

Winter Wander November 15th 2015

The weather forecasts for our last organised run of the calendar year were inauspicious. If UK storm Abigale didn't get us then ex-hurricane Kate probably would. Saturday was horribly wet, but then Sunday morning was pretty much dry, grey and breezy in Bridgnorth.



A murky wet morning greeted the 4 northern starters at Cannock. It was certainly Triumph Bathtub day with Ray Heap's 21, Brian & Pat Empsall's Speed Twin and Bill Harley's T100A. Almost a set with only a Thunderbird missing. Rob Todd rode his bathtubless Matchless 500 single.

Apart from mud and leaves giving some slippery going the route unfolded without incident or breakdown although bike cleaning would certainly take some time.

The southern start point at Wolverley was also murky but less wet as 11 riders gathered plus a couple of other members, Martyn Griffiths and Peter Gray, who couldn't ride but came along to socialise. Apart from Mike Cutler's Guzzi Falcone it was a bit 'two by two' with two Triumphs: Stuart Munroe's T100c and Trevor Bull's modern Adventurer; my and Ron Higgins' BSA A10s; the Hondas of Martyn Round and Paul Raybould; two military machines in the form of Jonathan Jinks' BSA M20 and John Shaw's Velocette MDD, and (to stretch the point) the two Tiddlers of Jonathan Clarke's 98cc James Comet and Bill Danks' 25cc Cyclomaster in a Triumph cycle.



I think Bill Danks was the last to arrive, but what an entry, he came down the hill from Wolverley island and onto the car park at an unfeasible speed as though jet propelled. I think gravity had a lot to do with it as we later saw him having to employ pedal assistance to get up the very gentle slope to Franche island.



Clockwise from above right: the two military machines; Churchill mascot on the MDD Velocette; Two Triumphs, little and large; and Jonathan Clarke's James Comet.



Soon after 10.30 the southern contingent moved off from Wolverley, first going through Bewdley and out to Great Witley where we turned right up Wynniates Way to ascend Flagstaff Hill (from the 'wrong' direction if you are a Levis Trial competitor). It's steep going up there and suffice to say that Jonathan Clarke was seen to be providing some manual assistance to the James, while Bill Danks was not seen at all on the Cyclemotor as an outbreak of common sense had dictated that he take a short cut to the finish. Or perhaps several of them.

After that we went through Pensax, or was it Worles Common, even the route sheet was unsure on this point, and made our way to Boraston Ford. On approaching the Ford we had to drop down a steep, wet, muddy and leaf strewn hill, much the kind of thing you see



depicted in photos of 1930s trials in the Straight from the Plate section in The Classic Motorcycle. I confess to being a bit nervous as to what we would find at the bottom of the valley, but in the end the ford was fairly shallow and not too wide.

On entering Cleobury Mortimer soon afterwards my low caffeine alarm went off as I stopped to check with Ron if he was OK. He said something about coffee, so with no more ado we went round the corner to the Cleobury Café in the High Street, where we were soon joined by Mike Cutler, Martyn Round and Jonathan Jinks for an impromptu coffee stop. Once refreshed we soon completed the last section of the run back to Tony's Diner, and met up with the northern start group. Apparently when they had arrived the café was overwhelmed by an overflow of Harley Davidson types from the café over the road, but that had since subsided and we were able to get inside for some light refreshments.

When it was time for the last few of us to leave Tony's we had a crisis, Stuart had lost the keys to his Triumph. He'd searched his pockets and they were gone, so the five of us scoured the car park, retracing Stuarts movements, looking under picnic tables, under cars (though what he'd been doing under there I have no idea), kicking through piles of fallen leaves, all to no avail. Enquiries were made with staff in the Diner, checks made under the table where we had been sitting. It was no good. Stuart said he'd have to phone Sue for assistance, I don't know what she was going to do, maybe she has a metal detector. As a last resort Stuart was persuaded to check his clothing again, ALL the pockets, even the ones he never puts anything in. And yes, dear reader, you can guess the rest. Apparently some swine had concealed the keys in a secret zippy place... 'Will I ever live this down?' he asked. I assured him that of course he would, but not for a very long time.

Thanks to Martyn Round and Paul Harris for arranging the routes and to everyone for risking the weather.

Dave Spencer

