

Machynlleth Run, 14 May 2006

Name, Ride Leader

Departed Gloucester 0845, returned Gloucester 1900. Miles: 265 (315 for some!)

Pilot	Bike
Sally Charlton (leading)	F650GS
Bill Carter	Yamaha Fazer 1000
Lawrence Morgan	Honda Transalp
Dave & Lorraine Butcher	Honda CBR 600
Richard Atkins	VFR
Narjas Mehdi	VFR
Marc & Tracey Levy-Benchetton	Sprint ST
Bob Clapham	Pan
Terry Henshaw (sweeping)	R1100RT

In spite of mixed forecasts it was a great day of dry roads, sunny intervals, not too hot, not too cold, light winds ... all that a good day out on the bike should be.

I arrived early at BEW and stood in sunshine in the car park. With so many from SAM away in Ireland at



Motley Crew, ready for the off, including Teddy who's a social member

the North West 200, would anyone turn up? But in no time at all the first bike came trickling in and soon we were up to 9 bikes and 11 participants. Admittedly we were in the midst of taking an obligatory group photo at the start as Narjas arrived – but as the day went along, she more than made up for a slightly late arrival!

The original plan was for me to lead the ride and Brian bring up the rear as the sweeper, but sadly I had left Brian at home with a pulled muscle. A quick discussion with Terry, resplendent in yellow vest and he agreed to stand in as sweeper – thank you Terry!

After a thorough discussion on the drop-off system and marking, we headed out of Gloucester to Ledbury. This was an easy number of bikes to pick up in the mirrors at regular

intervals and as I took the Leominster road from Ledbury, I settled into enjoying the ride, confident that all was going well. Big mistake but more on that shortly!



All enjoy the view, Teddy goes for a dip

At Hope-under-Dinmore I paused briefly, the string of bikes fell in behind for a moment with the sweeper at the back, and as no-one indicated a need to stop, we headed straight on, through the edge of Leominster and out on the A44 towards Rhyader. The roads were wide open and deserted beneath blue skies and white puffy clouds, and we were running on freely through beautiful parts of Herefordshire and the Welsh marches, slowing only occasionally to pass through lovely timbered villages such as Pembridge. As the miles grew, the hills gradually changed colour and began to rise higher on each side of us, with contrasting farmland retreating into the valley bottoms.

75 miles - and we arrived at Crossgates, our destined stop for fuel, toilets and coffee – and to my surprise Brian to greet us as we arrived. Not to be totally done out of the day, he had come for a drive in the car and to join us for coffee. With the bikes spread around the pumps for a fill-up (to last through the next part of the ride) and with some heading very speedily for the toilets, I did a quick count, twice – and still came up with one bike short! Quick debate with the sweeper, who had noted Richard as a marker in Gloucester that failed to pick up and rejoin the ride as the sweeper came through. Apologies must go out to Richard for a misunderstanding of his intentions that left him behind.

Coffee was well timed, as we were sitting supping and munching well before other bike groups arrived.

Refreshed and refuelled, we were off again, rolling along to Rhyader and



Sal's rear end dominates at the tea stop



SAMmers smile, but Teddy misses out on lunch

Llangurig, before turning off to go through the town of Llanidloes. This is where the mountain roads started and we wound our way on reasonable single track roads, stopping at the viewpoint above Llyn Clywedog to take in the stunning scenery. Wales at its best, we meandered across the mountains with far-reaching views in all directions and then finally down into Machynlleth and lunch at The White Lion. From this point we said goodbye to both Bill and to Marc and Tracey, who planned to head back home on faster roads and shorten the day.

Down the south side of the estuary to Tal-y-bont and then we were off again, this time on very single track roads, to wind all the way round the Nant-y-moch reservoir. This part of the day we really did have to ourselves. Stopping for a break no-one came or went – just us amidst superb wild countryside. Rejoining

roads with centre line markings very briefly at Devils Bridge, we quickly turned off again (that's a tight bend!) and wound right down through the Elan Valley to the visitor centre for a welcome tea stop. By this time Bob was desperate to rediscover 3rd and 4th gears on the Pan, so was well pleased that we had done the last of the mountain roads – for today at any rate! By contrast Narjas loved every minute of the slow wandering and could have carried on indefinitely. Dave, two up on the 600 CBF, had taken advantage of the narrow stretches to put in some practice for this type of road on the test – but was glad to have survived the “challenge” unscathed.



We all enjoy a good nosh-up!

Heading home now and sweeping along on A-roads, leaving Rhyader, we passed the Red Kite centre where the huge birds were gathering overhead in great numbers for feeding. On to Builth Wells, then Talgarth where we went up and

down, over the “twisties” to Crickhowell and Abergavenny. Lovely roads with great bends and lots of fast pace.

Our last leg stretch and chat was at the bus stop in Abergavenny, where at the end of the afternoon there were still a large number of bikes gathered. It was now 6pm and given the choice of the old winding roads to Raglan and Monmouth – or the fast straight dual carriageway – the vote was unanimous for the heading home fast and straight! So, past Monmouth and up into the Forest, I left the group to head back into Gloucester as I peeled off for home.

A great day!



Sal calls Richard on her Star Trek communicator. Sadly no reply.

It was lovely to see those I hadn't ridden with for some long time. Bill, over here on his own for a spell from his French pad; Marc and Tracey (& the bear!) who I had last seen to talk to on the SAM trip to Brittany in .. um .. a few years ago; and Bob, who

assured me we had been on a rideout together at some point in the distant past – how could I have forgotten?

Then there was Terry, who has had a spell of time not biking due to a foot operation, and chose this ride to get back into the swing. After 300 miles I think he felt well and truly back in the swing! My thanks again for riding “sweeper” all day.

Dave and Lorraine, new to the club this year and great company. It was good to get to know you both and Lorraine deserved a medal for the miles she covered on a bike with “not the most comfortable” of pillion seats!

Then there is Narjas – whose humour, enthusiasm and participation contribute so much to every ride I have been on with her. You added loads of fun to my day out.

And Lawrence, who has ridden so many miles with me and just settles easily into the flow. It was great to have your company yet again.

Richard – I am sad you missed a great day – we will do it again soon especially for you!

My thanks to all of the willing participants who humoured my huge love for riding the wilder remote parts of Wales, I hope you will come again some time! ♦