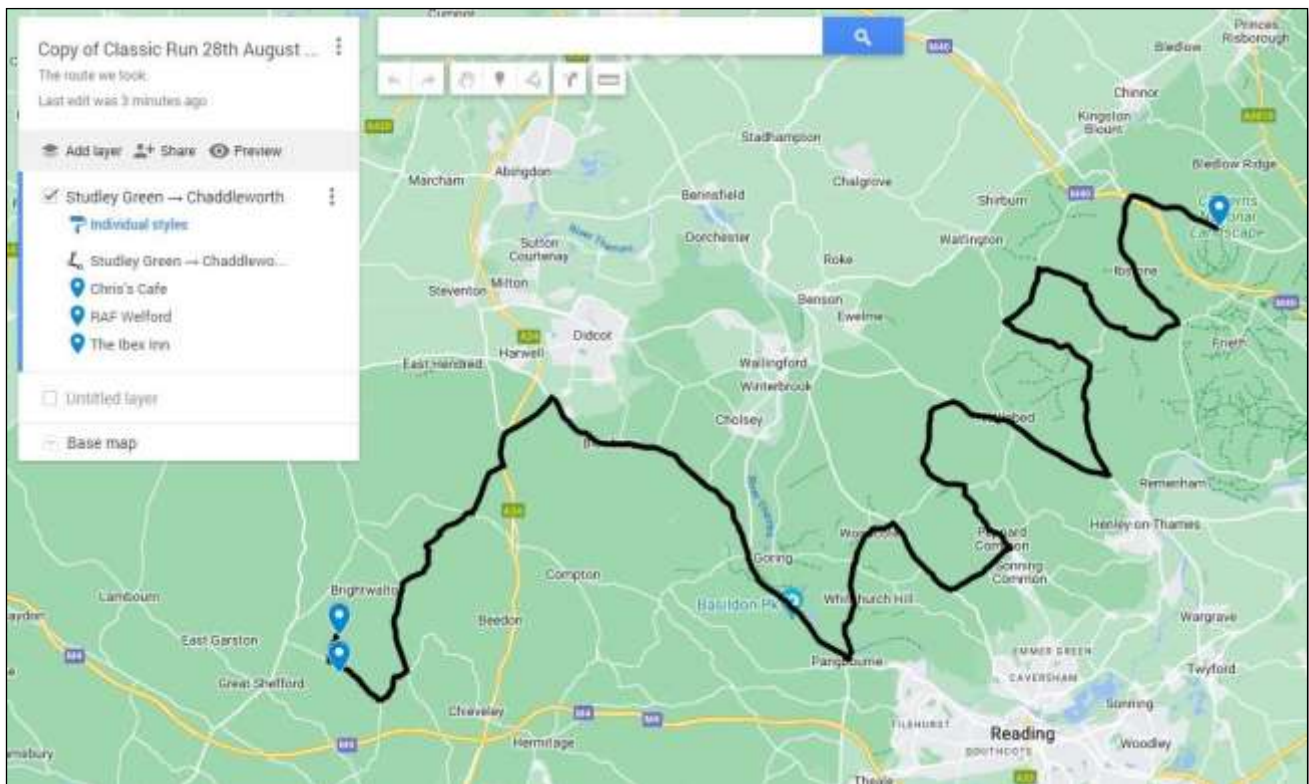


The Club Classic Run, 28th August 2024 – Organisers Ian Kerr MBE and Nick Hopkins

Give or take 7 days, it was 3 years since Ian Kerr's inaugural Classic run back in August 2021. The country and indeed the World was gradually re-opening after the Covid pandemic and on a somewhat damp day, six riders on five classic bikes and one modern (your scribe) assembled at Chris' Café close to Stokenchurch in Buckinghamshire to ride to the Oxford Bus Museum 60-odd miles away.

Fast forward those 3 years and we were back at Chris' Café for the second Classic Run; this time Ian had planned a picturesque ride to the RAF Welford Historical Society Museum, just to the north of the M4 and Newbury, where Nick had arranged an exclusive visit for us.

There are two ways of looking at the term 'classic run': firstly and most obviously, it is a run for classic (i.e. old!) machinery or, in respect of our club, a run in the style of those undertaken in the early days back in the halcyon 'Swinging 60s'. This ride out was a bit of both with eight participants on three classic bikes and five 'moderns'. The distance ridden was around 65 miles (typical of the early runs) with a point of interest and a pleasant lunch to follow; just like the old days! The route was recorded by Chairman Alan Halford.



The weather this time around was set fair: warm with very little chance of rain however, a number of road works and closures necessitated last minute changes to Ian's meticulously prepared route.

Initially, the route followed the 2021 ride, leaving Stokenchurch to the west and heading around the head of the Hambleden Valley where more often than not a film or TV company are filming, before a single track section of road led to the top of the Assendon Valley via Christmas Common and thence down past Stonor Deer Park to meet the Henley to Wallingford road just south east of Bix.

