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CLUB RUN AT KINGTON

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Cast your mind back to Summer '89. Lucky old Simon Goodman we thought; out in rural Hereford on those long lazy days, helped now and then by Tom Waterer. another ex road racer both of them on high speed road burners - what a super time they must be having. And so it proved. A really first class route was finally stitched together ready for the Great Day on September 16th. As Simon said, during the planning stage, "we need a wet day like a hole in the ozone layer!"

* So, on Friday the fifteenth, all the participants with the exception of your scribe set off for Kington in Herefordshire - not to be confused with Knighton in Radnorshire, which is actually within spitting distance. I must confess I had never heard of Kington but that's probably because, to my knowledge, this small township hadn't ever sported a motorcycle Dealership. We've all heard of Knighton, of course, thanks to the activities of Roger Maughfling the sprocket king. Unfortunately, Roger's untimely death a couple of years ago robbed our industry of a wonderful man who would, surely, by now have been a staunch member of The Club. Some of us were worried that Bert Greeves might go to Knighton, in lieu of Kington, but regrettably on this occasion Bert was giving both venues a miss! OBG, along with Peter Fraser, is our staunchest contributor to Kitty - in absentia - so let's hope we see him (and Peter) in Yorkshire in April 1990. Meantime, your scribe had gone to the Forest of Dean where, stupidly, he thought the run was to be based! Ultimately though, everyone but everyone checked into Kington's 2 Star Burton Hotel. Simon's long search for a suitable base camp did not go unrewarded - any anxiety about choosing a 2 Star instead of a Three were instantly dispelled by the friendly service at The Burton. Ironically, the most attractive of the barmaids rode a motorcycle - we were amongst friends! We should, for a moment, take stock and reflect on the economics of these gatherings. The all up price, excluding Kitty, for the Kington week end required an outlay of £70.00 including the VAT content. Considering that this included two first class evening meals, and a brace of breakfasts our Organiser is to be congratulated on keeping the standard high and the cost low. Not an easy task but on this occasion we had the supreme example of a good 2 Star hotel actually proving to be better than one or two 3 Stars that we have sampled.

Throughout the week end The Burton did us proud as far as catering, thirst quenching, and general accommodation matters though one doubts the local reservoir will ever recover from the demands placed upon the hotel hot water system as thirty plus dripping motorcyclists returned late Saturday afternoon - it was on the cards that even the man from the RAC coveted a hot bath!

The Hereford Run broke new ground in its format and, unwittingly, broke a sodden record into the bargain! This Run saw the introduction of what is now referred to as the D.R. System. At a stroke it has solved the T Junction log jams whilst we wait for Tail End Charlie to hove into sight. It has forever, I think, resolved the problem of "wrong slotting" as well as those aimless bunch-ups when we haven't known if we were lost or not! The D.R. System is so simple and so effective; I must say it's a bit worrying when you consider that it's taken the keenest

* 15/9/89

brains in the UK Motorcycle market 23 years to evolve! I cannot be sure to whom the credit should go, for finally getting the D.R.S. adapted, but my earliest recollection is a submission by Dennis Bates during one of our Sunday meetings circa Lyme Regis, or maybe the Run prior. In practice the D.R.S. works like a dream. Here's how it happens: The Run Leader delegates the rider immediately behind, to stop, and provide directions to the whole convoy, every time that there is a turn off or a deviation from the main route. The "stopper" then awaits the arrival of Tail End Charlie whereupon he mounts up and rejoins the "snake". The effect of the D.R.S. is a much much smoother ride and there is none of the milling around that inevitably we suffered for so long. It goes without saying that nobody experienced any difficulty in taking the new system on board!

There is another constructive spin off that, where required, we can address ourselves to - the fact that the cumulative "T Junction time" that is saved will now allow for a very much longer route. Unusually, Simon's Autumn Run saw 150 miles exceeded for the first time and yet we were able to spend more time socialising at the 3 stops than ever before. Relatively high average speeds, and the D.R.S., were the reason why!

