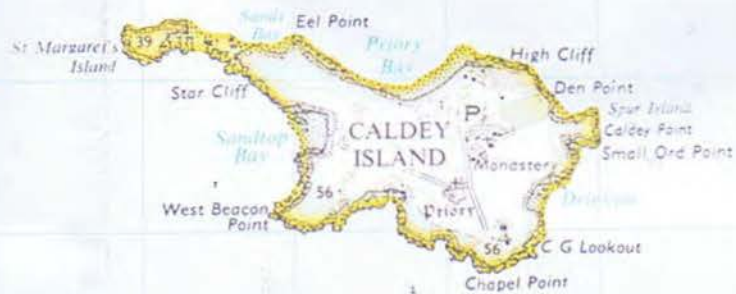




**The Club**

Tenby May 1981



There is little doubt that the imagination of Hugh Palin and its manifestation in the form of a lifeboat launching containing Club members was an inspired idea that came to fruition on a glorious day one May. It is fitting therefore that in producing a record of the thirty-seventh Club Run, but thirty one years after the event, was both a necessary act and also an enjoyable one. I am indebted to Ray Battersby for his improvement to the lifeboat illustration with crew and club members, also, locating photographs that were not known to exist. My thanks also to Old Mike Jackson for help with the Quasar, its rider John Malfloy and adding to my knowledge of others now named who were there. Also to Peter Sheen, who took on the role of director-general of the MCIA in 1984, he deserves thanks for contributing to my questions especially in relation to the lifeboat. Lastly, Tom Waterer who returned from holiday and quickly gave information. Tom unearthed the on-board lifeboat shots in time for their inclusion—a most noble effort.

Hugh, Bill Smith, Ivor Davies and Peter Fraser alas have departed this life. Vibrant reporter, author and all-round expert on two wheels, David Dixon, no longer is in the best of health. At least three then present are no longer members. For the rest and for newer members here to the best of our joint ability is a record of possibly the shortest—just thirty in mileage terms—of a very enjoyable Club Run.

*Dennis Bates, Bromley, September 2012*

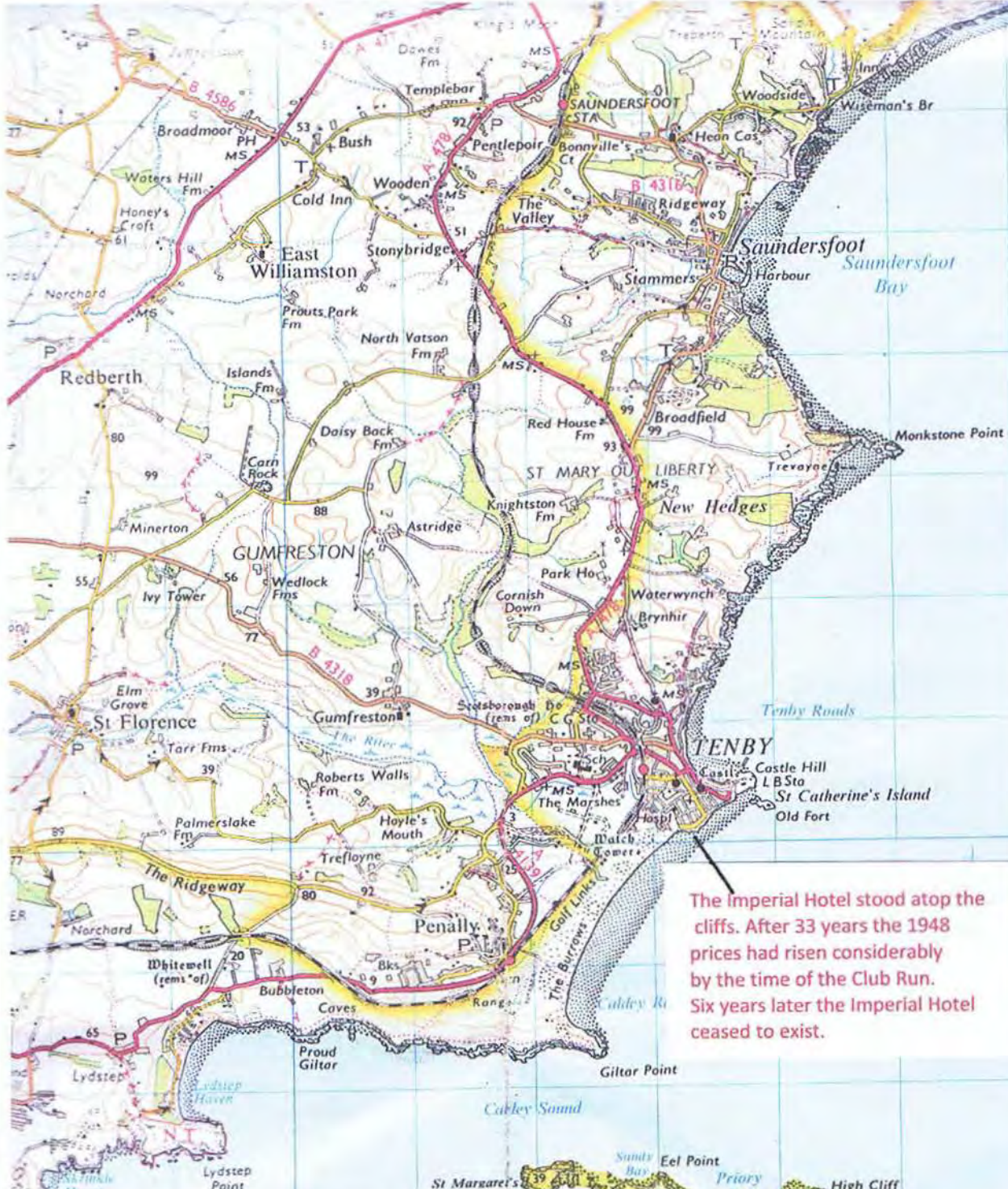
## In May 1981 Tenby was the Thirty Seventh Club Run

