



The Club

Club Run Woodhall Spa, April 3rd – 5th 1998

**“How 29 m/c execs kept off The Links, in Lincs”
or
“We counted ‘em all out, and we counted ‘em all back”**

Organisers: **Tony Dawson & Frank Finch**

Approaching Woodhall Spa, from Sleaford – in the anticipatory ‘glow’ which, on a Friday, traditionally precedes each Club Run afresh – I was struck by a rash of irreverent thoughts: flat old countryside as far as the eye could see/ideal maybe for extending the runway at Heathrow but not too sure about this terrain for motorcycling/too many ditches/surely that’s not ‘spa water’ therein/better warn Alan Blake about all these ditches/landscape’s a bit like a ‘scruffy’ Holland/fingers crossed our 2 organisers (virgins both..) know what there’re doing/hope the hotel’s not too corny, this far off The Great North Ridgeway/all the goddam place names, ‘cept Sleaford and Woodhall, seem to end in ‘by’/how on earth could anyone create a Spa in this neck o’ the woods/wonder if the ignition key’s remained in my borrowed Honda, all this time on the trailer/crikey; this is the 71st Club Run/ah well, once more unto the breach....

Composing these notes, in the contented ‘afterglow’ of a truly wonderful weekend in the ‘wolds, there runs an echo of reaction from what is clearly – as far as recent Run Reports are concerned – a highly contented readership. Having rashly confessed how I’d volunteered to compile “the notes”, as a result of our regular scribe’s much regretted absence overseas, the comments ran from a “Blimey, you’ve taken on a tricky old task there, my old son...” to the even more encouraging, “...for sure Bake’s a pretty hard act to follow”. Don’t I know it? Any road up, those worries expressed in my opening para – every single one – evaporated as quick as a Cabinet Minister’s Smile having been informed he/she must now include the PTW as a component part of the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Meanwhile, back in Lincs, Dawson Team Finch came up trumps. The only worry outstanding, dear reader, remains one’s ability to convey a cogent account. Here goes....

Your average British Spa is either elegant (e.g. Bath) or faded (e.g. Llandrindod Wells) or, like Norman Hyde's Leamington, a bit of both. In the event Woodhall Spa was neither. The Golf Hotel's brochure failed to state when or why Woodhall relinquished their "waters" (one assumes into a nearby ditch..) but it was clearly some years ago the community made a corporate – or, more likely, a parish council policy – decision to concentrate on golf. The philosophy seems to have worked for there now exists a trio or more of 'big draughty pile' 3 Star Hotels, in which to suitably accommodate the likes of us.

As ever, this Club Run weekend began – upon arrival – in the Car Park itself. Tight up against the fence reposed an impressive box trailer, securely locked from prying eyes, hitched behind a Stuttgart station wagon; it could only belong to Ecurie Bolton. There was, surely, more than a Puch 'Maxi' within? Try as we might, Peter Bee's lips remained sealed – it was a tad reminiscent, really, of 'the good old days' when Steyr Daimler were "putting one over on Sulley" – no way would Peter reveal what he intended unloading on the morrow. Knowing Bolton's sense of adventure, as we do, it could even have been an autogiro.

Provided it's dry there's always a good 'buzz' of an early Friday evening, in the 'Arrivals' area of the Car Park, as folk ride in from far and near. On this occasion 'twas mostly 'far'. The talk, of course, focuses on 'the journey up', intertwined with 'tomorrow's' (riding) menu and, of necessity, 'the forecast'. Harking back, even superficially, over the past 70 Runs we've coped just fine with thunder and lightning; with fog and mist: not forgetting hail and snow. Mind you, as the Earth's Crust becomes ever more fragile, an entry of too many old British 'icons' might yet just see how we tackle the Earthquake these **Richtermobiles** provoke... Happily, we've also experienced some Sunny Times, though one suspects the score is probably no better than 20/50 when calculating the tally to date: DRY and /or SUNNY -v- GREY/DAMPISH/HISSING DOWN. Another ponderable statistic, perhaps, would be to work out the number of 'on road' miles The Club has safely completed, all these years, when measured against 'the tumbles'. An encouraging figure, quite probably, but do we have an 'anorak' in our midst who'd do the sums? One fears not. Maybe the Director General (Ret'd) could yet be persuaded; strictly on the basis he's allowed to calculate the answer in... **Executive Safety Miles?**

