



Membership of the Motor Cycle Industries' Executive Club is restricted to invited Senior Executives of the Motor Cycle Manufacturing and Importing Industry including components and accessories

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## AUTUMN CLUB RUN, BRECON

5th & 6th & 7th OCTOBER 1990

After the second scorching summer in succession it is, I suppose, almost inevitable that we should anticipate a spot of rain come the day of our Autumn Run - we had had more than our fair share during the '89 Run in the Herefordshire/Forest of Dean area and it was certainly on the cards that the heavens would open again for Alan Blake's first Run, based upon Brecon. In the event we suffered for twenty minutes or so with some of Michael Fish's finest - immediately prior to lunch - but, that apart, we rode the rest of the day in relatively dry (albeit pretty grey) conditions.

Taking a leaf directly out of Simon Goodman's book, 12 months before, Alan had laid out a cracking long loop which actually totalled around 165 miles - the longest ever Club Run! In spite of this eminently respectable distance there were no complaints or, if there were, the complainants simply fell asleep immediately after returning to the hotel! Thanks to the route marking system that we now employ a lap of this distance is quite easily achievable. Base Camp itself for this excellent Run was the Castle of Brecon Hotel where the catering was a joy to behold (or rather to consume) and was a particular highlight of a fulfilling weekend. The Bar facilities were *sympatico* throughout without any pressure applied, upon the usual bunch of late drinking reprobates, to call it a day as the witching hours approached. One hopes it isn't a straw in the wind but on the Friday night the drinking arena was free and clear and last man safely upstairs by 1.45 am latest. Not a trend to which our dear late President would have subscribed, I'm sure!

There is, undoubtedly, nothing like an early night to ensure a full complement of on time runners on the hotel forecourt, the following morning, engine oil awarmed and all rarin' to go. And so it proved to be with everyone except former local, Les Williams, moving out on time.....Les had a minor difficulty with a rocky protusion which hadn't been there when he was a boy. We took a brisk canter down the Wye Valley arriving at Newent Falconry for Coffee and a tour of their fascinating feathered inventory. The tour cum lecture was hosted and delivered by a most personable young man who, though new to The Falconry, imparted a tremendous enthusiasm for all the hunting and sporting birds in his care. On this windy Saturday, unfortunately, conditions were too turbulent for the hawks to fly although older Members will recall a previous visit here, circa 1975, when we were lucky enough to catch an afternoon flying session. It was an impressive sight. Try as I might I cannot recall who organised that run, nor where it was based. Answers, please by carrier pigeon.....

After leaving The Falconry we retraced some of the earlier route, but now heading westerly, eventually running into increasingly heavy rain during the final few miles to lunch at the Bull Ring Inn, Kingstone. The Landlord, his young family, and his regulars rapidly entered into the *esprit* of the occasion and succeeded in convincing us that there was no great incentive to ride on, at least until the rainy squall had blown itself out. So, an ever generous kitty successfully lubricated our ever open inlet manifolds! But all good lunches come to an end

and it was up and away into yet more fine riding territory. The main landmark on this section was a period toll bridge where, although they did not take Luncheon Vouchers, they cheerfully removed a florin from each of us. With so much less weight about our persons we were all in good physical shape to tackle a stimulating 15 mile stretch to the Tea Shop at Crossgates - but there was better yet to come, on the last leg back to the hotel. The Crossgates car park contained some interesting early post war vehicles including some Austin commercials and an MG Magnette. Whenever, nowadays, I take a long and nostalgic look at vehicles of this period I cannot help but think that **life was certainly simpler** in those carefree days of the 50's and 60's. But thoughts like this, presumably, are proof indeed that one has passed all the qualifications required for the not unpleasant state of Middle Age.