Its probably time to mention **The Rain**, so here goes with the "**pluvius paragraph**". Unless one is a staunch gardener or a waterfall maintenance man (and motorcycle managers rarely are) you would have enjoyed the high blue sky Summer we have just experienced. The prevailing conditions for this Run, although it was only a fortnight into September, could not have provided a greater contradiction. It was raining when we assembled for the start at nine and it was still precipitating when we returned to The Burton around 5.30 pm. In a charming note put out by Treasurer Bates, soon after the Run, he correctly pointed out that riding in the rain for the first time in 20 years probably provided a whole new excitement for those fair weather riders thus categorised. How right he was! This Run was seemingly even wetter than Shaftesbury, 7 years ago, but on that occasion a bedraggled bunch cut for base after lunch and continued round the course by car. Maybe we are hardier now, or riding suits have improved. Thinking about this in retrospect its far more likely that the Hereford Run Lunch Stop at Gwehelog was located much further from the hotel than the aerodrome at Cerne Abbas no matter, conditions on this day were the ultimate test of riding apparel. Asking around, during and afterwards, it appeared that the Gore-Tex based suits were the least worst but at one time or other during the day nearly everyone confessed to sitting or standing in a pool of water, or had leaks up the sleeve, or down the neck, or through the zip. One damp cynic, slowly marinating inside his Gore-Tex, opined that, whilst his suit was so much better at holding the fluid in than keeping it out in the first place, he'd be better off ordering his next suit from Dur-Ex! Only those worthies riding shotgun with the RAC escaped the deluge but I suspect that by the end of the day the RAC bloke could quite easily have been persuaded to jump in a bath (not with Hugh Palin, you understand) at The Burton! Anyway, thats quite enough space devoted to the weather other than to stress that although we were at times quite uncomfortable the enjoyment coursed back through our veins just as soon as one was immersed in that hot bath!

There was a minor kerfuffle as we prepared to start due to an electrical problem with Bill Colquhoun's BMW. It turned out he'd spent far more time tuning the tax disc than he had preparing the machine - and this cost him dear come The Fines! A BMW held no mystery for the man from the RAC so very soon after 9.00 am we duly blasted off down the A4111 to Willersley. Almost immediately the Goodman philosophy became clear - fast empty roads; open country; sweeping bends, all tackled at a generous turn of speed. Coupled with the smooth flow effect of the D.R.S. we covered the 39 miles to the Coffee Stop (in the wet, let me remind you) in a smidgeon over 49 minutes! And everybody was very content.

In fact, we were so prompt arriving at the Coach and Horses, Llangynidr, that the landlord and his staff weren't quite ready for us. Judging by the acre or so of unwashed glasses and empties they'd experienced a **Night Before** in the very best traditions. Once they'd got their hats and coats on we were made quite welcome - more's the pity that conditions did not allow us to sit outside by the adjacent canal. It was certainly a scenic spot.

No sooner, it seemed, had we snatched our Starter Buttons than we were 23 miles up the road at The Hall Inn, Gwehelog. Everybody, to a man, was complimentary about the D.R.S. - we had just completed the fastest 60 miles in The Club's history with not a single untoward incident occurring. Our pre lunch route had actually taken us across the Heads of the Valleys with Ebbw Vale to our right, Abergavenny, Glynis Kinnock and Michael Foot to our left! It was at this juncture that someone likened the proceedings to a Tokyo bath house - very wet, but very happy! A great deal of hard work had clearly gone into this run; the fact that we had been unable to savour the views or fully appreciate the superb choice of roads had not frustrated a genuine esprit de corps permeating our five and thirty participants.

Lunch was a congenial affair in spite of sitting in ones own private pool that, admittedly, had reached full room temperature by the time that cheese was served! The Lunch Stop proved so comfortable that there was much creaking of joints as we shuffled back to the Car Park. To my knowledge there was little or no bike swapping taking place - sensibly so, in the circumstances, but such is the price we pay for a very subatandard day's weather.

