



**Club Run  
Sherborne, Dorset  
April 27th-29th, 2007**

# Club Run Sherborne, Dorset Spring 2007

To the train-spotters among us, Somerset & Dorset will always be associated with the 'Slow & Dirty' railway that was made famous by Betjamen and axed by Dr Beeching. The Club Run was anything but slow and with the notable exception of the historic town's kebab house, appeared very clean cut & wholesome.

The sun was beating down as we thundered into 'Sher-bun' on our gleaming steeds. Although at first glance the hotel had an air of the legendary Crossroads Motel about it, one had to be impressed by its location, next to Sherborne Girls School. The car park was packed with an exotic selection of machinery from around the world and an equally exotic selection of riders from the motorcycle industry. Ray Battersby had returned to the fold for his first Club Run in many years (on a Suzuki GSX400) and there was a wide variety of guests, including a wine merchant and a solutions architect, so we had most eventualities covered.

With 45 people present it was snug around the dinner table, which added to the conviviality but presented certain challenges when attempting to slurp the soup. Richard Davies burst into the room just in time for dinner, but as I'd called into his office 3X Motorcycles at 5:00 that afternoon to find him eating lunch, his body clock was clearly running a shade late.

Our guests were introduced at this point; Ian Kerr (C/O Mike Jackson) is a motorcycle journalist and has recently taken over from Frank Levy running Beaulieu's Motorcycle World. Tim Albone (C/O Frank Finch) runs an engineering business and is involved in a new motorcycle tracking system. James Fleetwood (C/O Dan Sager) is a wine merchant (always a popular choice of guest) and has been known to spar with Norman Hyde on the real tennis court. Adrian Watts came with Nick Jeffery and Jonathan Whitehead (C/O Dave Martin) is a solutions architect, which prompted a shout of "bollocks" from somewhere in the crowd!

Gerald Davison took centre stage to deliver comprehensive instructions with military precision. He would take the lead on a modern British Triumph triple, while Keith Davies would bring up the rear on a modern French Peugeot scooter and Graham Matcham would be on hand to provide support on his Avon-shod Japanese Fazer. We were alerted to the fact that our route would take in the country's "most miserable museum" at Compton Abbas and were warned of the dangers of Police speed checks. Gerald himself had been 'invited' to attend a seminar on speed awareness by Avon & Somerset constabulary as a result of some over-enthusiastic driving earlier that month.

With wine glasses suitably refreshed we tucked into dinner.

## Friday's Menu

ÿ *Starters* - Mushroom Soup, Deep Fried Camembert or Whitebait

ÿ *Main course* - Roast Pork with Bacon & Cream Sauce, Plaice & Chips or Saute Mushrooms & Rice

· *Pudding* - Apricot Yoghurt Cake, Jam Roly Poly & Custard (Wilf complained at the lack of jam, but more of this later) or Mandarin Cheesecake

Just when you thought things couldn't get any more exciting ... they didn't. The raffle was once described by Simon Hill as the barometer of what's not selling in our industry and tonight was no exception. Andy Smith proved that you can polish a turd in his capacity as ring master while Dave Martin provided the muscle to encourage payment. Keith Blair was the lucky recipient of "Saving for Retirement" and Ian Kerr came away with "perfumed panty" air freshener (I can't believe I'm writing this). Nick Hopkins played a canny game by bringing a flagon of Wiltshire cider, which was promptly returned to him in one of those strange 'coincidences' of the Club raffles.

We awoke to a cool but dry day; perfect motorcycling conditions (not too hot & sticky) and so ate a hot and sticky breakfast instead. Outside in the car park Rick Parish's BMW started on the button (unlike the previous wet Autumn in Wales) but had a slow puncture in the rear tyre to compensate. Dave Wheeler, the ever-calm RAC van man, had it sorted in double quick time and we were off. Until Alan Blake's Triumph Speed Twin stalled half way up the drive!

There was, however, a separate drama unfolding of which many of us were blissfully unaware. Maurice Knight's Boxer twin had refused to start 'on the button' and RAC Dave had soon diagnosed a faulty starter motor. Luckily Tony Jakeman, who by day is BMW's head of marketing, was on hand to provide out-of-hours customer service. A 'phone call to the local BMW dealer was made and by great good fortune they had the requisite part in stock. Off to CW Motorcycles in Dorchester went Maurice and bike in the RAC van, with Graham Matcham as an out-rider and thanks to a swift turnaround they rejoined the party at the coffee stop.