Reception was a smooth running process. Pre-named brown envelopes (..utterly unconnected with the previous Tory Guvingment) were issued, containing an at-a-glance programme of the whole weekend; indeed, right through to Dispersal Time following the Members Meeting on Sunday Morning-O. A Saturday wake-up call had already been arranged. Hmmm; some nice touches here. Which B.O.F. said Tony and Frank were Virgins? It never ceases to surprise, or to please, when The Club descends **en masse** upon a country hotel. It is not unusual to detect an initial nervousness on the part of the staff and management. Let's face it, twenty five plus 'bikers cannot be their norm. Whilst the organisers themselves, from the day they first cross the threshold, always play their part – on the PR front – it's on the Friday afternoon when that 'descent' begins for real. For a committed hotel there's no turning back. So often, as 'checking in' progresses, one can visibly see the staff relax. It happens every time. A couple of dozen motorcyclists in the flesh aren't actually so terrifying after all. Proof of the pudding I suppose, were it required, is born out by this fact, There ain't a hostelry in the land that wouldn't welcome our return.

(Ahem. On a minor Historical Footnote basis I've chosen to overlook that occasion erstwhile Member, Derek Strachan, attempted to in-smuggle a couple of virgins for own consumption. This was, to be fair, towards the end of the Swinging Sixties. Now, in the Dangling Nineties, our thoughts are all to do with budgets and camshafts and....oh, there aren't enough hours in a day to plan an r and r programme for the next Cologne Show.)

A fine dinner was enhanced with The Club's new A5 Menus ('A' as in Appetite) upon which was a good choice for the Vegans, the Muesli Crunchers, and the Carnivores to chomp. Dave Martin, Chairman-elect, and 44 y.o.a. that day, further embellished Friday's **repas** by providing port and brandy for all; after a gesture this generous he should be working for an outfit called Distil Marketing. The Raffle somehow, thankfully, intruded not. Raffles can prove a perennial pitfall of the post-nosh Anglo Saxon Dinner scene. The Club's current **Raffel Meisters**, industry captains both, seem to have got it off to a fine art; they've made a potentially interruptive, albeit good cause, function into a humorous one and more often than not, it seems, the quantity of pound coins collected equates to the number of diners participating. With equal consistency they ensure the Prizes are compatible with the recipient's **peccadilloes**. Maybe, after their respective day jobs, this dynamic duo regard a Club Raffle as simple therapy; maybe, at work, they are used to distributing product to the same customer who actually ordered it....not an attitude to be encouraged in one of the old British factories, I can tell you. Keith Davies won a pair of illuminated rose-tinted spectacles capable of spotting denim through a two inch thick elm plank, whether the table was overlaid with a dazzling white linen cloth or not.

A side effect of the incoming Chairman's 'Liqueur Gesture' was the loss of his long serving Sergeant-at-Arms duties; a not so easy task Dave has performed with real zeal, minute observance and tremendous humour. This same loss, hopefully, ensured on the following day he could for once put down his notebook and pencil and again enjoy the motorcycling **per se**, together with the fellowship it engenders. As an aside Dave reckoned, at two score and four, he couldn't be too sure he still had sufficient lead in his pencil anyway All this meant your Committee had to find a pronto replacement. The onerous function was therefore sprung immediately upon Messrs Davies and Hill who accepted the chalice with grace and alacrity, and just a single proviso. Not being 'officer material', or so they modestly intoned, they'd prefer to be seen during the 'Running In Period' as mere humble joint "Corporals-at-Arms". They, and the rest of us, need not have worried. Knowing what we know now we could so easily, and far more accurately, have entitled 'em "Lance-wielding-Corporals-at-Arms". Gentlemen, a superbly sharp new Double Act has been born. More of this , anon.

Co-organiser 'Full Monty' Dawson had returned from China just 24 hours before. He'd rushed out there, allegedly, in connection with a project to replace the Great Wall with a structure built entirely of box section Sheffield steel. To the 'How did ye get on with the folk in China?' question Tony replied, "When I was out there, believe me, I spoke to an awful lot of Chinese". Well, he would, wouldn't he? Sort of 50 down, 1.1 billion to go situation, one suspects. Would the Club Quiz contain a Feng Shui flavour, this time round, perhaps? Certainly not. The Quiz was the best yet. So 'graspable', in fact, it has been repeated below – for the enjoyment of Absent Friends,

and the embarrassment of selected attendees – correct answers given in **bold type**: (Within brackets are displayed some of the wilder solutions submitted which, momentarily, prompted Frank and Tony to think the forms had mistakenly lodged with that Golfing Party in the adjacent suite...)

