

North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

Bill's Mid-Week Escape - Wed 17th April 2013

The postponement due to heavy snow of the Severn Valley Run scheduled for 24th March (to 4th August) turned this mid-week outing into the first run of the new season. Last year the day had been biblically wet but this time there was just a light mizzle first thing but that had dried up by the time we set off and the weather steadily improved. There was even a bit of sunshine. Seventeen riders signed on at Tony's and we were joined later by run organiser Bill Danks, who had another commitment and joined up with us later by riding around the route in reverse until we met up, in Ironbridge as it turned out. Riders included Maurice Trupp on his Ariel Arrow, trying out some new pistons; Ron Higgins, Ian Harris, Mike Stephenson, Les Bennett and myself on various BSAs; six Triumph twins, ridden by Peter Brind, Brian and Pat Empsall, Eric Greenfield, Bill Harley, Martyn Griffiths and Robb Tobb; John Shaw on the Velo MAC, Martyn Round on his 1939 Ariel NH, Peter Gray on a Moto Guzzi V50 and Robin Parker on his Honda CB 250.



Seventeen
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on at Tony's
Diner

Soon after 10.30 we were off, leaving Bridgnorth up the Ludlow Road before turning left to follow the lane through Oldfield and on for a few miles before crossing the Ludlow Road again

at Cleobury North and heading up towards Brown Clee, skirting the side of the hill, where there were still some quite deep snow drifts. We then dropped down towards Ditton Priors and on to Stanton Long before going up and over Wenlock Edge. The route then took us over towards the Wrekin, passing through Kenley and Cressage.



Martyn Round trying to appear intrepid on the flanks of Brown Clee, and below Mike Stephenson's BSA outfit.



As befits an early season run, there were a few mechanical problems. The brake on Ron's newly rebuilt front wheel started binding and had to be slackened off, and his machine was also running unevenly with a carburettor problem. Ian's BSA C11 ran out of sparks (again!) and had a severe electrical short that no one could pinpoint, so breakdown recovery had to be called, not easy in an area with poor phone signal. Once contact had been made and assistance called they decided to try the BSA one more time and it rewarded them by displaying its excellent sense of humour and starting straight away with no sign of the problem. It was then even more difficult cancelling the recovery than it had been requesting it. Finally, Robin's Honda loosened a rear chain sprocket attachment bolt until it jammed against the chain

adjuster, stopping the wheel going round and providing Robin with a narrow escape from what could have been a nasty accident. Fortunately none of these issues led to anyone being stranded.

The run continued to a coffee stop in Ironbridge and, rather than chance it with the difficult parking near the Bridge, the first riders decided to stop at The Swan Public House, a venue with decent parking and most of us gathered there in due course. The new licensees hadn't yet got organised with coffee making so we were 'forced' to have a beer.



Some of the happy band at The Swan. John Shaw had accidentally bought a plate full of chips and sandwiches and was sharing them round.

At the coffee stop I pointed out to Bill that amongst the 20 route sheets he had prepared there was one copy with the written part of the instructions but no diagrams. Bill was mystified how that happened. It would have been difficult following that one, but we eventually felt there could be a future in having more 'challenging' route sheets for the use of more experienced riders, just to keep their attention. There was also some confusion as a number of us noticed that we had covered about 10 miles less than the guide mileages on the route sheet, but after some consultation it was realised that we had neither been lost or had defective speedos. No doubt this was another of Bill's innovations to keep our minds active as our dotage approaches, and very kind of him it is.

After the 'coffee' stop the route took us along through Ironbridge, over the bridge to Broseley and towards Bridgnorth before turning right through The Smithies and following the lane through Tasley, past the Water Tower, down to Bridgnorth and back to Tony's, where some light refreshment was taken. Well, I say 'light', but I'm not sure that everyone found it easy to accept my explanation that sausages are a fruit and count as part of your '5 a day'.

Thanks Bill for an excellent route and for making all the arrangements.

Dave Spencer

Girder Fork Run – 19th May, 2013.

Some eighteen riders gathered on The Lock car park, Wolverley, at just after 10am for the Girder Fork Run, an eighty mile meander around the bottom of the Malvern Hills and back to The Lock. Amongst the earliest arrivals was a Norjap or Japton – a marriage of Norton running gear with a 750cc industrial JAP V-twin; the selection of donor parts and description of the installation made for an interesting conversation. At the other end of the line-up was Dave Elliot's Norton-HD, the American V-twin unit sitting in a suitably modified frame and again providing an interesting conversation regarding construction.



