

SAM GAM at Powis Castle, 13 August

Mark Sullivan, Gwent Advanced

Duration: 09:00-17:00, distance: 200 miles, conditions: Dry and fresh.

Pilots & pillions

Greg & Wendy Sullivan	CBR 1100 xx B Bird (Ride Leader)	
Mike Odelet	CBR 1100 xx B Bird (Tail ender)	
Dave Williams	Honda Deauville 650	
Martin Shepherd	BMW K1100	
Peter Moore	BMW K1200S	
Derek and Julie Lee	CBR 1100 xx B Bird	
Carl Knight	CBR 1100 xx B Bird	
Mark James-Gillum	Suzuki Bandit 600	
Mark Parkinson	Ducati Multistrada	
Brian Charlton	KTM Adventure 950	SAM
Sally Charlton	BMW F650 GS	SAM
Terry Freeman	Suzuki Bandit 1200	SAM

First there were nine

The three SAM members joined us later so nine bikes arrived at Edlogan Way for the 9am start.

Mark P arrived on a different Ducati declaring that it was a courtesy bike as he had given up on his own after numerous faults, mind you after 14,000 miles in 13 months it had been given quite a test.

Mark J-G arrived stating that he needed to get some air for his rear tyre before departing but on further inspection a screw head meant the end of the ride for Mark before he even started. That was a shame particularly as it was his first Sunday rideout but better that it happened

close to home rather than somewhere in mid-Wales!!!!!!!

Then there were eight

The heat wave was clearly over with lower temperatures indicating that summer time was coming to an end but that meant we were less hot under the collar and could enjoy the dry conditions and good road surface.

The obvious direction would have meant dual-carriageway to Abergavenny and then the A465 and A49 northwards but thinking that route a little mundane we were on our way after a quick brief.

Heading down Trehafod lane we made our way on well known roads to Usk, Gwehelog, Raglan, and Mitchell

Troy and on to Monmouth. Then it was the A466 through Welsh Newton and the A49 onto Hereford.

Roadworks slowed things down at this point but then we made our way through, towards Leominster and up Dinmore Hill passing those in the Crawler lane and turning left into the Queenswood Arboretum.

Then there were eleven

I was to look out for someone on a BMW GS bike which at one time might have been quite noticeable but nowadays there always seem to be a few of these adventure sports bikes wherever you are, almost as common as Blackbirds.

Thanks to those wearing the Gwent hi-Vis we were spotted

and the three members from the SAM group joined us and it was quite a collection at this café at one point as members from the Worcester group were also out and about.

Then there were ten

After a chat, cuppa and refuel it was back onto the A49 for Leominster and Ludlow with Dave Williams heading home at this point. Busy traffic and

resurfacing works slowed us again but didn't deter the one solo rider that squeezed past our group and the other motorists; I couldn't help wondering why when we passed him parked on the side of the road one mile ahead! What did he gain?

Riding through Craven Arms we turned left onto the A489 for Church Stoke. This section is normally quiet but slow moving vehicles took some getting past and the group became more strung out but still all on course

by using the drop-off system. Stopping in a lay-by to regroup meant that we all had the dubious pleasure of trying to get past the same caravan; they must have had a chuckle at us.



Used the loos but never went in!

Soon the signs for Welshpool came into view and finally the brown information signs for Powis Castle led us through the grounds to the car park where the attendant directed us to where we could all park together.

Powis Castle

There were many visitors to this impressive attraction but we simply made use of the essentials for an

hour not really having the time to look around inside.

This passed quickly and suitably refreshed we gathered for the photo-shoot and were soon on our way again.

Return

Turning right where the exit pointed left I'm sure a few thought we would soon be getting some "U" turn practice but it was the intended route on single track towards Berriew.

Towards Newtown I'm sure the actions of us ten considerate bikers were completely overlooked by the other motorists as two other riders overtook over the solid white lines going into a left hand corner with others being forced to allow them an escape route whenever an oncoming vehicle appeared.

I wonder which group left the lasting impression on the other motorists.

Derek then realised his rear tyre was low in pressure so we made our way gingerly to the Shell garage in



Ah, but what great loos they were!

Newtown where a screw head confirmed his worst thoughts.

Thankfully Brian Charlton sprang into action and gave an excellent display of repairing a tyre ably assisted by Mike Odelet who was having trouble straightening up after too long on the Blackbird.

The final snag was that the Shell garage didn't provide air on weekends and as not even Brian had a compressor in his bag of tricks it

was off to another garage to inflate the tyre hence save the canisters with the repair kit.

With 70 miles to go to Abergavenny the next stop at Crossgates was cancelled to complete the

ride without stopping so we all left the garage thanks to a kind motorist allowing us all out.

Turning left at the lights for the A483 to Llandrindod Wells it was a tight spot to drop off a marker so a few missed the turning and carried on ahead but soon turned round to regroup where we waited on the side.

All together at this point, next was an unhindered section of tarmac that is

amongst the best on offer where all could practice their cornering skills. Arriving at Cross Gates I resisted the urge to turn round and do it again so turned left onto the A44 for more of the same to Kington, the A4111 to Eardisley and then pulled into a lay-by before Letton.

The group was broken up again as can be expected and I duly waved in the first biker that appeared around the corner. This turned out to be a complete stranger and so was the motorist that also followed instructions to pull into the lay-by. Peter expressed his admiration for the drivers classic convertible Westerham (apparently being based on the lotus 7), however he appeared a little irate at this interruption and departed without so much as a good-day.

Carl thankfully then made sure that I didn't attempt to recruit any more strangers by directing in our group as they appeared, with Mike arriving at the back keeping the group together all arriving with big grins from the previous section.

The final stretch was over to Bredwardine taking the B4352 to Madley and the A465 to Abergavenny for a cuppa at the Oasis at 5pm after 200 miles.

A good day's riding on familiar roads to a not so familiar destination, many

thanks to Mike Odelet for being tail-end Charlie for the day.

The standard of riding was as high as expected with the SAM members impressively slotting in as if they always ride with us. ◆

Air Traffic Control 2

Conversation between Frankfurt ground control and BA (Speedbird) flight 206.

Speedbird 206: "*Frankfurt, Speedbird 206 clear of active runway*"

Ground: "*Speedbird 206. Taxi to gate Alpha One-Seven*"

Speedbird 207, a 747, pulled onto the main taxiway and slowed to a stop.

Ground: "*Speedbird, do you not know where you are going?*"

Speedbird 206: "*Stand by, Ground, I'm looking up our gate location now*"

Ground (impatiently): "*Speedbird 206, have you not been to Frankfurt before?!*"

Speedbird 206: "*Yes, twice in 1944, but it was dark, and I didn't land*" ◆