



*The Club*

## **Club Run Report 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Autumn 2003**

**Cumbria & the North Pennines**

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**With thanks to:**

**Dennis Bates – Graham Goodman – Peter Sheen – Keith Blair**

**Run organised by: Keith Blair – Tony Dawson**

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## **The Cumbrian Companion**

*Every man has something to do which he neglects; every man has faults to conquer which he delays to combat.* – Dr Samuel Johnson

“You know much the best way to do a run report is to sit right down as soon as you get home and do it there and then”.

So said my fellow “scribe”, Mike Jackson.

As will know by now, “Jacko” is a man of some repute, so if he should set such a standard then who am I to argue ?

Thus much in the same way he applied himself to various previous reports, I duly returned home with the very best of intentions. Those have lasted right until now when, some months later, I stare at the bundles of hastily compiled notes from a weekend spent slightly to the right of Windemere.

Feedback has suggested that more than one supper has become tepid and then cold due to the uninterrupted length of the Isle of Man scribblings.

To that end, and in an attempt to restore “diplomatic relations” in various Club member households, this Autumn 2003 Run Report is split into “bite size chunks” rather like a Yorkie bar (but without the chocolate covering which would make your fingers sticky!)...

.....and in case you are wondering, yes you have successfully completed the first section of the “*Cumbrian Companion*”



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The Crook of Lune 1825 – J.M.W Turner R.A

## From a Hovel to a Hotel

I am getting used to the fact that each and every Run will inevitably involve a mad afternoon dash somewhere within this sceptered Isle. To that end I decided to take a ZZR1200 to my hovel the night before departure and egress from there the next day. The saving, I hoped, would be about 100 miles and all the hassle involved in the plethora of last minute tasks that encumber progress when one is setting off for a Club Run.

As usual my journey would not be entirely alone. In what has now become a ritual, I had elected to travel at least some of the route with my chum Andrew Yamaha..... sorry, Smith.

We had decided to make the operation like a good pair of silk stockings – seamless.

Duly our rendezvous would be a service area somewhere convenient on the M6 in the general locale of Manchester.

“No problem” I thought, I can lope up at my own speed and meet Andy in the early part of the afternoon to trundle the last hundred miles in each others company.

You are psychic aren't you ?

It will come as no surprise to you, dear reader, to discover that at about 11.30 a.m I should get a call from Mrs Smiths' son saying that plans have changed, that he is now in Chester with Bob Mac and they are keen to tread on.

With a spring in my step, and half a sandwich in my face, I started for points North determined to make our new rendezvous, Lancaster services by 2.30 p.m.

Difficult but not impossible when you consider how fast modern motorcycles are – even if you take into account all the inconveniences of police, speed cameras, contra flows and those big tin things with a wheel at each corner.

On balance, it's probably a lot easier to cover ground quickly while on one's own anyway, even if it is not as companionable. One county and its gloriously appointed service area made way for the next until Lancaster “hove” into view.... I wonder if Brighton does the same ?



“Arch over the Lune” M6 (McAlpine's 1959)

There are two things sure in life;

1/ At some point you will be standing in your bathroom holding a pint of milk and wondering what you are doing there.

2/ Just occasionally you can tell something is going wrong right away.

Without any cow juice about my person it was logical to go straight past go, not collect £200, and assume that all was not well when I got off the old ZZR at Lancaster amid a very loud ticking from the heavily punished catalytic converters.

I'd missed Andy at the first location and now it appeared he was absent without excuse at the second.

I switched the mobile phone on and tried to call but he was on the message service. A hopeless situation then developed while I wondered if I had overtaken him or whether he had forged on and would call me forthwith.

Sure enough the trusty Nokia chirped into life and on the other end was the saviour of the UK motorcycle industry. "Hi Mart, Bob got bored and so we have pushed on to Kirkby Lonsdale. Dave Martin is with us too – see you there".

The understandable focus of simply trying to play catch up to Andy and Bob had precluded any distance calculations. It was a welcome surprise to discover that we could virtually throw a cricket ball from where we stood united at Devils Bridge into the Hotel parking area so we made ready for the last spurt.

Togged up we prepared to turn right at the junction. There moving from left to right, rather like one of those ducks making steady and deliberate progress across a funfair firing range, was Maurice Knight on a borrowed GS500.

Bob set off like a scalded cat and we covered the last few miles to our hostelry at 100mph+ only to be joined in less than a few minutes by our Knight of the road, Maurice, looking relaxed and ready for a gin and tonic.



M6, Lune Valley, Cumbria.

(Photographed by Ian Britton. From a vast collection of Motorway pictures available from the photographer...some are even less interesting than this one!)

## Crossroads then Krakatoa

Although there was something of the Crossroads Motel about it from the outside, the Westmorland Hotel was pleasingly appointed inside and had a fair smattering of bikes, vans and trailers in the parking area when we had arrived and locked up for the night.

Gruff and to the point Bob, who had strode manfully into reception, declared that he would have a single room please. "I don't want to share with another man" said the Welsh hermit, what he didn't want to share was lost on the wind as the others signed on the dotted line and made their way to allotted rooms.

Considering it was adjacent to a motorway, the view of rolling hills in the distance and highland cattle in the foreground was as spectacular as anything I had witnessed in recent years of traveling for the big K.

If the Japanese that build the majority of our motorcycles are so clever then why have they not yet developed a plasma screen measuring 8ft by 6ft ?

For the same fee as most businessmen pay to "mistakenly" have the adult channel on all night, could not a screen replace the room window whereupon one could select and number of views from a key pad.

Imagine retiring with the hanging gardens of Babylon spread out before you only to wake witnessing the mighty power of Krakatoa in full flood !

Suitably refreshed and unpacked I joined Andy, Bob, Maurice, Dave and a gathering host of the great and good in the bar area.

Still on my "detox" I was yet to fully return to the hop and elected to sup Ginger Beer while others had brews of a stronger variety.

Club conversation was, as usual, a mix of business and pleasure with a generous smattering of humour. One feels at ease immediately and the months between events evaporate in minutes.

As we sat in well upholstered sofa's I asked Maurice his opinion of the recently published biography of equally recently departed Barry Sheene.

Given that I knew of the author I was keen to hear the assessment of someone such as Maurice who had actually been there. "Rubbish", said Maurice. "Virtually every section that mentioned me was inaccurate or simply did not happen".

Not entirely surprised I pushed him further and asked if he had bought the book in order to come to this conclusion.

"Certainly not, I went to W.H. Smiths and read it in installments!".

