of the John Greenwood Trophy, Roland Robinson, on his 1934 600cc OHC Ariel Square Four. A few attempts on the hill were disallowed when the riders threw in a cheeky gear change!



Mary Roberts (left) on the 1929 250cc two stroke Rex Acme that had kippered Officials at the start, and the appropriately bearded Alan Dignan on the 1923 350cc Beardmore Precision



Back at the Lenchford in time for tea, there were a lot of big grins around the place, and one rider thought it was the best Levis he had ever done. As a relatively small section, however, North Birmingham is facing increasing difficulties in putting on the Trial. With eight time checks, two observed hills and the flexibility test to man, and the need for very active marshalling of the riders and spectators in Ludlow Market Square, it is a highly labour intensive undertaking. Add in the growing bureaucracy and cost of the ACU and MSA permits required for a competitive event, and the growth of traffic on formerly very quiet country roads, and the problems begin to multiply. It is only by drafting in non-VMCC family and friends (even members of Bill Danks' jazz club were pressed into service) and members of the Worcester Section, that we were able to man all the posts this year. If the event is to continue, then we must have more volunteers to take on roles as officials, observers and marshals.

Bill Danks did a brilliant job as Clerk of the Course, preparing a marvellous route and flawless route instructions, as well as twisting numerous arms to get enough bodies to man the posts. My thanks go to him and all those, too many to name, who gave up their Sunday to help run this unique event. My thanks also go to the riders, particularly those who have supported the Levis for many years, and we look forward to seeing you all next year.

In 1923, Geoff Davison won the Levis Cup outright. In 1954 he presented it to the VMCC, so next year is the 60th Anniversary of the revival of the Levis Cup Trial. The 2014 Trial will be held on 28th September, once again at the Lenchford Hotel.

Summary of results



The Levis Cup - Best performance – Mike Walker, 1934 Moto Guzzi Model V

The Alec Ross Cup – Runner-up – Keith Sams, 1929 OK Supreme H29

The Alice Round Cup – Best opposite class – Jenny Hart, 1930 BSA Tricar

The LeVack Trophy – Best performance on a vintage m/c – Mary Roberts, Rex Acme 250

The Albert Mattox Trophy – Team Award – Reg Eyre, Mary Roberts, Jaqueline Bickerstaff

The Rolley Newton Cup – Best performance on a Sidecar – Brian Empsall, 1928 Triumph Model N De Luxe combo

The Omyga Trophy – Best performance on a post-vintage m/c – Stephen Nutt, 1935 Levis A2

The Sgt H J Colley Trophy – Best performance on an ex-WD m/c – Bob Ashwin, 1943 Royal Enfield CO

The John Greenwood Trophy – Best Performance on the Flexibility Test – Roland Robinson, 1934 Ariel 4F

The Timekeeper's Trophy – Best performance on time – Ian Cole, 1929 BSA Model H

The Peter Ashen Cup – Best performance by a female rider – Jacqueline Bickerstaff, 1926 HRD 70/S

The Levis Tankard – Best performance on a Levis m/c – Gordon Smith, 1937 Levis Model A

The Marjorie Cottle Cup – Paul Raybould, 1964 Honda CB160

Paul Hutton

Autumn Run –13th October, 2013.

When I planned this route in August it was a lovely day, as it was also for the test ride 10 days before the run. Though I say it myself, it looked like a cracking route, interesting countryside and good views. Those who came along will have to take my word for it as the weather forecast for the 13th October was for cloud, rain and wind, and it was not wrong. In due course 10 riders gathered at Tony's Diner as the rain steadily got worse, clearly set in for the day. Stuart Munro came along in his car out of curiosity but not expecting anyone to be daft enough to ride. How wrong he was; these were hard core members, veterans of Bill Dank's wet rides over the last two years. I took refuge in the café to sign people on and extract their £2s, while some cowered under the veranda outside.

First away was Colin Lloyd on his BSA B33, accompanied by Bill Harley and Eric Greenfield on their Triumphs, soon followed by Paul Harris on the 1930 Sunbeam (a splendid effort to turn out an a pukka vintage machine on such a day), Maurice Trupp on the Ariel Arrow and Rob Todd on the Triumph Adventurer. We then waited while Martyn Griffiths tried to start his Triumph 3HW, but the bike had wisely decided to spare both itself and Martyn a grim day and refused to start. Martyn later told me the magneto had got sufficient water in on the ride over to halt play for the day. Stuart generously offered to take Martyn home to collect his trailer, so the final three of us left, Jonathan Jinks on the WW2 M20, Ron Higgins on his 1958 BSA Golden Flash and me on my 1950 Plunger Flash.

We went down towards Highley then skirted Brown Clee through Ditton Priors before going down and across to Cardington. Maurice and Rob caught us up, having stopped for petrol, so now we were five. Somewhere before Cardington while going down a hill Jonathan had an incident. One arm of his lower front mudguard stay came adrift and got caught up in the spokes, which spun it round, ripped the stay clean off and spat it out. Meanwhile the front wheel had caught hold of the mudguard, dragging it up towards the fork yoke. Fortunately Jonathan was able to stop safely and it could have been a lot worse. A few minutes later Paul Harris hove into view on the Sunbeam, having been delayed while temporarily unsure of his position, an emerging theme of the day.....



The deformed bottom stay perched on Jonathan's rack, left, and the bent front mudguard.