Recalled by Dennis Bates

Organiser Hugh Palin based the weekend on the Imperial Hotel that stood on the high ground above one of Tenby's two beaches. The aim of the Club committee was to achieve a great weekend at minimum cost for male senior executives sharing a room—hence the exclusion of women senior executives of which, probably in those days, there very few.



Hugh Palin, MBE.TD



The Imperial Hotel stood atop the cliffs. After 33 years the 1948 prices had risen considerably by the time of the Club Run. Six years later the Imperial Hotel ceased to exist.

**TENBY** (Pemb.). 4,343. MAP 10 22/1 0.  
 E.C. Wed. M.D. Wed./Sat. LONDON 237,  
 Aberystwyth 71, Cardigan 33, Carmarthen 27,  
 Fishguard 35, Haverfordwest 21, Pembroke 10.

\*\*\*\* **Imperial.** T.N. 28: 50 Rms: H & C:  
 N.P.: Ga-25: SAC.  
 B & B 18/-: W.T. 9½ to 13½ Gns.

\*\*\* **Cobourg.** T.N. 9: 40 Rms: H & C:  
 Ga-16: SAC.  
 B & B 10/6 to 15/-: W.T. 5 to 8 Gns.

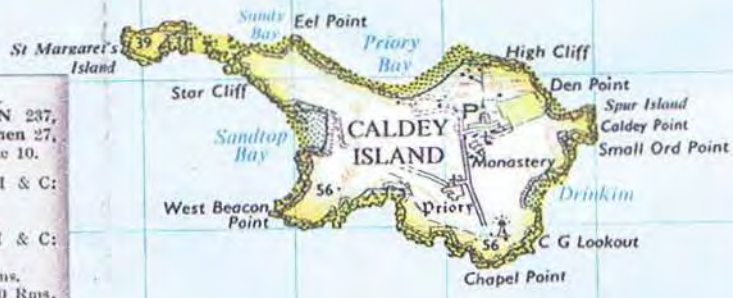
\*\*\* **Royal Gate House.** T.N. 12: 60 Rms.  
 H & C: Lt: N.P.: Ga-70: Lu-30: SAC.  
 B & B 14/6 to 17/6: W.T. 9½ to 11 Gns.

\*\* **Cliffe Norton** (Unlic.). T.N. 333: 41  
 Rms: h & c. Open Easter to Oct.  
 B & B 17/6 to 21/-: W.T. 6 to 10 Gns.

**Hilton,** Warren St. T.N. 99: 10 Rms:  
 H & C.  
 B & B 12/6: W.T. 8 Gns.

**George Ace Ltd.,** Warren St. T.N. 2:  
 O.N.C.: O.S.: M/G: M.G.: Morris: Riley:  
 Wolseley.

**Jeremys Five Arches Garage.** T.N.  
 42: O.N.C.: O.S.: M/G: Ford.



## A NEW DAY HERALDS A GREAT CLUB RUN

Saturday dawned, breakfast was taken (a good fry-up), bikes retrieved and parked in the road opposite. Knowing Hugh's thorough planning inevitably there would have been the RAC Rescue unit in attendance

(Top)

Peter Fraser wheels his trail bike ready for the off. Peter was now working with Mike Evans on promoting the motorcycle industry, previously holding down the roles of off-road reporter and road tester for *The Motor Cycle*.

(Bottom)



Dennis Bates (Honda 400/4) making his first club run after a 250-mile trip from his Bromley home. Old Mike Jackson, former Greeves works scrambler, and Norton executive, sits ready on the Kawasaki. Behind him in blue is Club Treasurer Ivor Davies, Triumph's ace publicist, whose successes included the 24-hour high speed launch at Montlhery of the Thunderbird in 1949.

## It was most certainly a modest gathering .....

.....for the weather appeared to be set fair for the Club's weekend in Pembrokeshire as a dozen or so members and guests gathered in Tenby at the Imperial Hotel on a mild and sunny Friday.