It is easy to imagine Maurice on his folding garden chair in Smiths with his thermos next to him telling other shoppers to be quiet while he ploughed through yet another chapter isn't it ?

Keith Davies told us that he had recently bought a pedal bike to keep fit. Seeing we were ready to pile in he offered that he had in fact only covered 38 miles on it so far. This, and the thought of the Club Chairman in a figure hugging lycra suit, moved the topic of conversation on rapidly to luggage and how to transport it to Club runs.

An earlier idea practiced by Simon Hill was used by Keith for this run. He had sent his clothes by UPS to the Hotel and would have them delivered back home by the same method.

Oh how we envied his enterprise, oh how we wished we had that kind of foresight... oh how we laughed when the hotel told Keith his parcel had not arrived.

Speaking of luggage, it emerged that Mike Jackson would not join us in the lake district. As a guest of Louis Vuitton, Mike had been invited, nay ordered, to attend the Italia Classic in Puglia. How Mike could have betrayed us like this I could not fathom.

Why in heavens name would he choose the company of assorted ex world champions, various millionaires, five star luxury, the best cars ever manufactured and a bevy of the most gorgeous women on the planet over a Club run I cannot understand. Certainly if I were given the chance I know where my loyalties would lay..... Now where did I put that Italian phrase book ?

Seriously though, Mike would be a sad loss on this run on any number of accounts. His effortless humour and equally effortless riding style are always a feature of a weekend away.

So too are his acerbic observation at the Saturday dinner as Sergeant at Arms.

That did, however, raise the possibility of a guilt free event given that it was learnt so late Mike would be knee deep in expensive suitcases and hat boxes all weekend.

Manfully into the breach strode Norman Hyde. Not a vindictive man by nature (!), Norman would cover for Mike for this event. I say manfully as Norman was overtly masculine on this occasion having sprouted enough facial hair to qualify for a European farming subsidy.

There was temporary confusion among the reception staff as the hotel had originally been declared open by nutty botanist and equally fuzzy Dr David Bellamy – perhaps he had returned to see whether the place was still thriving.

Practically, not vanity, had the largest part to play offered a cornered Hyde. The full set, he claimed, was simply so he could spend another five minutes in bed of a morning instead of shaving.

This slightly abstract conversation was suddenly spilt asunder by a hearty shout of hello from Hon Treasurer, Dennis Bates who strode across the bar area like a man on a mission. Thus with his panniers under his arms and a crash helmet dangling preciously from I don't know what, or where, he bounded up the stairs to the upper floor.

Obscured, as he was, by all that luggage Dennis' "foot-to-eye coordination" was not what it should have been and he somewhat misjudged the height of his desired stair.

The tumble and crash of ABS back down the stairs was quite a cacophony. You will understand that this loud report contrasted with the silence from assembled members in the bar area gazing upon Bates senior spread eagled on the stairs. It's been a few months since Dennis sat his eleven plus and we were understandably concerned.

Up he jumped doing a reasonable impression of Jimmy Dainty and conquered the remaining flight like a gazelle.

Typical of Dennis - to make a grand entrance by falling UP a flight of stairs.

Following this daylight cabaret, a group of us listened to Peter Bolton relate his career history. He has certainly led a full and interesting life and to achieve all that flying would be the envy of other club aviators like Hon Dutchman, Geoff Selvidge.

A former MCI President, Peter was involved, with Michael Evans, in the importation of Puch mopeds from Austria. At one time they were bringing 40,000 units a year in, an impressive figure compared to today's PTW market.

I can still remember at fifteen gazing all dewey eyed at a "JPS Puch Grand Prix" moped complete with... a rev counter. Elite Motors and Maurice K won the day though and I eventually invested in a Suzuki AP50.

According to club historian Dennis, the Austrian company went through several incarnations until, in 1928, it became Steyr Daimler Puch Fahrzuegtechnik GmbH, one of Austria's biggest companies, and surely the one with the longest name.

Rather like Slater Walker taking an interest in your company, Puch found itself with an unwelcome large shareholder (in every sense of the word) in 1938 when art "expert" and WW1 flying ace, Herman Goring, "acquired" a 75% interest in the firm.

Post war, the production of motorcycles made way for mopeds and Peter, being an ex Raleigh man well versed in bicycles became the importer for these and, latterly, the infamous exercise bikes.

As a sort of Ellis Island for Club members, the bar made a useful checking-in point located twixt reception and the bedrooms.

Peter Sheen scurried into the bar in an uncharacteristically flustered mood. Apparently he had left his well worn "portfolio" behind along with his diary and sundry paperwork. Remembered was his raffle prize which was a shame really as I bet the prize was worth a few quid but that PRTS diary, should anyone ever get their hands on it, is probably priceless.

Speaking of which, I hope Frank is as careful of his MRA members subs as he is of his own finances as he selected a bottle of wine as a raffle prize that cost less than most good restaurants charge for mineral water.

Next Huw joined us on the easy chairs. The Hawaiian style shirt he sported was more reminiscent of world traveler namesake Michael Palin than that which are used to from Huw.



His guest Louis Cole was a senior executive at Texaco and had known Huw for some years and now lived in Freshwater, Pembrokeshire.

Evening was drawing on by now and the burble of conversation was suitably fueled by drink thanks to the efforts of kitty meister, Dennis Bates. With the choice of farmhouse soup (great but the bits of masonry get in your teeth), chicken salad or melon for starters, we looked further down the printed menu and made our selection from Salmon, Cumbrian pork or veggie friendly stir fried vegetables for the main course.

And so to the “Bobby Sands Suite” for the evening meal..



Maurice Knight and Peter Bolton share stories and Whiskey fumes.



“Then I told the Minister where he could stick his legislation”. Tom holds an enthralled audience in the palm of his hand.

## Eat, drink, for tomorrow we ride

We made our way to the venue set aside for our evening repast and circled tables in small groups.

Grace said we sat, but for some who had already done so who would be dealt with by Norman in due course.

Sitting at a table that included Martyn Roberts, I heard as much as he could legally tell me about the workings of his employer, Pro-Drive, and his input into vehicle developments for various car manufacturers and the efforts of the various rally teams based at the Bicester HQ.

Keith, pre-armed via the ever attentive Dennis, informed us that there was a record attendance of thirty four members and seven guests for this run and then raced through the apologies.

Michael was still in Greece and unable to tear himself away from the heat and dust and vicissitudes of building a swanky apartment to attend. Former colleague of Michael at the "blue'n", David Dixon had a problem with his leg – which one was not chronicled.

