

Winter Wander 2019 - Something of a challenge - 9th November

Our dear weather forecasters had predicted heavy rain due mid morning and for the rest of the day with some snow on the hills, this on the heels of a week or more of heavy rain and flooding. However, Saturday the 9th November dawned clear and dry, had they got it wrong?

The Southerly Route –

Determined not to let Martyn's hard work pass in vain, 7 machines gathered at Rowberry's Garden Centre at Chaddersley Corbett for the southerly start. Bill Danks paid a flying visit, though he wisely had organised an alternative place to be, and scarpered before it rained, leaving Ian Goodhall with Lesley riding pillion on their BMW R100, Martyn Round on his trusty Honda 400C, Mike Cutler - Moto Guzzi Falcone, Kevin Fleet BSA B31, John Shaw Velocette MDD, Jonathan Jinks BSA WM20 and me on my Triumph T100.

Full waterproofs and thermals, if you had them, were the order of the day and as we departed the rain began, became heavy and stayed that way for the duration of the run. Martyn had created a fairly simple route, all on a single sheet which was a blessing, as the rain quickly filtered inside my route-holder to form a nice papier-mâché.

Kevin Fleet on his B31 and I, headed off to the South where we crossed the swollen River Severn at Holt Fleet, turning towards Worcester, then the B4203 and the B4204 towards Tenbury Wells and cutting across to the A456 to Clows Top. Here we entered low cloud and maybe even some sleet, making me very grateful to my kids for buying me my heated gloves.

And still it rained.

Wisely, Martyn had advised us to ignore the next section through Bayton to Cleobury Mortimer due to the weather making these roads virtually impassable, so we stayed on the B roads picking up the B4363 to take us to Bridgnorth and the warmth of Tony's Diner.

I arrived at the finish with soggy boots and gloves full of water though they were still keeping me warm. Good gloves indeed but the battery, being in the cuff, meant that I couldn't fit my jacket outside it, hence they filled with water. I knew if I took them off I'd never get them back on again, so after a wave to the others at the finish, I rode on home, highly motivated by the thought of recovering in a deep warm bath.

I'd doubted my waterproofs would be any good, but with cheap over-trousers and a thin storm jacket under my bike coat I had survived surprisingly well. It took three days to dry out my gloves and thankfully they still work, so I'll have to bring some gaffer tape to cover the cuffs in a future rain storm.

So far as I'm aware there were no breakdowns or even a miss-fire and considering the conditions, this is a great testament to our aging steeds. Strangely, Martyn somehow appeared at the finish long before us but never passed us! I suspect some skulduggery may have occurred.

Peter Gray

The Northerly Route –

Just five of us gathered at the northern start, Dobbies Garden Centre at Gailey: organiser Paul Harris with his Harris Matchless, Neil Howells, Commando (the motorcycle, not his undergarments, it was far too cold for that), Ron Higgins, BSA B33, me (with a merino wool catsuit base layer, now there's an image!), on my Velocette MAC and eventually Rob Todd on his ex-Posh Dave Honda PCX, the Matchless having developed a mechanical glitch as he was about to leave home. It was also good to see Stuart Munroe, who came along in the car to say Hello.

The day was cold and damp, but not so wet as they had it from the southern start, though it did rain more the nearer we got to the finish at Tony's Diner.

Our route took us northwest from Gailey to Church Eaton, then to the A518 where we turned west towards Newport, then past the Harper Adams Agricultural College (now



University) at Edgmond before turning south towards Telford, which we skirted and headed towards Cressage and Much Wenlock. Before then, however, I had a puncture, or more accurately, the Velocette did. It started with the shimmering back end that you initially try to pretend is wind or a dodgy road surface, but not for long. So I stopped and Ron produced the foot pump he carries in the top box. Of course it's likely to be just a slow puncture, blow it up and make for home is the answer. For 100 yards, flat again. "Drat", or maybe something stronger. By now it was raining, windy and very cold. A recovery truck felt like a good idea, but no "come on David, we can fix it" says Ron. Oh all right then. Ron stayed to help and I urged the others to carry on, "Don't wait for me, save yourselves", or something brave like that. There was nothing in the tyre, the 'hole' was an area of rubbing somewhere around the tyre bead, I wonder whether that bit of tube had been caught there and eventually rubbed through. It's a shame we don't have a photo of Ron submerging the partially inflated tube in a puddle to see where the leak was, but there is one taken by Paul



Harris, of me wrestling the tyre back on. Ron was nearby but I've cropped the photo to try and make me look more alone and heroic. It was OK though, by then I had lost all feeling in my fingers so the pain had stopped!

After nearly an hour or so we were off again, following the route to Much Wenlock, but by then the sausages at Tony's were calling, so we avoided the loop through Broseley and Coalport and headed for the finish, where nearly all the others still were.

Dave Spencer