INDUSTRY:

1. Total PTW registrations 1997? **..93,000..** (330,000 was the answer submitted by one unashamed optimist. He actually retired in 1979...)
2. Past MCI Prez and Director @ Silverstone? **..Denys Rohan..** (PRT Sheen)
3. Who was the MCI Prez before Hugh Palin/Peter Bolton? **..Eric Brockway..** (Sid Tooth, Edward Wilson, Alex Haley, Bill Smith, Harold Neville, Eric Sulley, Fluff Brown)
4. Author of “M/C Engineering”, publ 1961? **..Phil Irving..** (Edgar Jessop, Vic Willoughby, John Nelson, Val Page, the other Alan Baker)

MACHINES

5. What did D.O.T. stand for? **..Devoid Of Trouble..** (Ditton on Thames)
6. Who patented Norton’s ‘Isolastic’ system? **..Dr Bauer/Bernard Hooper..** (Bob Trigg, Al Cave, Maurice Knight, Dennis Poore, Bert Hopwood)
7. Upon what m/c was Lawrence of Arabia killed? **..Brough Superior..** (using his Vast knowledge to the full Peter Bolton resisted putting Steyr Daimler Puch. You can tell Quizmaster Dawson is an engineer. On Saturday night he confirmed that Lawrence was indeed ‘fatally killed’ on the road to Bovington, circa 1935)
8. Who produced ‘Bella’ scooters? **..Zundapp..** (BSA. NSU. BMW. Triumph)
9. A steam train/an Ariel; the link between? **..'Golden Arrow'..** (“steers like it’s on rails”, ‘Hunter’ Class)

SPORT

10. Christian names of Mike Hailwood? **..Stanley Michael Bailey..** (Stephen, Sam, Malcolm, Ebenezer, Oswald, Baxter).
11. Name new IOM TT refuelling area? **..Pit Lane..** (Glencrutchery Road, Bracebridge Street, Plumstead Road, Coronation Street).
12. Who demolished Oulton Park’s notorious tree stumps? **..Blaster Bates..** (Chris Lowe, John Webb, Bob McIntyre, Winnie the Pooh, Christine Keeler)
13. Previous uses of Cadwell/Mallory/Brands? **..Grass Track..** (karting, trials, scrambles, flying).
14. Which track includes 2 bends named after famous circuits? **..Thruxton.. curves called ‘Goodwood’ & ‘Brooklands’.** (Silverstone, Monza, Knockhill, Donington, Oulton, Cadwell, Brands, M25, Woodhall Spa).

15. Year Steve Hislop (Norton) won Senior TT? **..1992..** (no correct answers provided here, but a grand spread 'twixt 1938 – 1995).
16. Driver of Thrust SSC LSR breaker in 1997? **..Andy Green..** (Edgar Jessop, Douglas Bader).

The UK m/c population at large can certainly rest easy in their beds safe in the thought the motorcycle, importer, and wholesale industries are presently plentifully peopled by **persona** of profoundly professorial persuasion. At our side the target should be to find these knowledgeable industry types – wherever they may be hiding – and endeavour to persuade 'em to join us on future Club Runs. With as little delay as possible....

Amid much merriment the Club Quiz was won by Bill Colquhoun, entered by 'Group Officer Merrill', with a score of twelve. Peter Bolton, presumably representing Norway, managed 11/2 points.

In a desperate measure to pad out this copy it'd be criminal not to include these extracts from the Quiz TieBreaker, erm, poems that several conscientious contestants composed:

When Dawson T puts his mind to it
Let no soul be in doubt
T'Club Run's a success
Wi'nowt left 'owt

What a super day out we've had
Much weather, some good and some bad
The roads were superb, and the bomber we heard
Was simply amazing. Well done

A pox on Corporals-at-Arms, in t'Car Park they trigger alarms
At trough they extract cash, one daren't even slash
S'pose overall they don't mean us no harms