With Mike Jackson in Italy and Chris Ventress unwell, we heard that Simon Hill was at a 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration for his mother.

Dave Hill, who I swear shares his name with a guitarist of 1970's band, Slade, had a "clash of dates" – perhaps he was on a sell out tour..

Blakey had a family commitment while Ray Batersby not only could not attend but couldn't even come up with a creative reason for his absence..

Guests were duly announced by their sponsor starting with Peter Sheen who went to great lengths to describe Graham Matcham of Avon.

Before we had time to wonder if he was going to try and sell us cosmetics it emerged that Graham was actually from Cooper Avon Tyres and not the "ding-dong Avon calling" people.

Dan Sagar, with perhaps one eye on the possibilities of claiming against tax, invited a client, Geoff Travell of Knox, the body armour specialists. While Dave Plumber had Mark Hopkins with him who admitted to be one of the growing band of young "propeller heads" that do things with computers on the Internet to sell motorcycles.

John Nelson brought "son number three", Steve, who it transpired, had competed in the Paris - Dakar rally and volunteered to drive the break down van for the club which earned him double points on both accounts.

It appeared that Huw may have thought that the run was sponsored by Tesco as he brought "three for the price of one" and introduced us to Paul Lopez, van driver, Greg Elson, RAC executive and the aforementioned Lois Cole who unlike Mike Evans in Greece is in oil. Tom Waterer brought MCI number cruncher Nick Brown and local hero David O'Neill had Paul Peters of Hoco with him.

Time now for run organisers Keith Blair and Tony Dawson to avail us of the route, and the benefit of their local knowledge.

Keith's synopsis began with an earnest warning about the scarcity of petrol available the response to which was Martyn Roberts declaring that he, "blamed the Arabs".

Only a few miles into the action the next day we are due to visit a bread shop, the adoption of which according to Keith, was "an interactive collective decision", that and the fact that Norman Hyde is apparently a bread fetishist.

We were further warned about the possibly of motorcyclists at the coffee stop and the lunchtime visit to a lead mine so at least I could buy a new pencil.

Tony Dawson, who had so far been uncharacteristically quiet, chimed in that he would be tail end Charlie. On blue Yamaha according to Keith... a "Midnight Blue" one said the ever accurate Tony.

With maps distributed, examined and ultimately lost we turned to the raffle run in most direct and efficient fashion by Andy Smith, the man who had earlier quite blatantly said to several, if not all members, "excuse me, can I look at your raffle ticket",

So it came to pass that I spookily won a Yamaha watch (showing the wrong date), Geoff Selvidge won a copy of a book he already owned and Peter Sheen, who at least had a chance to get it home by car, won a range of garden furniture brought as a prize by Bill Colquhoun, displaying a dark sense of

humour that should be repaid by him winning a six man inflatable raft on the next run. I made a note and sat back to enjoy the rest of the tat being distributed.

Unlike distraught villagers being offered half a loaf of bread from the tailboard of a United Nations truck, most club members tried not to catch Andrew's eye. In fact, more than a few disguised the number on their tickets as soon as it became known that they had won something that should really have been sent straight to the Westmorland tip – thus cutting out the "middle man".

Maurice Knight, who I have realised is a difficult man to impress, had a look like a depressed Clement Freud when presented with a Taiwanese tyre pressure gauge and "Greyboots" Goodman won a bottle opener and no bottle while Greg Elson sat looking at a full bottle of beer with nothing to open it with.

Someone, and I do not remember who, won a guide to the lake district which was donated by Tony Dawson only to be informed that it had been bought at the last minute from the adjacent service station. Still at least he had not gone with his first choice – an egg sandwich.

Hopefully the Dianese T Shirt won by Dave Martin was fitted with ABS (additional belly space). In addition, one hoped that the lucky winner of the bottle of wine donated by Frank could find the number of the temperance society this late at night.

Topically Bill Colquhoun won a Harry Potter mug donated by Mr de Clifford. I say topically as the Club Raffle is a great barometer for what was in fashion.... approximately two years previous.

Perhaps we should drop the name raffle and rename it – “Too good to throw away - but too awful to keep”

That being said the final presentation of the evening of an engraved tankard was gracefully and thankfully received by a surprised and delighted Keith Blair.

Coffee's finished we left the suite and made our way to the bar from which few departed until way after the witching hour.

## Eggs, bacon... and a shower cap

Breakfast the following morning was taken with a steady flow of Club members - some with a little more blood flowing through the veins in their eyes than others.

One of the earliest to step up to the plate was Bob Trigg who had a sorry tale to tell about the recently immolated National Motorcycle Museum.

It was Bob who had lent the museum the last ever Norton Commando which, like many others, had turned into a pile of twisted tubes and melted, scorched aluminum and steel. He said that most machines had melted and that of a Rotary engined Norton the sole surviving component was one of the hardened rotor tips.

Speaking of plates, Dennis was obviously not at all happy about something.

Having worked with him in the past I know what a stickler for detail he is, and what a curmudgeonly fellow he can be when dealing with those "below stairs".

Bromley's finest had carefully made his way along the cooked fayre on display and was approximately 64.3% through construction his breakfast when he realized the plate was - horror of horrors - cold !!

Ports and airports were shut, stock exchanges suspended and global mergers put on hold while the kitchen staff were called for.

Once Dennis has disemboweled at least two of them with a grapefruit knife and received a warm plate, order was restored and the world started to turn once more.

As a group of motorcyclists staying at a hotel we do not throw televisions out of the windows, drive Bentley's into the swimming pool or set the fire alarms off at 3.00 a.m., but show us a cold plate at breakfast and there is a strong chance we will trash the place, or at the very least unwrap the shower cap and not use it.

Seemingly unconcerned by the melee, Dave Plumber's guest, Mark Hopkins, created an artistic yet edible monolith which he titled "breakfast for one". You have to respect someone that can shovel that amount of breakfast away knowing they will spend the next four or five hours bent double over the tank of a Ducati 996.

First alarm of the day was, appropriately, that of Mark Hopkins. It was either a bike or cholesterol alarm, I could not tell which.

Bookies all over the North West waited for the next shriek and sure enough Keith Blair's BMW chimed up with lights, indicators and sirens screaming just like it does on every run.

Pretty soon all the bikes and most of the riders were facing in the right direction and patient, reserved fellows like Bob Mac were revving their engines and sounding horns in anticipation.

One quick check with Tony Dawson and we should be away.

