

The Autumn Run – 9th October 2016

This year I thought of going to 'A Major Museum Site' in Shropshire and contacted their employee that deals with group visits. The response was so shambolic that I went elsewhere, and approached the Shrewsbury Steam and Small Machinery Museum at Coleham Pumping Station in Shrewsbury, which is run by volunteers. They could not have been more professional and helpful, draw your own conclusions!

So, the destination was known, so I had to do some route planning, which for me starts with drawing pencil lines on an Ordnance Survey map, then going out to make a draft of the route sheet. The first effort involved 47 miles from Tony's Diner to the Museum, too far, so I edited the early stages and ended up with 37 miles, more like it, and then 30 miles back to Tony's. Perfick. Now to produce a route sheet so I can ask Ron Higgins to go round and test the directions for me.

Weather is always a concern for run organisers, but we were in luck, the day dawned with blue sky and it looked like it would be OK all day.

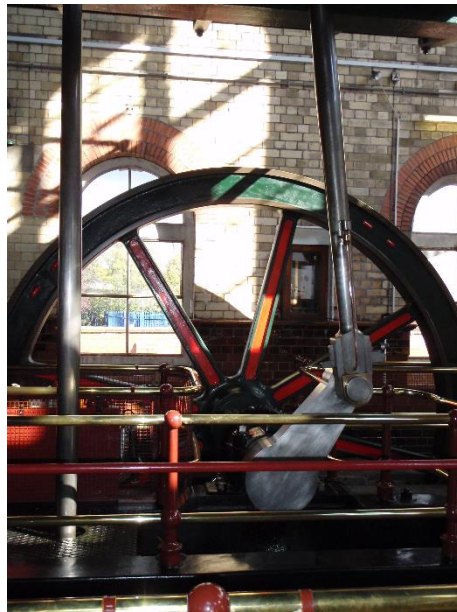
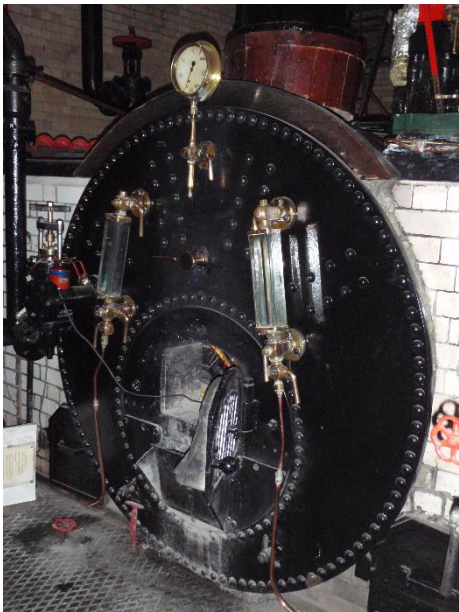


The usual social gathering ensued at Tony's, and eventually 18 of us set off for Shrewsbury. These included Roger Watkins, a newish member out for his first VMCC run on a Triumph 21. He didn't have a route holder, thought we'd be going up the main road, so I suggested he follow some others and asked Ray Heap to keep an eye out for him. Everyone else were more or less regular riders, and it was good to see Dave Roberts taking the Matchless Model X for an outing. Peter Gray was out on the Moto Guzzi, his Triumph twin still being in pieces after the recent catastrophic failure of the coating around the alternator coils. Might not sound much, but it filled his engine with a sort of black grinding paste....



The route, as amended, took us out on the Ludlow road as far as Neenton before turning right for Middleton Priors and continuing through Brockton to Easthope then up and over Wenlock Edge to Longville. We then went through Plaish and down Causeway Hill to Acton Burnell and approached Shrewsbury through Condover, Exfords Green, Annscroft and then down the Longden Road until the Pumping Station was on our right in Longden Coleham. As promised, the gates were open and we were ushered through to park in the rear yard.

The Pumping Station was designed and built in the late 1890's and was officially opened in 1901. The steam engines were then in use continually until being replaced by electric pumps in 1970. The steam machinery was left in place and the building opened to visitors, initially somewhat haphazardly by the council, before being taken over by the Shrewsbury Steam Trust in 1992 though the council are still responsible for the building itself.



This wasn't one of their usual open days, they opened just for us and we had the place to ourselves though the engines were not in steam, it's a 3 day process to get them going. I guess some of us can relate to that....?

We were warmly welcomed by a number of volunteers and offered tea and biscuits, which were most welcome. Then we were split into groups of about 6 and taken on guided tours around the site, boiler room (Cornish Boilers), engine room (beam engines designed by WR Renshaw of Stoke on Trent), and the recently opened up basement where the pumps and pipework are. It really was an interesting and informative couple of hours.



Paul Harris had his eye on a set of spanners.

The Pumping Station has a number of open days during the year and I can well imagine that some members will return on another occasion to see the engines in steam.

In due course a move was made to continue the run, with some following it all the way back to Tony's, while others peeled off for home. We left Shrewsbury along the old A5 past the Column and out through Atcham before turning right for Wroxeter and then right again for Eyton on Severn, following the lane with views of

the River Severn to the right. On reaching the Atcham to Buildwas road we crossed over, going up towards The Wrekin before skirting round and down to Leighton. A spurt along the main road then right for Much Wenlock before turning left to Wyke and following a nadgery lane though to the Broseley to Much Wenlock Road. Then a short stretch of B road before turning off again on a lane through Willey and the Smithies to Tasley on the outskirts of Bridgnorth. Then the main road back to Tony's and a late lunch.

I was pleased with the day, the weather, the welcome at the pumping station and the turn out of riders, so from my point of view it could hardly have gone better. Thank you to everyone who came. Stunt of the Day has to go to Alan Bromwich (right). The screw fell out of his spectacle frame and the lens fell down inside his full face helmet and landed on the top of his leg, from where Alan retrieved it and put it in his pocket. ALL WHILE RIDING ALONG!

Dave Spencer