From Sherborne we took the A3030 East into the Piddle valley, then followed the exceptionally twisty B3143 South to Puddletown. The lanes were gritty and narrow with hedges on either side, so you had to keep your wits about you, but there was very little traffic to get in our way (apart from a post-War BSA 3-wheeler). Then we headed up the A354 East towards Blandford, just missing Tolpuddle and its visiting groups of assorted lefties and union activists.

It was around this time that Bob Mac was on point duty in a village when he was approached by a lady who I assumed wanted his autograph, having mistaken him for bearded country & western legend Kenny Rogers. He claims that she wanted to take a photo of his bike next to a giant inflatable green monster, which seems far less plausible.

Close to Blandford Forum we turned North on the A350 in the direction of Shaftsbury (where they filmed the legendary Oop North Hovis bread advertisements), stopping for coffee just before reaching the town. Outside Compton Abbas airfield ([www.abbasair.com](http://www.abbasair.com)) was a gigantic poster of Terry Thomas in flying kit. I know not why. Even the Wright Brothers would have described the facilities as primitive. A tractor was mowing the runway while light aircraft attempted to land. Its location, on the crest of a hill, was exceptionally windy and we witnessed a number of aborted attempts to land - all highly amusing from the ground but probably less so in the cockpit. Gerald informed me that we were ahead of schedule because Smith, Lambert, Martin & Finch hadn't gone for a curry the night before.

Reinvigorated with a pint of caffeine and half a pound of biscuits each, we re-mounted and roared over the escarpment with a sharp drop to the valley below on our left. The road was bumpy & bendy with several hairpins on the descent, which are always a treat. Having followed the B3095 to Maiden Bradley, Gerald led us along many back roads, through Bruton and Somerton, before going south to our lunch stop at Yeovilton. We lost Peter Sheene and his yellow Grinall somewhere around Ilchester, but were distracted when we parked up at the Fleet Air Arm Museum by Jonathan Whitehead's Triumph Triple with a very flat battery. Dave the RAC man leapt into action and managed to get the bike back on the road in spite of all the 'helpful' suggestions from Club members gathered around the machine. Just as we were preparing a search party, PRT piloted the Grinall into the car park, with something of the air of the Spitfire pilot returning late from a sortie over the Channel.

We were ushered into the Warnefords private dining room, which takes its name from Flight Sub Lieutenant Reginald AJ Warneford who was awarded the highest military honour, the Victoria Cross, for outstanding bravery in 1915. We feasted on chicken chasseur with apple pie to follow. It's a tough life on the road! The Museum ([www.fleetairarm.com](http://www.fleetairarm.com)) has the largest collection of Naval aircraft anywhere in Europe together with the first British built Concorde. The award-winning Aircraft Carrier Experience is where the Museum meets theatre. We were 'transported' by helicopter to the replica flight deck of the aircraft carrier HMS ARK ROYAL. On board we saw (and heard!) fighter aircraft and two enormous projection screens showing a Phantom strike fighter and a Buccaneer fighter-bomber. Proper Boys Own stuff from the Senior Service.

We emerged from the cavernous museum into bright sunlight and soon found ourselves on the dual carriage-way of the A303. Several of our number succumbed to over-enthusiastic throttle syndrome at this point and I decided to let the 117bhp Moto Morini V-twin I'd been leant have its head. I soon discovered that on a naked motorcycle my 14-stone bulk counted for nothing at an indicated 120mph and found myself rising slowly from the seat, while my helmet tried to remove itself from my head, at which point I chickened out and watched the sportier types disappear into the distance.

We left the 303 near Montacute (well, those of us who weren't going so fast that they missed the marker), and rode down the A356 towards Crewkerne, where we joined the A3066. This road took us through Beaminster towards West Bay (famed for its fish). It was during this stage that I saw flashing blue lights ahead and assumed that it must be a Police road block to net us pesky speeding biker types. However, as I drew closer it transpired that the boys in blue were attending a minor motor car shunt so that was alright (for us, at any rate). On reaching the coast we turned East along the fast and sweeping B3157 that skirts the shore with idyllic views, turning off after a few miles to climb the hills to our tea stop at Puncknowle. We completely filled car park at the thatched Crown Inn, where we sat in garden and got sunburnt while eating too many biscuits. Legend has it that the inn was favoured by smugglers, although the only bandit I spied that day was of the Suzuki variety.