Tail end Charlie would, if we were not careful, be a very distant Charlie given that the "Midnight Blue" Yamaha did not clunk onto gear. The hydraulic clutch was neither "hydraulicking" or "clutching" and technically speaking, he had broken down before even turning a wheel.

After some "bleeding time" (copyright James Robertson Justice, Doctor in the House 1954), gears were restored and Tony signalled he was ready.

Visors were pulled down, racing gloves tensed against hair trigger throttles and, in David Strathcarron's case, a tartan rug was pulled purposefully across his knees.

Out of the parking area and over the M6, it was cold and misty while we settled into some kind of order and assorted chokes and fast idles faded away as engines warmed.

The area we would traverse is criss-crossed with roads of varying ages and stretching back many hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

From droving routes, coal roads, military roads to the more modern and apparently mundane motorways, all have their story to tell.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century this area of the country was dominated by the movement of stock, most especially sheep and cattle transiting from Scotland to the Midlands and, for some, the far South and the various fairs and markets at which they were sold.

Kirkby Stephen's St Luke's fair, for instance, was granted by Edward III in 1353 in return for an undertaking by Robert de Clifford, Baron of Westmorland, owner of the Manor of Kirkby Stephen, to provide the King with men-at-arms and archers for his wars with the Scots.

So it seems as if times have not changed dramatically in the past few hundred years then. The duplicity of nations in respect of war and trade is not new and it must therefore be a human instinct to turn a blind eye to conflict if there is a buck to be made.

The first couple of miles were reminiscent of the Isle of Man in that the conditions were misty but promised better weather later.

In front lay the sinuous dales roads and behind lay Solway Firth, a decidedly romantic spot of some importance... but of greatest significance was that it played host to the birth of Club member, David O'Neill.

Even on the clearest day it would be too far to see the glint of the blue plaque so we took his word for it and carried on towards Appleby-in-Westmorland and Langwathby.

Next stop was Melmerby and our first planned halt of the day, a bread shop. Like its produce it rose to the occasion. This was no ordinary bakers but an organic enterprise of some local and national renown. We parked up and some went inside to sample the bread makers art – most notably Norman Hyde who emerged from the premises with a large loaf but minus the fish that would have made the lunch stop largely redundant if he had chosen to use his vast and mysterious powers.

The Village bakery was founded in 1976 in a 200 year old converted stone barn and has since expanded not just in terms of its facilities but its customer base too. Sold in Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Selfridges and Tesco, the produce of Melmerby village bakery is enjoyed countrywide. This enjoyment apparently extends to well known heir and flora conversationalist, the Prince of Wales, who visited the site on 2001 and was reportedly impressed with what he saw.

The complexities of building a wood pellet fired, hot gas by-pass combustor bread oven paled into insignificance once the gathered ensemble witnessed Nick Jeffry starting his venerable Brough Superior.

With a variety of levers and a twist grip at either end of the handlebar, plus a further selection of controls sprouting from the most unlikely places, the Brough looked like it had been designed by Igor Sikorsky - no wonder T.E. could ride a camel with such ease.

As Nick and the Brough chuffed into life we were instructed by Keith that the next section was the canter to the coffee stop atop the Hartside pass and that, should we wish, we could break into a gallop if the conditions allowed.

Judging myself to be in a safe spot (to the rear of Bob Mac) I eased along the incline with equally increasing speed. It was obvious that this would be one of the better chances of the day to get round to three o'clock on the rev counter so we upped the pace and made progress.

Raising the game somewhat the last section was very steep with cars at

regular intervals breaking the group into manageable sections. Following Bob we had a loose understanding which meant that we could dart past any number of cars without any undue fuss.

Dave Plumber was on another wave band that morning and pulled out just as Bob as alongside him. It could have been nasty, but Bob just looked sideways long enough to make eye contact and Dave stayed in the gap he was intending to vacate.

Parked up at the head of the pass in the popular Hartside Café, Dave was most apologetic and Bob duly accepted with alacrity. In his days at Honda Bob would have had Dave rubbed out for that move so it was nice to see the old bear had a cuddly side too.

Pursuing his usual stream of logic Tony Dawson said, "those that want to eat, eat and those that don't, don't". Not quite Shakespeare but understandable none the less. I made a few notes outside and then settled with Martyn Roberts at one of the many tables to hear about a short trot he had secured on the Voxan brought by Richard Davies. "It's a brilliant bike, but no one buys brilliant bikes anymore", was the pithy summary - we could not find it in our hearts to disagree.

Peter Sheen removed his crash helmet into which was mounted an igneous intercom system. "It's for when me and Tina ride together", said Peter. My hope was that it was not voice activated lest the lovely Tina think it broken in one direction.

Returning outside, a sizable and mostly appreciative crowd stood round Norman's latest creation, a Thruxton Bonneville complete with upper fairing, less restrictive pipes and a bolt hanging merrily out of the handlebar area. The seat and handlebar relationship looked ideal and drew compliments as did the new front brake caliper. Only one slightly detracting voice rang out stating "that was a good bike before he started", a pint to whoever guesses who that was..

It was observed from our windswept eerie that, on a clear day, one could see seven counties from here, these being Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmorland, Dumfries, Galloway, Co Durham and the East Borders.

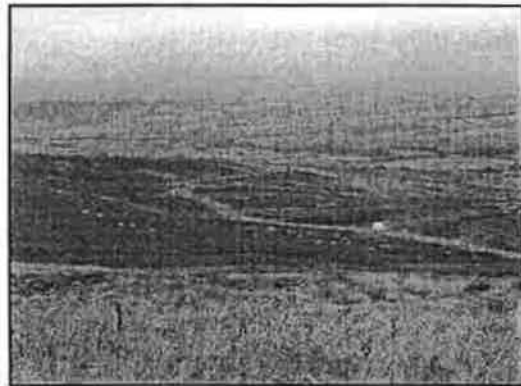
Our eyes sore at such a stare, we remounted, jettisoned the two extra riders that had erroneously been coerced into joining our happy band and turned towards Alston and the lead mine at Nenthead.

The pace today was comfortably swift with no time to let the cold set in or take that second cup of tea, and certainly no time to check Keith Blair's assertion that Ulston had more "bastards" than any other town in the UK.

Up here on the moors it was natural to reflect on the variety of transport that had been and was still used, from the drovers on foot, the first crude carts then carriages and, most significantly, the era of railway expansion that opened up this and other traditionally inaccessible parts of the UK.

Most of the railways are either gone or preserved as shadows of their former selves but, sadly, economics is

always the overriding factor and we would soon witness the see-saw effect of demand and market value at the Lead mine at Nenthead.