Even though we'd been within a walking stick's throw of some of the best known mines in Britain, that morning, our own descent beneath Mother Earth had to wait 'till we reached the Forest of Dean, in England! Thus we came to Clearwell Caves although one would not know it as we parked in a sloping woodland clearing. Down below lay a huge complex of tunnels in which iron "fingers", hanging down from the ceiling, had first been discovered over 2000 years ago. A very dry and craggy guide had been assigned to us and he was most definitely a chip off the old block. Complete with powerful helmet lamp, climbing boots, and a casual rope coil slung over his shoulder he struck all the right poses as he leapt from outcrop to outcrop, not unlike a mountain goat. Our guide, with one exception, had heard all the "down the mine" jokes many times over and he was so quick and dry with his repartee that we hardly dared heckle or even assist with his commentary. Mind you, being down an iron mine, it was not too long before the Bonneville jokes were flowing thick and fast. In places the cave roof was little more than a metre high resulting in some splendid contortions by Nick Jeffery, Keith Blair and Hugh Palin. No doubt their day will come, but one hopes its not on the day we have to ford a fast flowing river 5'8 deep! During several fascinating commentaries by the dry old stick it transpired that the mine, like much of the Forest of Dean, was in common ownership (as opposed to private or public ownership) similar to the system that applies in the New Forest. Our Shetland Pony of a guide exuded such a fierceness of independent spirit, at times, that one would have hesitated to engage him in an emotional argument in a situation where he was holding a set of cramping irons and one was empty handed. As with Lord Saye and Sele I was similarly tempted to ask his views on Arthur Scargill but my courage evaporated. In retrospect I'm glad I refrained. I might still be down there! Shortly before reaching our respective claustrophobic thresholds we emerged into the rainlight but it had been an interesting excursion nevertheless. We had also been out of the downpour for nigh on 75 minutes!

The itinerary then took in a few miles of the Forest of Dean, an area of great beauty on a normal day - and so to Tea at Much Masele, at yet another licensed establishment, the Royal Oak. Young Goodman portrays great style for one of such tender years! Mine host at the 'Oak was an odd ball, claiming a motorcycle trade background 'oop north. He had, apparently, traded in the Lancashire area and had been quite involved in some "racing programmes". Haven't we all? What he wasn't doing now, however, was running an **Alcohol Free Zone**. It was the gentle swaying about that confirmed his new job as Chief Tester coupled with the position of Chief Taster as well. He was undoubtedly taking his responsibilities very seriously indeed! This apart, Tea went without a hitch and the venue was yet again eminently suitable for our purpose. Just as we were getting comfortable the powers - that - be effectively shattered the reverie by announcing that there was only sufficient hot water at The Burton for the first 10 men home! It never fails on a wet day. The Royal Oak was emptied within minutes!

It was 40 miles back to Kington, skirting Hereford in the process, undertaken at a brisk old pace but with everyone riding well within their personal limits. The first 10 men ashore received their due reward with copious quantities of heated H₂O but the stragglers had to be patient. Some of the leakier riders experienced the phenomenon of the water that was trapped in their boots being of a higher temperature than the stuff comin' out of the taps! Ultimately though it needed less than a minute's immersion to start enjoying that day's run and by the time the Bar was reached an all over feeling of contentment and affability pervaded the whole body. Life on a motorbike, whatever the weather, was an OK event.

A superb Dinner followed by a much slicker Raffle took us through to The Fines. Now that Norman is Chairman the new Sergeant at Arms is Harley-Davidson's Dave Martin. Its fair to say that Dave had always seemed to be one of the "quieter fellas" but did he blossom forth in his new role of Finesman in Chief? He had us in stitches and we need worry not that Norman's high standard will not be sustained. In Dave's case those initials "H.D." must surely equate to **Hidden Depths**. Yet again the spontaneity of The Fines cools in a hot photocopier but enjoy these highlights:

It had to happen. Those daring souls who had supplemented the commentary in the caves had to pay for the privilege.