The Norton
– JAP Special

10.30 and the designated leaving time was heralded by the steady Bdrop - Bdrop - Bdrop of Bill's Aero Morgan, followed closely by the beat of Mark Homer's Sunbeam Lion combo with Mick Jones comfortable in the 'fag-packet' sidecar. There followed a flurry of activity as the car park resounded to a busy burble of twins topped with the open-pipe note of Mr Williams' Panther. For some, 10.35 was time to recheck the route sheet as what would have been the first and subsequent half dozen pictorial instructions were replaced by a single sentence – my apologies for not pointing this out when dishing out the sheets.

With Bewdley cleared, we climbed Long Bank then dropped into the lanes for Bliss Gate. Mid-May sunshine works wonders for the 'classics' such that a sprinkling of MG's and a post-war Bedford were all encountered in the early miles but, by the time we had passed through Rock the roads were pretty much ours. From Menithwood we looked out over the Teme valley – bathed in sunshine – a patchwork of greens, yellow and blossoms – marvellous – just as was the sweet sound of Maurice's Triton as he lead t'other Maurice – Matchless 500 and

Martyn Griffiths – ‘RAF’ Triumph onward to Stanford Bridge and the Shellsleys. Ankerdine Hill tested everyone’s brakes which cooled off when we stopped for coffee at The Talbot.



Mark Homer & Mick Jones: “That hill tests the brakes !”

Cooling off too was Alan Bromwich – B31 who, caught out by the day, had elected thermals as part of his riding attire, a decision narrowly avoided by yours truly at 9.30! Back markers Keith – Ariel KH and Roger Banton – Norton Atlas pulled in along with Jonathan Jinks – WM20 who had rendered ‘primary’ assistance to Ian Harris’s Sunbeam. From Knightwick we journeyed through Suckley and on towards Bosbury before dipping back into the lanes for Colwall and Coddington. Emerging just outside Ledbury we dropped down past Eastnor and over Midsummer at the tail end of The Malverns and so back to The Farmers Arms –Birts Street.

Fed and watered, the homeward journey to The Lock was contemplated with a few electing to take a ‘straight’ route home via Worcester whilst the rest of us, now in smaller groups, made our way back to the river crossing at Upton then by ‘B’ road to ‘almost Worcester’. The minor road through Himbleton took us to Droitwich and then via Chaddesley to Wolverley. A heaving car park put us off an afternoon tea so, with eighty six miles on the clock, home beckoned. My thanks to all who rode with us, or rode out to the meeting points.

Martyn Round.

Ride a Bike night and Concours, 26th June 2013.

After a period of dodgy weather, including a wet and muddy day for the Long Mynd Run on 23rd June, we had a fine day and a lovely evening for the Ride a Bike Night and Concours evening, held for the second year at The Boycott Arms, Upper Ludstone, and again organised by Paul and Chris Harris. As before the proprietors publicised the event, leading to a large turn out of non-VMCC members on a variety of motorcycles, classic cars, or just coming to have a look. From our point of view, 27 people signed on, an increase on the previous year, and most of them went off on the short evening run. That comprised a lovely circular route of about 20 miles of lanes and country roads and was well enjoyed by all.



Neil Allman brought along his families 1925 New Imperial.

Seen in the car park, neither concours nor original by the look of the lights, but certainly very unusual. The owner told us it was an HSG, of which 30 were made just after the war. It comprised an Ariel Square 4 frame with a Harley engine.





Josie Stanley brought Little Norman, the 1956 New Hudson, for an outing, making sprightly progress around the route.



Paul Hutton's very nice 1935 Sunbeam Model 95



Keith Little with his 1956 500cc Ariel Fieldmaster



Chris Harris presenting Awards to, left, Martyn Griffiths for his 1928 BSA Sloper (above); and right, Julian Edwards for his 1956 AJS Model 16



Clun Run – 7th July, 2013.

What a day this was, unbroken blue sky, temperatures reaching 80 and above, men's Wimbledon final to come in the afternoon and a good turn out of riders at Tony's for Ian Harris' Clun Run. 21 signed on, but Maurice Trupp had to retire from the start with a rear wheel binding on his Triumph. We had a number of visitors, one of whom had brought along a simply gorgeous BSA Rocket 3, looking as though a proud owner had just collected it from the dealership in 1969. I guess there might be a better one but it's hard to imagine. Other visitors included Ken Hayes from the Shropshire Section on his Velocette Viper and Kevin Egan on a 1966 175cc BSA Bantam.