You can see seven counties...and perhaps David O'Neill's birthplace, from here



The assembled crowd in mid "throng" pose for the camera at Nenthead Mine.



Martyn Roberts gives us a practical demonstration of his interest in mines and mining.



## You can take a horse to water, but a pencil..

As the mainstay of the village, the lead mine spent most of its life teetering between breaking even, loss and, at times, a small profit. That wasn't to say that during these times mining the ore was any easier and, for the majority of its life, the material was hewn by hand in nearly forty miles of galleries and drawn to the surface by horse drawn carts.

The right to mine changed hands several times and, occasionally, new machinery was introduced – usually just as the lead price or demand slumped once more. Interestingly this change in demand stretched all the way back to the early 1500's when Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries and the market was flooded with lead stripped from ecclesiastical buildings.

From its position in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, providing up to half of the world's lead, the spectre of cheaper foreign imports destroyed the industry once and for all. Small pockets persisted in the North, and the last mining enterprise, in Swaledale, closed in 1990.

Contemplating the pretty miserable life of a miner I watched Davies "minor" panning for lead, gold or whatever in the exhibit outside the windows of the café and made my way through a welcome pasty and some soup.

Higher up the valley was an exhibition of some lead crushing and other sundry

mining machinery all powered by water. Strolling up with Tom Waterer we pondered the lot of the motorcycle industry in contrast to the fate of lead mining. It's stretching a point, but we have already seen the change in British fortunes as a result of foreign imports and now the roller coaster of demand which has changed and compressed the so called "buying season".

Ever the optimist, Tom understands the need to balance the undeniable performance available from modern machines with the need to be responsible and for industry to self regulate in the face of government pressure and rising accident statistics. Lets all hope Tom continues to enjoy his motorcycling and the pressures of the MCI.

The run after lunch would be pretty much a free ride all the way to Brough where we were due to stop for a "photographic opportunity" as they say in all the best PR agencies these days.

Order reigns in these situations and, marking corners apart, members generally find themselves in the right group within a few miles of setting off. So it was that I rode with MRA head honcho, Frank Finch, Bob, Andy and Dave Martin for this section of the run and sampled the delights of Andy's Yamaha FJR1300 sport tourer.

There are plenty of people who will say that there is no such thing as a bad motorcycle but that does not mean they will ride or encounter anything other than a mediocre one. The FJ stands outside this as a really accomplished piece of machinery. I had the use of an old style FJ1200 a while ago and apart from its thirst it was a great bike. This modern incarnation is sublime and I envy Yamaha for it.

Soon we were bend swinging at three figure speeds with myself clinging to the licence plate of Dave Martin likewise FJR mounted. Following his embarrassment on the Isle of Man run, Dave had now bedecked his FJR with an ingenious radiator guard not unallied to a loud speaker grill.

I experienced first hand the reason why he has fitted the hi-fi extra to his mount while following him and Ducati 996 mounted Mark Hopkins. Not only do modern high performance tyres only last a couple of thousand miles but, being so sticky, they tend to fire small stones like bullets for hundreds of feet behind them. It is certainly something else to consider before staying behind one of these machines down a country lane or moorland road like the ones we were using.

Making good use of the torque and easy going nature of his machine, Geoff Selvidge made good progress on a ZR-7 and was obviously enjoying himself. Bill Colquoon was really motoring on his TDM Yamaha and cruised effortlessly in the upper "nineties" for mile after mile.

"Greyboots" Goodman hove into view on his BMW boxer riding line astern with Nick Hopkins on his customary Ducati ST2. There were the usual glimpses of Tom Waterer on a borrowed Honda Varadero hooning into corners with Keith and Richard Davies recognisable only by their riding gear so popular are the motorcycles that they bring seemingly for others to ride.

I expect you could lend Keith a Raleigh Runabout and he would ride rings round you so machinery is not a problem for him. Having said that, it

is so characteristic of him that he willingly lets others sample his chosen machinery be it a Triumph Sprint or some other member of the Three Cross "family" of marques.

Back on my Kawasaki ZZR1200, and riding with Frank, we past the "unholy alliance" of Dennis Bates, Wilf Harrison and Maurice Knight all enjoying the countryside seemingly without a care in the world – except what time the bar would open.

Just before Middleton-in-Teesdale, and to our left, we passed High Force waterfall. With a 70ft drop this is England's largest waterfall and worth a look of we had not shot past at a tad over a ton.

Right or South West we started down the B6276 towards Brough. To our left the massive 107 hectare Selset reservoir sits at 310 meters and is joined in feeding the thirst of the North by Grassholme and Bolderhead reservoirs.

We have, by now, effectively ridden three quarters of the way round a route which encloses the ancient Millburn and Lune forests in addition to Dufton fell. The Pennine way tracks across this centre section we have circumnavigated, along with England's highest and largest terrestrial National Nature Reserve (TTR) to the East of Dufton Fell, which is also designated a European Biosphere Reserve and European Special Protection area.

Running through to the A66 and Brough, we arrived at a forested area and a junction which would be manned by Frank. I stopped to keep him company and we waved club members through.

With our crash hats off, Frank suggested that being at the rear of the pack we could tread on for a few miles as soon as we saw the RAC van.

The orange Transit appeared and we duly mounted up and roared off. I think Frank must have got to the redline in second before he slowed suddenly and came to a juddering halt.

Even though we appeared to be in a forest it emerged we were about a half a mile from Brough and the rest of the pack wondering why Frank and myself had approached them at motorway speeds.

We joined the group talking photographs of Nick on his Brough (680cc and Nick's total mileage door-to-door was 680 miles!) and then remounted to work our way South down the A685 and A683 to Sedburgh with its Grammar School founded by – yes you've guessed it - Edward III.

On via Millthrop we navigated weaving country roads for a few miles before arriving at Dent our afternoon tea stop.



The Brough at Brough

## Rock cakes and geology

Famous as the centre of local wool trade and for its “knitters”, Dent has a history that stretches back to Roman times and has Norman evidence such as the doorway on the North side of the parish Church.

Most famous son of Dent is Adam Sedgewick, generally accepted as the father of modern Geology who was born at the Old Parsonage in Vicarage Lane. The village is, like many, a shadow of its former self but still reassuringly vibrant with a small school almost opposite the tea shop we have settled in and a number of pubs though not the five that were here in the 1930’s.

Above us, and within easy reach of the village, are miles of byways which can be connected to make a very rewarding days trail riding.

