

THE AUTUMN 1986 CANNOCK CHASE :

The last few days before the event had been somewhat traumatic - there was a lot on at the office and our worthy Run-Organiser Tim Wassell had been having problems with the Hotel because the number of guests was considerably down on original expectations. However, as Friday afternoon wore on everything seemed to drop into place and by the time I started for Sutton Coldfield things appeared to have sorted themselves out. With such a short journey to our base for the weekend I had little time for further reflection but was pleased to see a good collection of motorcycles outside the Moorhall Hotel when I arrived. Tim had somehow talked his way out of the reduction in numbers and we were not to pay for missing guests - good news indeed for the Treasurer.

Shortly after I had booked in, that intrepid motorcyclist Doug Hele arrived having travelled all of 6 miles - no wonder he looked his usual youthful self, although he complained that he hadn't really had chance to blow away the cobwebs and he much preferred venues at least 150 miles from home.

The Moorhall Hotel proved to be excellent and Tim is to be congratulated on his selection. Nobody appeared to be too interested in the golfing facilities, but then our P.R. members were not in evidence and I suspect that they are probably better golfers than the rest of us.

I have no idea what time anybody went to bed on the Friday evening, as I was only too happy to get my own head down about 11 o'clock. So if Bill Smith saw the dawn light up I'm afraid I was not there to help him. Derek Norton probably was, but then he wouldn't remember by that time!

Anyway, we woke up on Saturday morning to find the world covered in mist, and these are not ideal conditions in which to follow Tim Wassell on anything but the most familiar roads. He swears that he never exceeded 50 mph for the first 25 miles, but as tail-end Charlie I found a constant 65 - 70 the order of the day, and I was glad when the mist lifted to reveal some beautiful Staffordshire/Derbyshire countryside.

We had coffee at the Red Lion at Newborough - why do I always enjoy the biscuits so much at these coffee stops? Maybe its because they look as if they will act as good blotting paper for the alcoholic evening to come. Anyway, the Red Lion was good value and gave an opportunity to finally wipe away the misty cobwebs before the run to the North Staffs Railway Museum.

Fascinating things, Railway Museums - we all think we know something about steam engines but I was party to a discussion between two extremely well-informed members who were having a heated argument as to whether the thing we were looking at was a twin or a four. I didn't like to intrude but it seemed to me that they were undecided as to whether the mechanism in front of us was the cylinders or the valves. "Are you sure they are the valves?" "They don't look much like the valves in my BMW" "Why are the wheel counter weights placed like that?"

"Because at speed the counter weights tend to throw the wheels either on or off the railway line, and they have to be throwing them onto the railway line just as the power pulse reaches the wheels".

All sounds highly interesting and interlectual stuff to me - perhaps I'll stick to deisels.

There now followed a run towards lunch at The Huntsman in Cheadle but somewhere along the line Doug Hele - following Club Rules - got the tailenders into a bit of a spin. He stopped at a corner to ensure that the man behind was following - the man behind wasn't - so Doug concluded that he was last and set off in rapid pursuit of those ahead of him before he lost them. By the time the final 3 or 4 members arrived at the cross roads Doug was congratulating himself that he had caught up and not been left to find his own way to The Huntsman. After 2 or 3 laps round (was it Stoke-on-Trent?) we finally made lunch. The Huntsman was also good value, we filled up well and made for RAF Cosford. What a fascinating place that was for those of us who are interested in aeroplanes. Everytime I go to an Aircraft Museum I can't help feeling that flying before the war was so much more fun than it is in today's luxurious, warm, modern jets. To lumber across the North Sea with the pilot sitting outside like a coachman must have been a tremendous experience.

During our visit we were met by some more "visiting" members - Peter Bolton and his entourage and Phil Wood. It was good that they could come to the Museum and, with the exception of Phil Wood, on to the Dinner, but it would have been better still if they could all have been with us throughout the weekend.

Back we all went via the Bridge Hotel where we had tea in Penkridge, across Cannock Chase to Sutton Coldfield. When Tim first sent me his write up on the meeting, it included a sentence which said "Cannock Chase should be a blaze of autumn colour". In the event it proved to be a "blur of autumn colour" as we flew through at Tim's homing speed after another very successful and pleasant run. With a slight detour I had covered 168 miles - most of you I suspect had done about 150, and in the conditions prevailing it was not a bad mileage, and Tim is to be congratulated on master-minding another good event.

Dinner followed the normal practice, and there were no goois this time by the Chairman concerning Vicars who had or had not been married for 50 years, depending on your point of view, or any other such complicated matters.

Sunday always comes too soon.