Soon after 10.30 we were off before it got any hotter, taking one of our usual routes out of Bridgnorth along the Ludlow road and then right by the YELLOW cottage up the lane through Criddon to Ditton Priors. At least that was the plan but the first group met a tar and chipping gang along the lane but they hadn't yet started work and let them through. Later riders were not so lucky and had to detour onto the main road to Craven Arms. Not long after escaping the road menders, Colin Lloyd in the lead had a 'moment' on rounding a sharp right hand corner and finding a quadbike coming towards him on the wrong side of the road. A bit of nifty ziz-zagging and dicing with the verge averted disaster while doing nothing for Colin's heart rate. Colin's excitement wasn't over yet though, soon after he came across a pick-up abandoned in the middle of a lane with driver's door open and engine running. Then a huge tractor caused him to again take to the verge, the driver being occupied on his mobile phone. He next faced a car on his side of the road on a left hand bend in Diddlebury, caused by the driver having to go round a car parked on the bend on a corner on yellow hatch marking in order to have a chat with a bystander, and just yards from a car park. Colin offered some advice on parking through his crash helmet, but perhaps fortunately couldn't hear the reply. Surely that was enough excitement for one morning, but no. Soon after on the main road

down into Craven Arms we came behind a group of cyclists who, at the last minute and without looking turned right into a lane just as Colin was about to pass them. Another scare and it was with some wry amusement we learned from riders behind that one of the cyclists, having made it into the lane then fell off on some gravel.

It was with some relief that we reached the coffee stop at Harry Tuffins in Craven Arms, where Colin decided that he had had enough of leading on the road and he fell back into the peloton for the next stage.



The coffee stop
in Craven Arms

After coffee the route took us north out of Craven Arms and then left along a lovely lane up a hill through Round Oak towards Lydbury North and into Bishops Castle, where the plan was to skirt the southern edge of the town and take the lane out towards Bishops Moat. That was the plan, but Ian hadn't anticipated the Bishops Castle carnival and the road into town being closed. Officials were there to give advice, but that amounted to telling us to turn right and second left into town. They were divided about whether the lane we wanted was accessible; one said it wasn't, the other that it was. I spotted Ken Hayes riding purposefully into Bishops castle and

looking as though he knew what he was doing so, with a wave to the others to follow, we pursued him, picking up Keith Little on our way through town and just making it to the Bishops Moat turn before it was closed off. Later riders were not so fortunate and had to find a more extensive detour. After Bishops Moat we followed lanes down towards Mellington and then had a short section of more main roads into Sarn, where we turned left into the hills again. Sarn proved a useful landmark for Jonathan Jinks and Julian Edwards, who had been disrupted by the carnival, and they were able to get back on the route. The climb out of Sarn went on and on, eventually taking us up on to the Kerry Ridgway. The next



At the top of the climb out of Sarn

section of the route was stunning, taking us along lanes across hilltops and ridges with glorious views down into valleys in seemingly every direction. There was even an optional green lane (gravel really), which gave Kevin a chance to bound along on the Bantam and show us how it's done. The Bantam had kept up perfectly well all day and generally impressed with its ability. Soon after the green lane we came across Ian, whose BSA C11 had (again!) run out of sparks. He waved us on, saying that he had a dead short and would wire the coil direct from the battery and would be ok. Much later he arrived at the finish at The Sun Inn in Clun on the end of Martyn Round's tow rope, this having not worked as the electrical short was by then suspected to be in the condenser.

After lunch at the Sun we made our way home, and after such an eventful day I hope that everyone else had as safe and problem free journey as my small group did. Thanks Ian for a simply terrific route. There was general agreement that nobody does it better than Ian Harris, Routemaster!



Martyn and Ian arriving at The Sun Inn

Severn Valley Run 4th August 2013

We postponed this event due to blizzard conditions in late March. The weather for the past two weeks had been glorious, so I looked forward to some well-deserved summer sunshine, delightful views across the Severn and Teme valleys with a visit to Dave Spruce's Vintage Rally at Trimpley thrown in for good measure. Young David works hard to put on this event for charity and deserves our support. This year he'd allocated us a space in the display area and made a set of wooden boards for our centre stands.