“Military” and “Coal” roads are now mostly used by horse riders, motorcyclists and the occasional 4x4 driver – for how much longer this off-road pleasure will be open to one and all is a matter of debate. I wager that it won’t be long before trail riding is effectively made illegal by the rabid dogooders of the Ramblers Association even though byways account for less than three percent of the paths and unmade roads in the UK.

And on that semi messianic rant it may be worth noting that Dentdale is the seat of Quakerism, it having been established in the region. No lesser person than our old chum Adam Sedgewick also encouraged the building of a chapel by the “Inghamites” (a sort

of dub version of the Methodists) and, while he had nothing better to do, was trusted with proclaiming the victory at Waterloo to the village inhabitants in 1815.

There were no Napoleonic overtones at the tea rooms where civility reigned while tea and cakes were consumed with equal passion and hang the calorific consequences. Thus replete we repaired to the parking area for the short hop to Kirkby Lonsdale which, for some reason, seems to get mentioned at least once per run report.

Kirkby or, *The Church town in the valley upon the Lon*, is one of the largest towns in the area and certainly among the most historic having had its market charter granted in 1227. The famous Devils Bridge was constructed some time before this, evidenced by the fact that the first repairs to the structure were made and catalogued in 1275.

Such is the reputation of the local beauty, that Joseph Mallord William Turner painted the valley in his work titled *Crook of Lune* in 1825 before the lure of the industrial revolution took him away to paint railway engines, steamships and the like.

From Kirkby to Tebay and a warm, welcoming bar was but a short dash North, and those with sense opted for this leaving a handful of riders in the capable hands of one David O’Neill who you will remember hails from these here parts.

Loins suitably girded we made off towards Kendal and Windemere at speeds which can only be attempted but once in a weekend (or maybe twice).

Thankfully David's surfeit of local knowledge had us out of the tourist ridden lakeside town in a thrice (four minutes to be pre-thrice) and we all forced our way North East up the Kirkstone pass. Dave set a furious pace and tucked in behind were myself and Dave Martin riding like a demon on his FJR1300.

I could not keep with him into the corners still as he appeared to brake so late then accelerate while I was still trying to work out how he had been so brave.

Both Andy and I were on another plane when the bikes ahead of us rushed into view as Mr O'Neill stopped outside the Kirkstone Pass Inn with the merest hint of indication.

Our heart monitors reset we agreed to take on fuel as soon as possible and resumed bend swinging and appreciating the local scenery in equal measure.

By now I was getting more than a little perturbed by Dave Martin's apparent prowess and took the bull by the horns at the petrol stop.

"Look here Dave", I said, "I am right on your tail into all these bends but I have to back off way before you brake, what is the secret?".

A somewhat puzzled Mr Martin then proceeded to yank the stop handle and discover that he had ridden all day with no rear brake light. No wonder we were all running into the back of him waiting for him to brake – he was stopping all the time.

Ironic though, that a man who has made it a career goal to find the most uses ever for an LED spends his time riding a motorcycle without any optical indication of retardation.

Nearing Penrith on B roads we turned South and made one last dash for the hotel with David O'Neill altering the pace with the realisation that he may have a leaking hose evidenced by a few unwelcome slides.

By early evening we joined the rest of the club at Teebay and surveyed the parking area complete with an array of well used machinery.

We had avoided the North/West artery of the M6 for most of the day and were none the poorer for it even though the road itself had played a significant part in changing the local area and access to the North for many years.

The number of accidents on the Liverpool and East Lancashire road prompted speculation about a motorway as early as 1937. In light of the popularity of such arteries with a certain Mr Hitler, a plan was devised following a visit to the Fatherland just before hostilities broke out.

So with characteristic lightening reactions the motorway was started in 1956 nigh on twenty years after its conception. The man charged with overseeing the design was a certain Mr Drake, country surveyor and bridgmaster of Lancashire.

Little is known of Mr Drake save that he was famous before the M6 construction for being the man that proposed a "Blackpool ring road", only to be told that the Western perimeter might be a little damp...

With the distant echo of the M6 barely audible we made our way into the hotel and a well deserved bath (separately of course!) before meeting in the bar.



Tony Dawson tries to persuade Frank Finch to join the facial hair society, while existing members Geoff Selvidge and Bob McMillan look on.



Rick Parish and Nick Brown are ready to assist as Peter Meeck finally dislodges that annoying lump of grime under his fingernail.

## Hyde that small change

“What a great days riding”. This was the “fuel” for bar conversations and it sounded very much as if we all had our tanks full such was the burble of contented chatter pre-dinner.

Dennis had changed out of riding garb and was, once more, collecting for a good cause, i.e. drink, while Norman Hyde collected yet more names, ranks and serial numbers for his stint as Sergeant at Arms.

In a departure from normal Club convention, the evening meal would follow a special presentation organised by Huw Palin in one of the Hotel’s conference suites.

Along with an extremely able female staff member, Huw collected us together in order to share some memories of the Second World War in verse.

His collection of memories had been assimilated over a number of years from a variety of sources including newspapers, published books of verse and wartime reminiscences.

With few collections of this kind in print, this was a special chance to hear from soldiers, sailors, airmen and their loved ones – as well as civilian victims - about the effect that conflict has on all concerned.

In a moving presentation, Huw and his assistant relayed thoughts both humorous and harrowing which echo down the years and are as applicable today as they were over fifty years ago.

In contrast to the overriding and understandable humour of the weekend, this was an opportunity for us all to reflect on just how lucky we are right now.

For those of us who, hopefully, will never have to be involved in conflict, it was right to pay our respects to those that did fight and survived and especially those that went to war and did not return.

Dinner was selected and we made our way to the eating area once more.

In contrast to the causal manner of the Friday meal, the final repast is always a jacket and tie affair with the loyal toast and club business interspersed with the wit and wisdom – not to say financial burden – of the Sergeant at Arms.

Club Chairman, Keith Davies rose to speak and disgorge some pearls of wisdom.

Quite rightly, he thanked Keith Blair and Tony Dawson for an excellently planned and executed run and then idled on an execution of rather different kind.

Apparently we were very lucky to have the company of Mr Blair at this event as he had been the victim of a rather serious accident earlier in the year having hit a chicken in the road – presumably playing “human”.

Luckily Keith appears to be fine and maintains his vegetarian credentials – after all you don’t get onions running headlong into your motorcycle do you, so you can see his point.

The outstanding route and great views were applauded before Keith went on to single out the RAC for praise.

