

Trent Valley Run – 12th July 2015

The forecast had said that the overnight rain would clear by morning but it hadn't. The on-line forecast told me that it wasn't raining outside, but it clearly was and we had a rather wet ride in to the start point at Wall Heath near Cannock. In due course 10 machines gathered, with most of us feeling a bit damp around the gloves and down the front, if you



Above: Signing on at Wall Heath. The photo doesn't make it look as wet as it was.

know what I mean. Our numbers were 4 down on the last two years, no doubt partly accounted for by the weather, and also some were away on holiday, indisposed or had other things that had to take precedence. Using the Danks method of calculation, the day was a draw between Triumphs and BSAs, of which there were 3 of each. For Triumph we had the '58 6T of Maurice Trupp, '61 Speed Twin of Brian and Pat Empsall (the run organisers) and the '71 Adventurer of Rob Todd.

For BSA there was Jonathan Jinks' '39 M20, Ron Higgins '58 Flash and my '50 plunger Flash. Then we had two from AJS: Julian Edwards' '56 Model 16 and Ray Heap's '60 250. The other two machines were Martyn Round's '76 Honda 400 Four and Keith Little with the Ariel Huntmaster on which he had taken a cup at the Ride a Bike Evening, and he was not afraid of getting it dirty again. I think he actually enjoys polishing it.

We set off soon after 10.30 for a lovely trundle round some Staffordshire Lanes and Cannock Chase. Before long the rain stopped and we started to dry out. By the time of the coffee stop 21 miles later at the Barley Mow at Milford, the sun was out and good humour such that most of us shelled out for small cups of expensive coffee and stayed cheerful. Soon we were spread around the smart wickerwork garden furniture in front of the pub soaking up the sunlight like basking seals after a storm. Julian had removed his jacket to reveal a set of overtrousers that went very near up to his nipples (I didn't check!), "like old man's trousers" I told him, "Ah but I'm dry underneath" he told me, which I wasn't so One Nil to Julian. Looking round I realised that Maurice Trupp hadn't arrived. "Has he gone on or should we be worried?" I asked. "There's no need to worry about Maurice, he's the Bear Grylls of motorcycling" replied Rob Todd. Now there's an image. A few minutes later Maurice did arrive, having stopped off to see someone.

After coffee we meandered north east for another 24 miles, through lovely villages and past some very smart houses, before settling again for lunch at Doveleys Garden Centre, about 6 miles south west of Ashbourne (right). I tell you, vintage motorcycling is tough, we sometimes go as far as 30 miles between refreshments. At the garden centre, Ron's guardian angel made an appearance and whispered in his ear (below). We don't know what she said to him; quite possibly "Don't have the pie Ron", because he didn't. Whatever it was he looked pleased to hear from her as you can see.



After lunch we set off again, turning to the south and back towards Lichfield. Maurice, Rob and Ray made for home but the remaining 8 of us stopped (again) at the Fradley Junction café alongside the canal where the Coventry and Trent & Mersey canals meet. By this time the sun was burning down as we ordered tea and cakes and found a picnic table in the courtyard (right).

After that we made our way home, and by the time I got there I'd done just over 150 miles in the day. It had been another excellent day out thanks to Brian and Pat's excellent planning and route sheets.

Dave Spencer

