

Autumn Run – 8th October

This year my research for somewhere interesting to visit turned up the Churchill Watermill and Forge near Kidderminster, another small site run by volunteers and open just a few days a year. Enquiries soon revealed that they would be happy to open especially for our visit, and that hot drinks, biscuits and home-made cakes could be provided at modest cost. That would do nicely, the only problem being that it was only about 13 miles from Tony's Diner going the direct route, but that could easily be extended. Route planning commenced.



The weather had been a bit mixed this year but the forecast for the day looked promising so I gambled and printed off 25 route sheets. And so it proved, a pleasant morning and it stayed dry all day. Ten days previously Tony's had suffered a small fire but were back in operation so I went down early to have some breakfast and already a few riders had arrived. One of the first to say Hello was Rod Hann, the current VMCC President, now that doesn't happen on every run. In due course 25 riders signed on, what a good guess that was, and we had an excellent spread of interesting machines. These included 4 Vintage, 2 Post Vintage, 12 Post War, 6 Post 1960 and one modern scooter being ridden by octogenarian Dave Gaffye.



Of note, Jim Plant had come all the way from Solihull, bringing his 1930 ohc Velocette KSS (left, and he did get it off the trailer!); Brian and Pat Empsall, 1928 Triumph combination; Bill Danks brought his 1930 Morgan and Paul Harris his 1930 Sunbeam Model 8. Among the later machines Mike Cutler had brought the 1952 Nimbus that we first saw at Ride a Bike night (although he signed on as riding the '73 Guzzi Falcone through force of habit!).

The route took us into Bridgnorth over the old bridge, avoiding the never ending roadworks on the by-pass, then out on the Highley road through Eardington. We then took a right turn along the lane through Astbury, along which I came across Dave Chapman, whose B31 had run out of sparks. A small group of helpers had already gathered so I left them to it. In due course Martyn Round arrived, cleaned the slip ring and narrowed the plug gap to 5 thou, upon which she started but Dave sensibly decided to make for home and sort the issue properly. The route continued into Highley before turning off and going through Borle Mill, then on through Kinlet towards Bewdley. Another right turn took us through Sturt Common, emerging at Far Forest and then through Bewdley. After that we went up over Trimpley and skirted Kinver before arriving at Churchill, a distance from the start of 35 miles.



Bikes Parked at the Mill and, below, the millpond.



At the Mill we were provided with hot drinks, biscuits and the home made cakes as promised, the whisky fruit cake proving delicious and especially popular. Then Mrs Hayward, the daughter of the last mill operator, gave us a talk about the mill and its history. There has been a mill on the site since the 13th century and the forge had finally closed in about 1970. After that a trust had been formed to preserve the buildings and remaining machinery, and the site has

been designated an ancient monument. Members were then able to look around the site and talk to volunteers about the machinery. The two waterwheels were in motion, passing drive into the mill buildings through overhead shafts, drive belts and gear wheels taller than us.



After an interesting visit we set off again to make our way back to Tony's. Jim Plant's KSS promptly ran out of sparks but was soon revived. The route took us through Cookley and Kinver then Halfpenny Green, crossing the A454, past a ploughing match taking place, before circling round through Badger and back towards Bridgnorth. We again avoided the roadworks by going through Bromley, past Stanmore and the down through Quatford Wood.

I'm grateful that so many people turned out and seemed to enjoy the day, it makes the effort of organising these things feel worthwhile. I can now have 6 months off before starting to think about where we might go next year.



David Spencer

This is how a plan comes together: The photographer distracts six members, leaving the way clear for the Chairman to sneak a piece of cake!