This was, said Keith, the second run in our 40<sup>th</sup> year and there were a lot of young and old members in evidence. I made a mental note not to mention pox Doctors clinics and carried on scribbling.

Two things stood out as impressive to the elder Davies; firstly Norman riding smoothly on the Thruxton Bonneville and a 72 year old Brough rattling round a course plainly designed for modern day machinery. I am sure George Brough had not heard of RSI when he invented the 680cc motorcycle cum weaving loom, but we all had to take our hats off to Nick who had manfully guided the relic round with not a word of complaint.

Tony Dawson got his own back for being tail end Charlie by setting another fiendishly difficult quiz which was won by Bob MacMillan followed by pairings of Frank Finch with Richard Davies in second and Steve Nelson and Norman Hyde in third place. (Bob says that the win will not change him and he will continue to devote his life to the poor and nursing sick animals)

With this, the “enjoyable” part of the evening over, the light dimmed and Dr Jeckyll’s alter ego took over in the form of Mr Hyde, Sergeant at Arms.

Bob Trigg, who had behaved himself all weekend, fell at the first fence and was fined for opposing the role of Sergeant at Arms. Dan Sagar soon followed for sitting down before grace.

The triumvirate of Keith Blair (“beards are trendy these days), David Stratthcarron (“he can’t tell bare faced lies anymore”) and Keith Davies, with a “bearded” onslaught throughout Fridays dinner, were all sanctioned for basically taking the piss out of Norman.

This was swiftly followed by a fine for Martyn Roberts for being a “lookalike”.

My pleas for mercy went unheeded as I was found guilty of spelling mistakes in the last report while Tony Dawson could not spell Hayabusa.

Again I fell foul for using a free Tesco road map as my only navigational aid while Geoff Selvidge contributed for boasting just a little too much about his mountain climbing abilities.

I fancied Mr Hyde was salivating when he fined Hugh Palin for wearing a shirt that looked like “National Trust Pyjamas” and Rick Parish for putting stick on ears on his crash helmet. It must be said in mitigation that Andy Smith reckoned there was more profit on the ears than an R1, but the fine remained.

No surprise to find Mrs Finch’s son admonished for wheelieing within 400 yards of the start and Bob Mac for enquiring who the chap with the glasses and the Dicky bow was (Norman of course).

Rounding off the more creative fines was Mike Jackson, in absentia, for, er, not being there, and Keith Blair for the incident where he manfully tried to get two people to join the run who were no part of the club whatsoever.



No Sergeant at Arms is worth his salt unless he can fine himself and Norman pulled a cracker by admitting that he insisted Bob Trigg wait for several final motorcycles on a corner when all the club had passed.

Fortunately the mistake was spotted or Bob would still have been on that windswept corner now like a Club version of Greyfriars Bobby.

The remainder of the evening would now be ours and most populated the bar to say goodbyes or plan the route home.

Myself, Andy and Bob had early business down South and made preparations for a very prompt start.

Most, understandably, would be at the scheduled Club meeting the next morning only to remove to parts South, West and North later on Sunday.

Another good run and with weather that was nigh on perfect for powered two wheelers.

Although the thought was difficult to reconcile at 5.30 in the morning, I chuckled to myself about PRTS trying to explain to Tina how he had acquired some garden furniture, how some poor individual would be embarrassed by a well ridden Brough later in the day and whether Keith's luggage would ever make it back to Dorset.

Companions all and a fitting end to this, the *Cumbrian Companion*.