A period of spannering followed while Jonathan, aided I'm sure by plenty of advice from the other five of us, removed the damaged front mudguard and strapped the remains onto the rear carrier. He said it was original tinware so would have to be fixed, I suggested that any unfixed blemishes could be put down to Panzer damage. And then we were off again. A few miles later I saw Paul miss a turning, so chased after him to correct matters. This delay led to he, Ron and I losing touch with the others and, soon after, HORROR, a sign post where none had been before and I'd put 'NO SP' on the route card. I think it may have previously been buried in a somewhat hirsute hedge, but it was there now, large as life and I feared confusion may have resulted.

A short while later, after negotiating the green lane (Paul was determined to do it), we arrived at the White Horse at Pulverbatch, cold, wet and going on for an hour late. There was as yet no sign of Maurice and Rob. Oh dear...



At the lunch stop, Jonathan putting his M20 onto the stand. Having ridden some miles without a front mudguard his face had by now gained a most authentic green and brown camouflage effect to match his riding jacket and machine livery.

On entering the pub a court appeared to have been set up, with Colin in full flight as prosecuting barrister, Eric and Bill either as magistrates or victims, I was unsure; possibly henchmen as the situation had more than a touch of the "Ah, Mr Bond, we've been expecting you" about it. An amused Martyn Round sat in the gallery observing proceedings, having arrived at Tony's late and made his way straight there. "Now then Mr Spencer", Colin greeted me, "we'd like you to explain your route". It looked like I was doomed but I pointed out that they had made it there OK and some time ago by the sound of it as they'd finished eating. I tried to claim some mitigation but it was to no avail. The guide mileages were wrong as well, my fate was sealed and I skulked away to the back of the courtroom to await judgement.

The Court in recess considering sentence.



Maurice and Rob arrived shortly afterwards, which was a relief, and we now had everyone who had set off from Tony's. After lunch Colin and Co decided to make their way back by the "direct route" (I think he meant a route that I'd had nothing to do with!), while Martyn, Jonathan, Paul, Ron and I followed the planned route down and across to Cressage. Paul and Martyn then took themselves off towards home while the remaining three of us continued through Ironbridge to Sutton Maddock.

I'm grateful to Steve and Vicki at the White Horse for making us so welcome, setting aside the top bar for our use, and putting up with the puddles on the floor. Thank you also to those members who turned out on such a foul day to support the run. I'll probably have another go next year if I'm out of the penitentiary by then, if my rehabilitation is going well, and subject to satisfactory progress with my course of counseling.

Dave Spencer



Paul Harris calls this dirty, he should have seen my Flash!

Winter Wander. - November 17th 2013

The Winter Wander, the last run of the season, again followed its now established format of a two-start event with The Lock at Wolverley being the south western start point and Halfords at Cannock the northern one.

Southern Report

A dozen riders gathered at The Lock, Wolverley, to participate in the last formal ride of our season The Winter Wander. Colin, Ron and Bill(H) lead us away toward Trimpley and the Severn crossing in Bewdley town. Gladder Brook ford at Liverage presented no difficulties, though the steep approach with its muddy and damp surface caused hearts to flutter in the face of an oncoming Land Rover. The gent was kind enough to back-off (downhill) in order that Morganeering Bill could pass.

Once out of the valley a clean run through Bliss Gate and over Pound Bank, accompanied by stunning views of the late autumn landscape, took us toward Buckridge and Bayton. The road over Ninevah Ridge was traversed with care, high banks and an interesting surface served to reduce our view of the russet countryside to occasional glimpses only. Through Cleobury and onto Catherton Common, Oretton and Silvington allowed us to stretch our legs before plunging into the mud around Aston Botterell and The Bold. Wow – an old phrase ‘Guddelling in the clart’ sprang to mind! Clear roads reappeared at Wrickton so allowing a more relaxed ride through Neenton to Middleton Baggot and so Bridgnorth. Ten very muddy machines met with Paul’s contingent for a well earned lunch at Tony’s. Yes, ten, two of our number took a shorter route...not so much cleaning needed..... wise lads!



Trevor Bull's splendid Pre-war Triumph was back out after a 3 year rest

Northern Report

Not such an inviting morning for our last run of 2013 with heavy cloud and wet roads. 7 machines gathered at Cannock, Ariel, BSA, Douglas, Kreidler, Matchless, Triumph and Velocette all well over 50 years old. A good mix in the true spirit of the VMCC.

The route took us on a sweep through South Staffs into Shropshire across The Severn Valley to Much Wenlock then via Monkhopton to meet up with the western starters for an all day breakfast at Tony's Diner in Quatford nr Bridgnorth. Plenty of mud and wet leaves kept your mind on the job but the ride was very enjoyable, the early winter colours were just spectacular. The majority of leaves somehow had resisted the recent gales.

Best good fortune of the day – Rob Todd's Matchless decided to cast off the main jet cover nut from it's monobloc. Not surprisingly the Matchless had stopped leaving a trail of petrol back to the point where the nut had left the carb. A quarter of mile walk back with 3 pairs of eyes peeled discovered the nut just resting in the mud waiting for pick up. Refitted and Rob was on his way again. Bike and ride of the day – Ian Harris on his recently acquired 1959 50cc Kreidler Florett (below), this excellent machine was flying along just eating up the miles along with the much bigger bikes – excellent!



Thanks to Paul Harris for the northern route and Martyn Round the southern one, and to both of them for the above reports and photographs.