Came the dawn and black ominous clouds rolled in from the west but undaunted I fired up the Morgan, collected my son-in-law Lee, riding my Triumph twin, and headed for the start at Tony's Diner at Quatford. As usual Tony made us very welcome and presented us with hearty breakfasts. First to arrive was Bill Orchard from All Stretton on his splendid and very quick 1925 Sunbeam. Bill has made a welcome return having been sent skywards whilst kick starting his 1952 Red Hunter Ariel earlier this year. His vertical ascent required surgery to the knee cap, muscles and tendons of his right leg and a long convalescence.



Bill Danks Morgan & Ian Harris & Bill Orchard's Sunbeams. Dave Roberts with his Norton

In they rolled in quick succession, Team Shifnal, Ian Harris 1927 Sunbeam and Martin Ayres 1961 AJS twin, Team Bridgnorth, Ron Higgins 1958 BSA twin and Dave Spencer 1954 350 Velo, Chris and Paul Harris in their low and fast Moto Guzzi powered Triking, Colin Lloyd, fighting fit and back in the saddle of his B33 500 BSA, Dave Williams on his 250 C15 BSA and Jonathan Clarke fresh from his John O'Groats-Land's End Jaunt and riding his deceptively quick BSA Bantam. Ian and Lesley Goodhall, from Kidderminster, arrived on their big and fiery Norton Commando followed by Stuart Munroe on his newly restored and immaculate Tiger 100C. It's great to see and encourage new faces into our eccentric society.

I have this strange passion for scanning the entries for our runs and depending on the numbers present stating it's an Ariel or a Norton Day!!! Well, undoubtedly, Sunday the 4th was a 'Triumph Twin Day' with no less 6 'signing on' from Martin Griffith's 1951 Tiger 100 through

to Eric Greenfield's 1972 Daytona plus a chap who just 'dropped in' on his way to Trimpley on a delightful early 50's Sprung Hub Speed Twin. However, vintage Sunbeams made their presence felt with a trio of side valvers from Messrs Orchard, Harris and Bull, potential Team Trophy winners in this year's Levis Cup Trial?



Trevor, Ian and Bill with their Vintage Sunbeams

With storm clouds gathering, I sent the assembly on its way with me taking up the position of 'Tail-End Charlie'. My route, similar to last year, WAS to take us up the Bridgnorth by-pass, then away from the main roads and down the quiet B4363 with its spectacular views across the Severn Valley, past Highley to Kinlet where we would dive into the Wyre Forest and to emerge at Clows Top with its views across to Abberley Clock Tower and the Malvern Hills beyond.

We were to turn right at Pensax and descend into the Teme Valley. At Stanford Bridge we were to motor along the Teme Valley, past Shelsley Walsh and up the steep climb over Woodbury Hill to cross the Martley road and through the apple orchards, onto Ockeridge and finally to our coffee stop at the Lenchford on the River Severn. It was not to be, having stopped to render assistance to a stranded and fuel less Triumph twin, now running late and low on fuel I reached Lem Hill and the heavens opened. I, as others did, made a quick decision and beelined the Morgan through Clows Top, Abberley, to the garage at Great Witley and on to Holt Heath and the coffee stop at the Lenchford.

Twelve bedraggled souls succeeded in reaching the coffee stop with Moss Trupp, Ariel Arrow and Bob Todd, Triumph Trail being the last to arrive. As conditions worsened, we sadly but rightly came to the decision to terminate the run at the Lenchford and forgo our visit to the Trimpley Vintage Valley.

Observations. Ian Harris dropped his flat tank Sunbeam into top gear on leaving Tony's Diner and remained in top until reaching the Lem Hill turn 13 miles later, tractability or what!!! Jonathan Clarke showed all a 'clean pair of heels' on the Bantam by overtaking everything in sight, but flew past junctions and had to 'back track' to regain the route. Worry not Jon, we've all done it in the past and will no doubt continue to do it in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen my sincere apologies for the conditions you experienced and many thanks for your support. Safe riding and all the very best.

Bill Danks

CRMC Classic Motorcycle Festival, Donington Park 10th & 11th August 2013

John Aston and Josie Stanley spent the weekend at Donington Park for the VJMC Classic Bike Show & CRMC Classic Motorcycle Festival. On the Saturday when the racing had finished all exhibitors were allowed a free track session. Josie took Norman the Third on the track and was the only one of nearly 100 people on the track that had pedals! It was an absolutely fantastic session and although Josie did not get the fastest lap she didn't get the slowest either! Everyone was very impressed (and amused) with Norman's performance and on the Sunday they put him in the concourse to represent the NACC and as the judge said "for the sheer fun of it and the performance on the track" they were awarded third overall.