Any lingering thoughts about just how comfortable Middle Age was proving to be were most rapidly dispelled as the homebound lap unfolded. These last 30 miles were also steeped in motorcycle history. First we came upon Llandrindod Wells, home of so many ISDT's, plus the annual Welsh 2 Day Trial. From schoolboy days I had feasted upon reports of events which commenced at Llandrindod, all of which were headquartered at the Palace Hotel. Until the day of this Run I had never actually set foot in LW so it was a great thrill to trickle by the Palace Hotel. One could visualise those ISDT giants of the early post-war period such as H.P. Baughan, H.R. Taylor, B.H.M. Viney and many more of the management gang besides, in days of yore, returning to the Palace after a hard days organising out in Brecon's hallowed hills. A further bonus was to ride by the Automobile Palace, so often mentioned in despatches of the period. Then we swooped through Bulth Wells, home of the infamous Kidson Grand National Scramble - happy hunting ground for the likes of John Draper, John Harris, Bill Gwynne and the brothers Taft. From memory the Kidston fizzled out in the early 70's..... like the Lancashire Grand National, and quite a few others, those old fashioned courses were simply too rugged for the newer breed of moto-crosser. (I rode in just two Kidstons - they were always held on a Saturday because "the track was on a farm owned by a religious man" and he frowned upon all forms of Sunday sport. At either event, due to the Saturday date, there were only about 250 spectators; which is probably another reason why the dear old Kidston eventually fizzled out.) Our final slice of 2 wheeled history was in connection with the old Eppynt road race circuit located high up on the moor just to the west of the B4520; surely one of the finer backroad blasts available to your average red blooded motorcyclist. Time, unfortunately, did not allow for a look at the Eppynt circuit itself which, in any case, is under control of the M.O.D. but racers of the day were vociferous in their praise for this track. Mind you, Eppynt was never going to be in the top league because of its distance from population centres, but in it's time it earned itself a greatly respected reputation.

Close by the turn-off to the circuit Blakey halted all riders to catch breath, and to take a group picture. Thereafter it was a beautiful blat back to base, at one's own pace, with everyone's adrenalin pumping at maximum. Back at base car park, perhaps because of the chill wind or maybe because everyone was so pleasantly fatigued, there was a minimum of machine try-outs; most folk eased straight into a hot bath and, as previously hinted, one or two of those that then laid down on beds barely made it down to Dinner! Those resters and relaxers amongst us, of course, were in considerable danger of missing out on the traditional pre-dinner cocktail and bench racing session which is always a congenial gathering and the Brecon bar gathering on this night was as congenial as they come!

All too soon (it seemed) sanity prevailed and our still thirsty troupe filed once more into the Banqueting Room for our second superb Dinner within a 24½ hour period. In best emm cee clubman style Blakey had produced a brace of amusing Menus for both Dinners incorporating all those favourite techno-term dishes such as Sump Sludge soup; Grinding Paste mousse; Pushrod poussin and Head Gasket cheddar. All good edible stuff. In fact, the standard of cuisine at Brecon was highly commendable - the Chef at the Castle of Brecon can have no fears other than that he was cooking for the converted. The ambiance certainly flowed through Dinner but whether this was in anticipation of The Raffle, or The Fines, or simply due to the choice of Dinner Wine I will leave that to the imagination of the reader.

At the Chairman's request your scribe delivered a somewhat rambling, albeit much merited, tribute to our late President. Whilst the Bill Smith anecdotes that he unfolded possibly contained something of interest to everyone still remaining awake he rather stupidly failed to dig up the remarkable story of how it was that Bill came to introduce Ducatis, in volume, to the UK (in the late 60's) as the result of an extraordinary tripartite deal between Bill Hannah, the Berliner Corporation and Norton factory. For that alone our late great President deserves his place in history. To be fair The Raffle was not quite as much fun as The Fines. In time, I suppose, The Fines will be as much part of Club Run folk lore as are The Bells to Notre Dame hunchbacks! On this occasion Dave Martin proved irrevocably that his sense of humour stretches well beyond working for Harley Davidson. His powers of observation during the previous 30 hours had proved, yet again, to be sharp, sharp, sharp. In his position of Sergeant at Arms not only does he have to observe and remember he then has to distort the members misdemeanor into a revenue raising fine. Usually, these fines raise a laugh as well, so he has to have a subtle range of skills. We should not be in too great a hurry to see the present incumbent retire. Suffice to say The Brecon Fines were fun but in the hot light of a Canon photocopier they cool, and they do not easily bear retelling. To prove that rank is no defence Treasurer Bates clocked up a Black Mark in anticipation of Spring Run '91 when, having settled our bill through Reception on the Sunday morning with a cheque for approx £2,000.00 he then left for London having forgotten to pay his own Room Extras account!

