

The Autumn Run - 1st October

Well that was an eventful day out. Some years I like to take the Autumn Run to a museum or suchlike. We've been to a bus museum, water powered forge and a steam pumping station, and I've often thought that we'd go to Daniels Mill, a water powered flour mill on the edge of Bridgnorth, if it weren't only about 3 miles from our starting point at Tony's Diner. So, this year we did it, I planned a figure of 8 route taking us on loops of 30 miles there and 35 miles back to Tony's for lunch.

The weather during the days leading up to the run was wet, as was the forecast for the day itself, but the day unexpectedly brought blue sky as riders began to gather at Tony's. In due



course 18 riders signed on, a good number for any run, but bearing in mind the weather before, we had a few regulars on holiday, or who had other commitments, were unwell or riding elsewhere, I was very pleased with the attendance.

Just after 10.30 we were ready and set off, but John Shaw was delayed while his Velocette was

reluctant to start ("They all do that Sir!"), and Neil Trinder waited with him,

John Shaw's 1940 MDD Velocette and Neil Trinder's 1941 Matchless

it wanted a new spark plug. The outward route took us through Bridgnorth and then along Stanley Lane past the Golf Club and along the Severn Valley before curving round through Astley Abbots and joining the Broseley Road for a couple of miles. Then left into The Smithies and to Morville. The lane leading down to Morville was tricky, with slippery moss in the middle and a couple of walkers on the nearside obliging riders to cross the moss onto the other track. I managed this where there was a gateway to the side and no moss in the middle, but I understand that a few skiddy moments were had. Then, going along Telegraph Lane, a wide piece of road, we came to a very large flooded puddle on the nearside, too deep to ride through, but with a cars width of clear tarmac on the offside. A car was coming the other way so I waited, while the car driver, at speed, needlessly dropped his nearside wheels into a long and very deep pothole next to the verge and powered through, accompanied by a tremendous grating noise. The route then took us through Middleton Scriven and Chelmarsh before arriving at Daniels Mill, but not before I passed Neil Howells on his Norton Commando, going the other way. In due course Neil arrived, having found the handlebar mirror, the stem of which had fractured, which he got to just in time to see a car run over it and destroy the mirror head even if it had survived the earlier fall.



The first 9 of us were taken away for a guided tour of the mill, while the other 7 went for excellent coffee, tea and cake (the fruit cake containing 7 types of fruit went down particularly well) in Rosalie's café, and were joined in due course by the somewhat rattled Neil and John. The roads had been slippery, moss, mud, low sun flickering through hedges making seeing the road surface, or much at all, difficult, and 4 x 4 vehicles coming the other way at breakneck speeds. They hadn't enjoyed it, not at all. I thought it was lovely when I planned it in late August, but note to self: use bigger roads next year.

While all this was going on, a couple came in, the lady with an owl on her arm, a pet that she said she'd had for 16 years, an astonishing life span and much more than they usually manage in the wild. It sat on her wrist looking at us, while we sat there looking at it.

Once the dust had settled and refreshments taken we went for our tour, while the first 9 took our seats in the café.



The tour of the mill was very interesting, it being mostly mid-Victorian, but on the site of very much older mills going back many centuries. It's run by a Trust, staffed by enthusiastic volunteers, and needs more maintenance than can be afforded. The type of place that we should be pleased to support.



For me, the biggest excitement of the day (or in fact of any day recently) happened as we were leaving. The Flash went on fire! I tickled the carb, which I now think must have flooded and the vapour had got to where there was a spark in the mag to ignite it (the mag was rebuilt last year and I think is in good nick). I don't tickle until fuel comes from the hole, only until there is dampness around the jet block, but sometimes the float can be jammed or a speck of dirt under the needle, and it keeps flowing. It's an Amal 276, one I fitted new 10 or more years ago. There is a drip tray so any fuel wouldn't have run straight onto the mag. Immediately after I started the bike John Williams shouted to tell me what was happening, I turned the fuel off and stopped the engine. The flames weren't intense, just fluttering around the magneto and bottom of the carb, I don't think there was a lot of fuel there. It has an air filter and I don't think the flames could quickly get to where there was more fuel. While I was flapping at it ineffectually with my gloved hands, Kevin Fleet, who happens to be a fuel tanker driver, brought some damp soil and nettles and we put it out. If no one had seen it, I would probably have ridden off aflame... The only damage I can find is about half an inch of plastic sheathing has gone missing from the end of the choke cable. The throttle cable is untouched as is everything else so far as I can see. A very lucky escape! It will be many years before I don't have a look first before setting off. I will be dismantling the carb, HT lead connections etc just to check everything, but did the 35 mile run back with no problem. I've had the bike over 40 years and this has never happened before. And I've now bought fire extinguishers, one for the BSA top box and one for the Velocette! After all that, the run back, circling around Brown Clee and through Ditton Priors was a bit of an anti-climax, and thank goodness for that, I'd had quite enough excitement for one day! Thanks to all who came, and especially to John and Kevin!

David Spencer