

## Tour of Worcestershire 7th May 2017

Creating and organising my first run for the Section has been a daunting prospect, as over the years I've taken part in many events, all of which have been really enjoyable, each organiser bringing forth their own style in creating novel runs in our lovely locality. My brief was simply for a longish event to the South West of Birmingham, but still able to cater for our more northerly members, starting and finishing at the same place to enable the use of trailers. I added, good views, adequate "Potty Breaks" and cakes - of course.

Using a combination of Google Maps, Streetview, and a programme called Tyre to Travel, which was linked to my most recent Sat-Nav, I managed to create an "Armchair Route", both pictorially and with a route-card providing times & distances, the seventh of which provided a potential route. However, users of Sat-Navs will be aware of their dangers. The distances take no account of undulations of terrain leading to errors and the guys driving the Google camera cars, do come against problems. I was very amused to see its camera take a direct hit from a branch on one part of the route, flipping it over. Also, on another perfectly normal road I found a section about 50yds long that a Sat-Nav refused to pass, therefore including a long diversion of its own making. "Junk in = Junk out". This provided the excuses for a few bike rides with Alan Bromwich and Gary Langman to check-out dubious parts, and thanks go to Martyn and Elaine Griffiths, who did another thorough check for me by car. Then, 3 days prior, I happened to check Tom Tom's route planner to find a road closure and roadwork's just where they shouldn't be, so it was off out for another check, together with the now mandatory cream tea or lump of cake.

I had been panicking over the weather. Having been dry for so long, could it hold out? Would anyone turn up? Saturday was foul but in stark contrast, Sunday brought glorious sunshine. Being the organiser I thought I'd better get to the start early but



was already 3rd to arrive, rapidly followed by a quick succession of 26 bikes (plus 1 pillion rider) all eager for a day out. A lovely cross section of machines assembled, dating from a 1919 Model H Triumph to a 2013 Triumph and made-up of 8 Triumphs, 2 Nortons, 3 Matchless's, 3 BMW's, a 200 MZ, 2 Honda's, 5 BSA's, a Moto Morini 3.5 (only arriving to Stuart Monroe on the Friday before) and Paul Harris's lovely little Moto Guzzi Lodola. One novel feature of the start that I would love to retain, was that Alan Bromwich's much better half, Marion, arrived bearing a tin full of freshly baked lemon shortcakes, just to start the day right. Thank you, they were excellent. (Below left: Marion being congratulated on them by Dave

Spencer; centre: Stuart Munroe with 'Luigi', his newly acquired Morini; and right: Nick Fitzpatrick and Ron Higgins sampling the shortcake.)

The 115 mile route was planned into three sections according to loo's and cakes. The first took us to the National Trust's Croome Park, trying to avoid main roads as much as possible.



Passing through Bluebell coated woods and flower lined lanes via Chaddesley Corbett to Droitwich, Himbleton, avoiding the village of North Piddle for reasons best known to elderly gentlemen, to Bishampton and crossing the old RAF Pershore (Vulcan Bomber base) runway to our first ford, close to Pershore Station. It had an easy by-pass route but most chose to cross it and 3 of us even chose to bathe in it, having fallen foul of the green algae on the centre line of its concrete base. Ray Heap's Triumph 21 literally filled its bathtub, which it did not like at all, but help was at hand and it was eventually persuaded back into life. 'Luigi' celebrated his first run by immersing Stuart, which soon led to him receiving baking tips via email from Marion on how to avoid a Soggy Bottom in future... Then over the not-so level crossing by Wadborough to our first break.

Croome Park is a very popular venue and the staff there made us very welcome, providing a convenient area for our exclusive use in their usually congested car park, which attracted



quite a few spectators. They had offered to let us into the Park itself to set up a display, but



time constraints meant I had to decline. They do have a fascinating museum there, about its war-time role as RAF Defford, the secret development of Radar and as a potential decontamination centre. We made full use of their facilities, basking (and drying-out) in the glorious sunshine outside their excellent café which was once the old wartime hospital.

Part 2 of the route passed by the old Defford airfield to circumnavigate Bredon Hill in a clockwise direction passing a Bromwich approved duck feeding location near Eckington. In typical fashion, a sham road closure here was suitably ignored. This wasn't shown on the route planner, reinforcing the junk info again and Julian nobly lead a crew down the fully open road (not working on Sundays but not bothered to remove the signs). We then cruised along the broad but unclassified roads linking the picturesque villages of Elmley Castle, Ashton under Hill and Overbury, to petrol at Tewkesbury. Here, Stuarts newly acquired Moto Morini, was frightened to open its tank cap (*no doubt a safety feature to avoid the risk of water ingress given the earlier incident Ed*), its prolonged reluctance only relenting when threatened by a brick wielding Moto Guzzi rider! It was later pointed out that the only tools required had been a spanner, an engineering brick, and 50 years' experience. Then, crossing the River Severn, we trundled through Bushley Green, past the cricket ground and Slades Green to a sun soaked lunch stop at The Duke of York pub at Berrow near the foot of the Malvern Hills.

Part 3 took us homeward through the narrow lanes south-east of Eastnor Castle including our second concrete based ford. A few people chose to take the simple diversionary route around it for some reason. This, like the first ford, had been a great



concern to me as it is very prone to sudden flooding, but, due to the prolonged dry spell, it was thankfully reduced to a mere trickle, successfully crossed by all. On a previous recce by car with my wife, it had been somewhat deeper causing a moment of rising consternation as a wave appeared over the car's bonnet. Then passing by the Landrover Off-Road Experience venue (excellent, I've tried it), we emerged to cross the Ledbury/Malvern road to return north, on the Westerly side of the Malvern Hills. There were some grand views to be had of

the Malverns to the right and across to Herefordshire on the left. We progressed via Old Coldwall, Mathon and Cradley to Alfrick Pound where two members of the Worcestershire Section that joined us at the start, came from. Passing through Doddenham and Wichenford, we emerged on the A443 to re-cross the River Severn at Holt Fleet. Sadly, main roads could not now be avoided to get us back to The Old Wagon and Horses. A few of us went our separate ways here, being on tighter schedules for things like a dawn flight to a holiday - perfectly acceptable.



Some 16 bikes gathered at the finish to make use of the new external bar & catering facilities set up on the showground field at the rear of the pub. Again we relaxed in the fabulous sunshine to consider the days events with a well earned drink, ice-cream or hot pork & crackling bap. Although he couldn't be with us due to Sunday duties, I think run organiser Paul Raybould must have ordered the lovely weather for us. Everyone appeared to have enjoyed themselves in the

surprisingly quite lanes, the fabulous Bluebells and wonderful views across the Worcestershire countryside.

No breakdowns were reported and I only saw 2 pot holes worthy of swift avoidance in the entire route. The Model H Triumph was amazing. Easily keeping up with everyone, quite a feat of riding considering its lack of brakes! It's due to be used to cross America on an epic 300 mile per day, month long expedition. It may have consumed a main bearing during the day, but it arrived at the finish as lively as it started. Of all the lovely bikes that took part, a difficult split would, in my opinion, favour the Norton Commando of Ian and Lesley Goodhall which seemed to have given a very capable two-up trip, closely followed by the glorious vee-twin Matchless 37X of Dave Roberts. Thank you all for attending. It made my day.

Peter Gray