Bill Colquhoun, nervously anticipating a very expensive half hour, had sensibly put a telephone on the Dinner Table connected directly to his bank in the City. His delaying tactics at the Start were for openers but the main penalty was levied for a very enterprising misdemeanour indeed. Because the tax had expired on his BMW he had substituted the Tax Disc from his Mercedes. "Well, officer, it was like this" Dave Martin's powers of observation are considerable. We are all warned.

Those powers of observation are also extensive. How about this one? D.M. produced a cutting from Denbigh's local newspaper in which a recent traffic felony of Rollo's was written up in best "hatches/matches/despatches" Cub Reporter style. It was such a serious offence he was lucky to escape the stocks!

Tom Waterer also caught it in the neck for committing the unforgiveable Back Marker sin. He'd paraded himself as riding a particular machine but by the time we set forth he had his leg over a completely different motorcycle. In this age of full face helmets that could have been a tricky one.

John Craigie was fined (for the 2nd time in 5 months) for tipping over his Guzzi in the Clearwell Car Park. It could have brought the roof down. And, omitted from the earlier Church Stretton Report, I should have mentioned how Norman took 30p from Tim Wassell (who its always good to see). First of all Tim was fined for turning up only just in time for Dinner on the Saturday, then he hit him with the second barrel ... in too much of a hurry or something, to shave, the Wassell visage was covered in designer stubbles so that also cost Tim dear.

Incidentally 1. At Kington, Rollo Denbigh had covered the famous chin with a rich brown covering of Velcro. He had presumably anticipated the downpour and was determined to employ only the very best waterproofing materials!

Incidentally 2. I made a note at the time concerning the refreshing manner in which our new Chairman said Grace. In the fullness of time I have mislaid that scrap of paper; suffice to say that Grace was a plus. We shall have to wait for Yorkshire in April to hope its repeated.

Incidentally 3. The comedy at Kington didn't cease with The Fines. Oh no. We had Wilfs Electric Home Video Show. This was, in fact, an audio/visual trailer for the Run in Yorkshire at Kirkby Moorside on 20th/21st April. In his totally straight forward way Wilf Harrison decided to stimulate interest and inform potential participants concerning the Spring Run that he is pledged to organise. How did Wilf know that his most diligently produced video, showing the hotel, the car park, the land lady, the dining room, the first set of traffic lights, and the road up t'moor would elicit such cynical howls of derision? We are verily a rotten lot. Wilf fielded every jibe and cat call with a plethora of such good natured surprise that the assembled mob could not be anything but impressed by the great deal of preliminary work he had undertaken on their behalf. It'll serve us right if we all keel over in the very first ford. Even so I have to say that the W.E.H.V.S. was a nice finish to this weekend and we should support the Yorkshire Run in our dozens.

Incidentally 4. It was only right that at around midnight Saturday Simon was finally able to relax. He is a vigorous relaxer, is Simon, whereby he gets his kicks from drinking unspilled beer whilst standing on his head. Simon had worked his butt off on our behalf so such a conventional pécadillo raised barely a murmur.

Incidentally 5. Wasn't it good to see Gerald Davison after a 3 year interval? There goes a captain of industry who has a deep affection for motorcycles. Welcome back!

Incidentally 6. The hotel staff very kindly put some wet clothing down in the basement Boiler Room to dry overnight. Upon retrieving these items on the Sunday morning I was in for a shock. The Burton boiler was a genuine artifact and may well have already been in place when Neville Chamberlain was flying back from Munich. I would heartily récommend a trip to view said boiler on a future Club Run!

In conclusion then the Autumn Run at Hereford was a milestone weekend. It was undoubtedly the wettest/longest/fastest/smoothest and best catered Run that we have experienced to date. Herefrom, one would like to categorise Kington as the first of **THE HIGH GEAR RUNS!**

Final Footnote. It would be remiss to fail to thank those many sponsors who have so graciously shared costs of the Tea and Coffee Stops; of the Lunches; of the Wine and Liqueurs. Unfortunately, sponsorship is not contagious. Your Committee (all of whom have suffered with the sponsorship disease) are simply most appreciative of the continuing generosity of so many Members.