All too soon it was time to saddle up and head home. We climbed the hill out of the village and back onto the glorious, coast road, passing through Abbotsbury and bypassing Weymouth by turning off towards Dorchester at Portersham. There was a steep ascent on a single track road between hills & sheep, where I discovered a new equation. If  $a = 117\text{bhp}$  motorcycle and  $b = \text{a cow pat}$  and they intersect at point  $c$  then the probable result is the rider ending up in something smelling of  $b$ . Luckily a combination of fear and prayer kept me upright. Joining the A352 at Dorchester it was then time for the mad dash back to base camp. On arrival back at the hotel Norman commented to Gerald that he seemed to be in a hurry to get back, to which Gerald responded that he backed off when he saw 150 on the clock. That's the Club spirit!

As we parked up outside the hotel, amidst much chatter of the day's riding, my guest James Fleetwood noticed that his BMW R1100GS had a leaking master cylinder. By an amazing coincidence so did Maurice Knight's R850 and the two of them were soon bonding over DOT4 brake fluid and screwdrivers. I suppose that's one of the joys of BMW ownership.

Prior to dinner a gaggle of us headed into town in search of real ale. We found an authentic local boozery with an excellent selection of local beers. To celebrate Norman Hyde delivered an impromptu lecture on Anglo-Saxon history to our select group (and anyone else within earshot).

Thence to dinner with special guest of honour Jeff 'Mr Haynes' Clew. As Chairman Roberts summed it up, it had been quite a historic run and, with seven guests, a very popular one too. Then it was time for food again!

### **Saturday's Menu**

Y *Starter* - Vegetable Soup, Fishcakes with chilli dip or Brussels Pate

Y *Main Course* - Beef in Red Wine, Poached salmon with chive cream sauce or Vegetable Lasagne

· *Pudding* - Fruit salad, Apple crumble clotted cream or Chocolate truffle torte

During pudding Wilf was presented with a pot of jam to compensate for the shortfall in the previous evening's roly poly.

Next up was Mike Jackson, who took to the floor as Sergeant at arms but would be "El Presidente" tomorrow. "I had no idea The Club was in so much trouble," he commented laconically. So to business. His "sources were impeccable" and implicated their friends and colleagues with a huge "disloyalty factor". Smith & Martin acted as "tin men" but we're all used to collecting debts in this industry. Mike declared that he would fine members, guests and, in particular, Peter Sheen. He then proceeded to fine himself for being "wimp of the weekend" having had to drive rather than ride following an operation. Norman copped 20p for ordering champagne because he didn't like the hotel's "fizzy beer" and Rick Parish escaped a fine for being an accountant but was instead penalised for being an IAM examiner. Ray Battersby had no tax, so was relieved of 20p. Bob Mac behaved impeccably, which resulted in a fine for acting out of character. Keith Davies enquired of locals in a village en route "You haven't seen a bunch of motorcyclists go by?" which cost him 20p. Dave Dew fell foul by setting off the museum alarms but the fine of the night went to Graham Matcham who stubbed his cigarette out on a large terracotta flower pot and broke it in the process! Maurice Knight's uphill push start came a close second.

Foraging has become a speciality for some of our number and so at 2am two intrepid gastronomes set off by taxi in search of spice food. They returned triumphant with kebabs, which turned out to be so bad that (a) the hotel staff banished them to eat them outside and (b) even Dave Martin threw his away.

Some wise man commented that “We meet twice a year and when we do you’d think we’d been friends forever.” How true.

On Sunday morning we loaded up, bade our farewells and roared off into glorious sunshine - the perfect end to another perfect weekend.



Dave stitches it back together



Embryo pilots face an incoming fighter (on a full stomach)



They have some strange customs in Dorset!



When was this last serviced?

Photos courtesy of David Dixon



Dennis points out one he made earlier



A British Concorde - sacre bleu!



The President & Chairman vet Lambert's story



Andy Smith poised for action



Ready, steady ... In your own time