Meanwhile, the evening drew to a civilised close approaching 2 o'clock or so - nobody went to bed other than at peace with himself, or the m/c industry in general!

Sunday morning saw a good attendance for the Members Meeting, which was both lively and constructive. Moments later, driving homeward over the Aberhondu (thats a river, not a Gallic motorcycle manufacturer) there was a moment to reflect..... the prevailing memory of Brecon was of yet another highly successful Run in an ever lengthening series of HSR's. It is stimulating to contemplate that there is presently a healthy trickle of Members, all waiting in line to organise a forthcoming Run. Their resolve is to be applauded, yet must be nurtured, and we must also hope that this current philosophy continues to be infectious.

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The Committee met one morning during the recent International Motorcycle Show at the NEC. By a fortunate choice of date we were able to convene in one of the exhibition offices but, if our meeting had been just 24 hours later, we'd have been confined to an igloo on the M6! Anyway, it is the sincere wish of your Committee to extend best wishes for a thoroughly reasonable 1991 - to all Members near and far - may your time in the saddle this year be fulfilled and free!

A Postscript, a few Footnotes, and some Afterthoughts

Nearly a fifth of our party at Brecon were guests of Members. Their attendance is always most refreshing and, surely, prevents these gatherings from becoming too stereotyped. Please read on:

Furthest travelled, and all the more stimulating for that, was Ludy Beumer, one of Bob Trigg's colleagues at Yamaha N.V. in Amstelveen, Holland. Ludy is just about the best informed backroom boy in the motorcycle industry, world wide, which is a contributory reason why he is the longest serving "round eye" at the Big Y H.Q. Like many of his countrymen Ludy speaks better English than we do! It was a splendid idea for Bob to invite a foreign guest (of this calibre) and we all hope Ludy soon comes back for a second helping!

David Martin invited Tony Holt, who is "something to do with the coppers"; in fact his connection is with the Mets. Tony is an experienced high speed rider and so fast and smooth out on the open road that one can only assume he thinks that complying with UK Speed Limits means you ride at over 70 mph, and not below!

Simon Goodman's guest was Colin McCausland, another highly proficient open road rider and great company in the Bar after a hard days ride - some of his north of Watford stories would almost certainly put Cannon and Ball to shame.

We were pleased to meet Frank Finch from the MCIA - he is Chief Number Cruncher at Starley Towers and was invited by Peter Sheen. Frank has been a useful road racer in summers past - so, on that last swoop back to base between Eppynt and Brecon, he was probably tempted to ask the Dee Gee "if there were any fast bits on the Run today?"

Tony Denniss invited fellow engineer Dave Watts who, because of business and commitments, could only attend Dinner on Saturday. Members who do not fit ear plugs will remember Dave's prior participation on a souped-up Vee Max at Church Stretton. Dave is a genuinely versatile motorcyclist. Just five weeks after Brecon he was competing in the Weston-Super-Mare Beach Race on his Yamaha YZ fitted with a 2 wheel drive conversion designed, created and produced "in house!"

Mike Jackson took his life in his hands and invited Malcolm Clube, erstwhile racer and, well known "man about the London biking scene". Nobody knows what Malcolm does for a living - even on his Passport it simply says **Motorcycle Swagman!** Clube set out for this Run on one of his MV's but the bike went lame on the M40 and he had to return home and downgrade to an OW31. If he had made it on the Italian 4 it would have been the first machine of this type on a Club Run. By way of compensation he told us some very racy stories in the Bar, supported with some equally lurid illustrations, all of which were also a first for a Club Run.....

Maurice Knight winkled a very fit looking Vincent Davey out of a well earned retirement. To the uninformed "Dave" was the **hands on** proprietor of Gus Kuhn Motors, a top hole UK Dealer for many years selling hundreds of Norton twins - they were also pioneer Dealers for BMW. Manufacturers at that time always enjoyed supplying the Prune organisation because it was a well run gentlemanly sort of emporium, neither were they participants in the Discount Wars of the period - in fact, they were at the opposite end of that particular spectrum. For instance, when Purchase Tax was phased out, VAT was always referred to in the Clapham area as **Vincent's Added Tax!**

The Members concerned are to be congratulated for mining into such a rich seam on this occasion and it has to be said that the present Guest System is one that is proving workable - provided, that is, that attending Guests don't ever get to see what is written about them!