

Ace Cafe outward leg, 20 May

Ian Stavert

Weather: glowing! Duration: 08:30-19:30. Miles: half as many as planned...

Pilot/pillion

Ian Stavert (lead)	FJR bucket
Steve Mason	TDM900
Graham Bailey	GS1200 (of course)
Dave Preest	Buell Ulysses (with blower!)
Budge/Di	BlackBird
Nick Handley	GS1200
Derek James	CBF600
Andy Woodward	Tiger thou fifty
Tom/Leslie Ann	BlackBird
Charlie Barnes	FJR1300 (clutchless)
Geoff Pollard	CBF1000
Lawrence Morgan	Varadero 1000
Mike Barrett	FJR1300
Dave Riley	VFR800 V-Tec
Alex Green	Pan (restricted)
Dave/Lorraine	VFR800 V-Tec

A ride of two halves, a couple of nails and an old boiler!

Well, the weatherman got it wrong again! It was supposed to be overcast with rain, but pulling into BEW seeing a number of gleaming bikes (16), smiley faces – and sunshine! The sun was glinting off Dave Butcher's brand new VFR800 – keep it polished Lorraine.

Quite a civilised group considering, (I think knowing that this was my first ride as leader put the sensible folks off) any way off up Birdlip Hill and down the A435 to Cirencester just to get some heat into the tyres.

Cirencester to Wantage A417 via Fairford and Lechlade, (back past new recruit Charlie Barnes' house, you could have had a lie in Charlie!) the roads are normally full of old dears and Sunday drivers, but they must have heard we were comin' as the road was nearly deserted - so the long sweepers we're enjoyed by all.

First pit stop in Wantage – blokes no problem here, but as for Di and Lesley Anne, they typically wanted the loo (I am sure that the loo's we're open when I did the recce??). Onward along the A417 then sharp left around Cholsey joining the A4130 heading for Henley on Thames then



Graham & Dave: Stellas for journey

sharp left to Marlow A4155. The banter at the Marlow stop was that the folks seemed to have enjoyed the ride so far – I don't know what they meant (!) must have been the sun, scenery, pleasant company and lack of traffic.

Then onto the boring stretch M40 / A40 down to Hangar Lane and the North Circular – trust me to pick the same day as the Morecambe v Exeter play offs at Wembley! (1 day after the FA Cup final) it seemed that most of Morecambe was on our stretch of road – well, they don't get out very often, and it's nice to come down south and see how folks get on with running water and electricity. Besides the Daffs were only just coming out up north.

Thanks to all the boys and girls on the run, we kept it all together brilliantly and we did Hangar Lane en masse, it must have been quite a sight to see. Dave Preest happily thumping along on his spanking Buell

(made the football coach windows vibrate!) “top piece of kit” Dave. Eventually we all got to the Ace Café – didn't lose anyone (miracle), no stress (yet) a chance for a bite, watch the bikes and get the T-shirt!

But leaving the Ace – who gets a puncture? Bl####y typical, yours truly: two closely packed nails. Many thanks to Budge and Mike B; emergency repairs got the tyre inflated. No need to mark, just follow the foam boys! Return journey was straight into a 3 lane traffic jam, filtering skills were tested to the limit from Hangar Lane to Chiswick, especially on an FJR with cases on (as Budge said if “I can get through....so can he, if Di keeps her knees in”) – how do these people do that every day??



SAM makes it to the Ace!

My journey stopped at Chiswick High St when the FJR's fan died, coolant covered the road and the tyre gave up the ghost... Bloke from the RAC was very helpful though! ♦

Ace Cafe return leg, 20 May

Graham Bailey

Weather: the best! Duration: 08:30-19:30. Miles: 10 cut 'n thrust, 140 free flowing'.

Pilot/pillion

Steve Mason (lead)	TDM900
Graham Bailey (lead!)	GS1200 (of course)
Dave Preet	Buell Ulysses (with blower!)
Budge/Di	BlackBird
Nick Handley	GS1200
Derek James	CBF600
Andy Woodward	Tiger thou fifty
Tom/Leslie Ann	BlackBird
Charlie Barnes	FJR1300 (clutchless)
Geoff Pollard	CBF1000
Lawrence Morgan	Varadero 1000
Mike Barrett	FJR1300
Dave Riley	VFR800 V-Tec
Alex Green	Pan (restricted)
Dave/Lorraine	VFR800 V-Tec

A ride out report written in two halves, 'Outward' written by the original leader (Ian Stavert, see elsewhere), 'homeward' written by one of the homeward bound leaders, simple really!!

Now don't get the wrong idea here, the 'drop off' worked extremely well throughout the day with all members adhering to its principles without fault. It's just that we are now convinced that Ian (our original

leader) doesn't like returning home with us!!

Prior to departure from the ACE it happened. Once off the stand it

became all too apparent that Ian's FJ had a bad case of rear hoop deflation, yep... two big un's boldly making their shiny heads known to all as the 500 mile hoop was spun in disbelief.



That's an Advanced puncture, Ian

With Budge desperately pumping his magic solution into the soft rubber

and with foam exuding from the valve, we all thought the rapidly hardening substance would do the trick, so off we set into 3 lanes of grid-locked traffic (with Dave's Buell blowing hard in my mirrors) to hone our mirror and hub cap dodging skills, nice.

All was really going well with everyone hanging in there when it became apparent that we weren't so much as following Ian by sight, but more by trails of white foam laced with a very green looking substance that resembled the 'hot n steaming' coolant from the by now dying FJ.



As picturesque as it gets round here

Alas the decision was made: leave the lifeless metal to the mercy of the circling buzzards along with its pilot. Well he'd already got us there, and it's only a Yammy after all!! More's the point, let's get out of this first gear only city and into some free flowing black top...fast.

With Reading now a sight in the mirrors and good old Dave's hard breathing Buell definitely happier, we eventually arrived at Hungerford where the bit about 2 leaders makes sense. Steve took the 'light weights'

via Swindon and the A419, and myself led the balance towards the sweeping Marlborough, Calne, Devizes and the good old A46 from Chipping Sodbury for some serious 'side wall' action before home.

What a day! With all said and done, it turned out to be a real 'cracker' with Ian making it home before me and my lot (no surprise there then... Eh Budge!) And no further dramas to

report (even the cuppa at Mc Donald's in Stroud was hot!!).

My personal thanks to Ian for his usual very professional organisation of the whole thing. 'Well done Stavros'

especially the weather, which was fab albeit not so handy for your un-cool FJ.

p.s. BVM opens at 8.30am Monday morning if you want something reliable!!!

Regards to all of the above that made the run a grand memory.

Graham Bailey (taking a route with pleasure in mind!). ◆