The Chiltern views are wonderful hereabouts and the first russet hints of autumn were beginning to creep into the horse chestnut trees either side of the road. A smell of garden bonfires hung in the air at one point taking me right back to Sunday mornings in the late 50s when my Dad would take me on the crossbar of his pushbike to see Grandpa on his allotment: happy days remembered!

Just beyond Nettlebed on the A4130, where incidentally I saw Sammy Miller riding his famous Ariel Hunter, GOV 132 in a trial in the woods there many years ago, we turned off the main road by Nuffield Place, the home of Lord Nuffield between 1933 until his death in 1963. It's owned by the National Trust now and well worth a visit.

Nuffield Place and its owner are a neat tie-in to the first Classic run as there was a section of the Oxford Bus Museum dedicated to his bicycle and car manufacturing businesses. Nick Jeffery was in his element there as he had worked for Morris many moons ago and knew some of the names listed in the various exhibits. Nick missed this ride owing to a clash with a Brough event in the Netherlands.

Passing the Maharajahs Well at Stoke Row (pictured right), commissioned by the Maharajah of Benares in 1863 to provide the locals with fresh water, it was on down via Woodcote to cross the Thames by way of the toll bridge at Pangbourne; it's free for bikes.



Leaving the leafy lanes of the Chilterns behind, just beyond Streatley, the views were now opening up to the big skies and rolling hills of the Berkshire Downs just to the south of Didcot. Yet another road closure necessitated a short section of the busy A34 dual-carriageway by East Ilsley be ridden before we were back on quiet lanes for the last section of the ride to RAF Welford.

Arriving at the entrance to RAF Welford a few minutes later than planned, a quick phone call by Nick ensured that the Chairman of the RAF Welford Historical Society, Alan Bovingdon-Cox, was at the Gate Guardhouse to escort us across the base to the museum building. For an active USAAF base, it was pretty much deserted, despite it being the second largest 'conventional' ordnance store in Europe.

Alan and his fellow volunteers were very welcoming and hospitable, providing coffee and offering plates of cocktail sausages to nibble as we given a guided tour of the small but very interesting building. RAF Welford had a major role in the D-Day planning and assault being a launch point for US Airborne troops and gliders. Post war it worked hand-in-glove with Greenham Common which is (or more correctly, was) just 7 miles away; there are quite a few exhibits highlighting that connection. There are a few internal photographs at the end of this report.



Our hour at the museum shot past in the blink of an eye and then it was a quick group photograph to record our visit for the historical society before Alan (pictured centre above) escorted us back to the main entrance, along Eisenhower Avenue and across Ammo Alley, and waved us farewell.

The last part of the ride was just a mile or so to the IbeX Inn in Chaddleworth for a late lunch and natter in the pub garden; interspersed with keeping the pub's Border Collie entertained with a never ending game of fetch! As we all went our separate ways after lunch we could reflect on an excellent ride where even the over-zealous 20mph speed limits imposed in every village (just because they can) by Oxfordshire CC did little to spoil the day's fun!

Many thanks to Ian and Nick for their organisation and I for one hope that there are more rides like this in the future. And for those of you who didn't attend, with or without classic mounts, you missed a treat!

Attendees and Mounts...

Ian Kerr MBE	1960 Matchless G12 650cc	Nick Hopkins	1955 BSA B33 500cc (Ex Keith Blair)
Greg Elson	1973 Honda 500-4	Tom Waterer	BMW GS650
Norman Hyde	Triumph Trident 650	Alan Halford	Triumph Tiger 900 GT
Nick Campolucci	Honda Africa Twin	Geoff Selvidge	Triumph Tiger 900 GT Pro



Left: Ian's Matchless G12

Top: Ancient and modern nav equipment.

Bottom Left: Classic bike, classic leak!

Bottom right: On board BBQ rack...

Below: Nick's BSA B33

Close up of the Avon Handlebar fairing by our late friend and member Doug Mitchenall.



Below: a few shots during the museum tour



Top L: Tour guide Alan introduces a still working RAF Link Trainer saved from scrappage at RAF Benson

Top Centre: Pilots eye view.

Top R: The Link Trainer schematic

Middle L: A diorama depicting an operational RAF Welford. There are no runways left nowadays.

Middle R: Part of the wrecked Lockheed F-5B Photo-Reconnaissance aircraft flown by Wing Commander Adrian 'Warby' Warburton DSO DFC DFC (USA). Warby went missing on a mission in April 1944 and his aircraft and body were finally discovered in Germany in 2002.

Bottom L: Obligatory group photo!

Bottom Centre & R: 2 examples of many pieces of 'wall art' that had been recovered and rehoused in the museum.