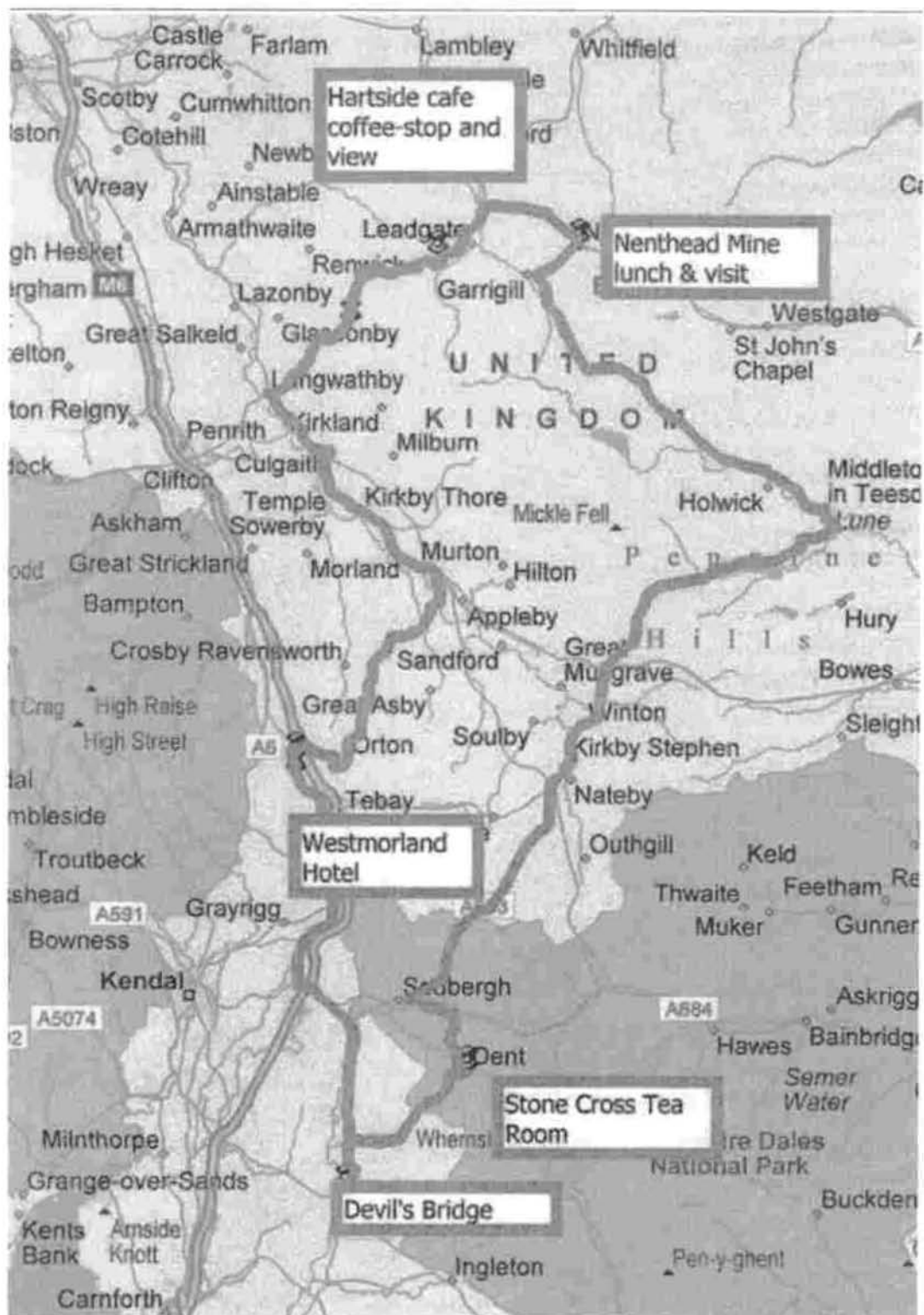
The Club Cumbria Autumn 2003

Members, guests and their machines

Keith Blair	740cc BMW K75RT
Dave Martin	1297cc Yamaha FJR1300
Geoff Selvidge	749cc Kawasaki ZR7S
Wilf Harrison	798cc BMW R80
Maurice Knight	498cc GS500E Suzuki
Graham Goodman	1130cc BMW 1150GS
Dennis Bates	598cc Yamaha Diversion
Martin Lambert	1198cc Kawasaki ZZR1200
Tony Dawson	1188cc Yamaha FJ 1200
David O'Neill	1297cc Yamaha FJR1300
David Strathcarron	1064cc Grinall three-wheeler
Dan Sager	649cc Honda Transalp
Keith Davies	955cc Triumph Sprint ST955i
Richard Davies	998cc Voxan Scrambler
Peter Sheen	652cc BMW F650 GS
Rick Parish	1137cc BMW R1150RT
Norman Hyde	790cc Triumph Thruxton/Bonneville
William Colquhoun	894cc Yamaha TDM900
Dave Plummer	942cc KTM Adventure 950
Peter Meek	892cc Yamaha Diversion
Nick Jeffrey	1931 680cc Brough Superior SS80
Nick Hopkins	944cc Ducati 944 ST2
Tom Waterer	998cc Honda Varadero
Martyn Roberts	1402cc Suzuki GSX1400
Tony Jakeman	1137cc BMW R1150GS
Mike Russell de Clifford	998cc Moto Guzzi California III
Bob Trigg	847cc Yamaha TDM850
Andy Smith	1297cc Yamaha FJR1300
Frank Finch	999cc Honda SPI
Bob McMillan	1298cc Honda CBR1300

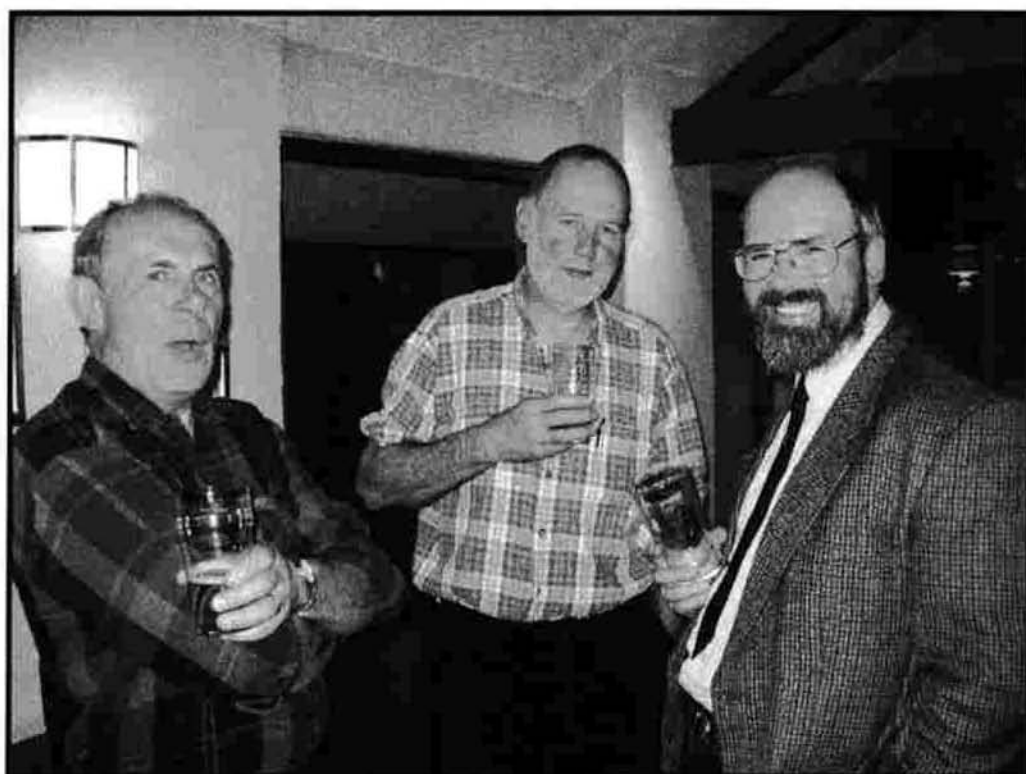
MEMBERS in CARS

John Nelson	Passenger to Steve Nelson
Hugh Palin	Passenger to Paul Lopez
Peter Bolton	3200cc E320 Mercedes





"It was black, about A4 and leather". Peter Sheen describes his portfolio to an obviously concerned Keith Davies.



Peter Meek tries to rouse Nick Jeffrey and Martyn Roberts in one last verse of "Down at the old Bull and Bush".



Nick Hopkins realizing that he has been speaking to Norman Hyde for twenty minutes and it was Martyn Roberts all the time.



This is the closest the Club ever gets to a "Le Mans" start



In true Rolls Royce fashion, Tony Dawson "fails to make progress"  
(Note RAC mans crafty fag)



"Take it easy for the first ten miles to scrub the tyres in, then wring her neck". John Nelson gives Wilf Harrison a pep talk before the off



A car park... in the far corner of which you can just see the Hartside Café



Andy Smith creates a diversion while Bob hires a hit man to put "the frighteners" on Dave Plumber



Authentic, right down to the loose bolt,  
Norman Hyde's Thruxton Bonneville



Tony Jakeman shows Martin Lambert  
a toe nail he keeps in a matchbox



Hon Tres, Dennis Bates, just after climbing  
the North face of a rock cake in Dent.



His Lordship graciously gives way to Frank Finch who, for some reason, has his front wheel on the ground



A relic of motorcycle history.. and a Brough Superior at Devil's Bridge



The End