The hotel's charge for the weekend was in the region of £30.00 (*Note 1948 prices on Tenby map*). Hugh and Dennis were allocated one room but Hugh then moved to a single as this early in the season the hotel was by no means fully occupied. Dennis found his room was the official bridal suite complete with a non-operative door lock (make of that what you will).

At the bar that evening Ivor dunned everyone a small sum (possibly £2.00) for pre- and post dinner drinks noting details of all income and expenditure in a minute pocket notebook. As yet there was no need for the more detailed aspects that now concern the Club and its often forty-strong attendance

After dinner came the inevitable raffle with a prize for everyone. Peter to his delight gained a large teddy bear, How he got it home is anyone's guess (possibly it rode pillion!)



Hugh (Suzuki), Peter Sheen (Triumph) in a high-viz yellow jacket, Mike Vickers (blue jacket) prepares to mount the Honda. The front rider wearing green is not identifiable. Peter was like Hugh a highly competent Club Run organiser achieving a grand total of eighteen in a thirty-year period



Two unidentified members; the leader rides a Norton twin, while his companion appears to have a bitza. Both are clad in Barbour suits, the mandatory wear for riders for many years.



Sales Director for Suzuki at Crawley, Maurice Knight rides the product



Riding someone else's motorcycle is all part of a Club Run. Here an unidentifiable member prepares to give David Dixon's Bimoto a test spin. That's Old MJ behind





Mike Jackson (Kawasaki) waits for the signal to move off. Mike became a wholesale distributor before moving into the international scene of motorcycle auctions that now occupy much of his time. His industry and sport contacts are legion especially in the moto-x and trials sectors. The rear end of the Triumph on Trade plates may give a clue that this is the following motorcycle of the pair of British machines, but who can name the rider?



The original handwritten caption read "A stop to soak up the sun, admire the view or maybe take a trip into the bushes". Who may be able to put a name to some of the riders present?



A brief stop mid-morning at Freshwater. John Malfloy balances the Quasar which enables Bob Reynolds to complete the task of refuelling.



Having enjoyed afternoon tea and cake Bill Smith astride his Suzuki, followed by (*left*) Lucas specialist, Derek Norton (Suzuki) and Bob Reynolds (Norton) *en route* back to Tenby. As things turned out this was Bill's final motorcycle ride in a Club Run, (apart from a car park sampling of Jeff Clew's Douglas in May 1982—see report) thereafter Bill followed each run in his car. Bill had many roles in the industry including general manager at AMC in its final days.

## QUASAR

ENGLAND 1976-83



OBJECTIVELY, THE QUASAR had everything. It was fast, reliable and economical, and probably the safest two-wheeler ever built. Ken Leaman and the late Malcolm Newell designed the machine in the early 1970s, probably with the input from Royce Creasey: in those days, Bristol was the world centre for feet-forward motorcycles. The 850cc water-cooled engine was from the most pedestrian source imaginable, the Reliant three-wheeler. It had a 41bhp at 5500rpm, but thanks to the design of the machine and its excellent aerodynamics, this was good for 176kph (110mph), with a cruising speed that was very little slower. The four-speed gearbox drove the rear wheel through a twin universal joint Kardan shaft and a spiral axle. Braking was by triple 100mm (9.5ins) discs, two at the front and one at the back, each with a Lockheed twin-piston calipers.

With its space frame of 531 tubing, specially designed to offer maximum protection in the event of a crash, and a water-cooled automobile engine that owed its ancestry to the Austin Seven, the Quasar was necessarily heavy at 318kg (701lb), but it was also ridiculously economical at 3.75 litres/100km (75mpg UK gallons). The model performed roughly the same as a Royal Enfield Bullet at two-thirds of the top speed, at half the weight, and little more

than a third of the power. It may have been the best long-distance tourer ever built, with excellent weather protection and it was very relaxing to ride at high speed.

Yet only 20 Quasars were ever built. Seven were sold between 1976 and 1980, when Romarsh Special Products in nearby Calne took over production: they built another 10 before going into receivership in 1982. Three more were built by John Malfroy, Quasar's project manager, from spares purchased from the receiver, and that was it.

There are two, or three, reasons why it failed. Firstly, motorcyclists are deeply conservative, and the Quasar was like a two-wheeled car, not a motorcycle, down to the glass windscreen with windscreen wiper as required by English law.



The Quasar looked interesting enough when it was standing still, but absolutely fascinating when in motion — though the tyres look very skinny to the modern eye.

The second problem was that the Quasar was expensive. People who buy motorcycles as toys are generally more interested in image than performance and innovation and people who buy motorcycles as transport can seldom afford expensive machines.

Thirdly, the Quasar was simply too practical. In particular, the engine was unglamorous, and although perfect for cruising, it did not offer the starship acceleration that people were beginning to expect. Paradoxically, the model might almost have done better with a low-powered engine and automatic transmission, taking it even further from its motorcycle roots, although a more powerful engine and a five-speed or even six-speed gearbox, and a reduction in weight — purely in the interests of marketing — would probably have been even more successful.

The Quasar is yet another of the countless might-have-beens that litter the history of motorcycling. However, it arguably had more potential than any of them, and was thus a greater loss.

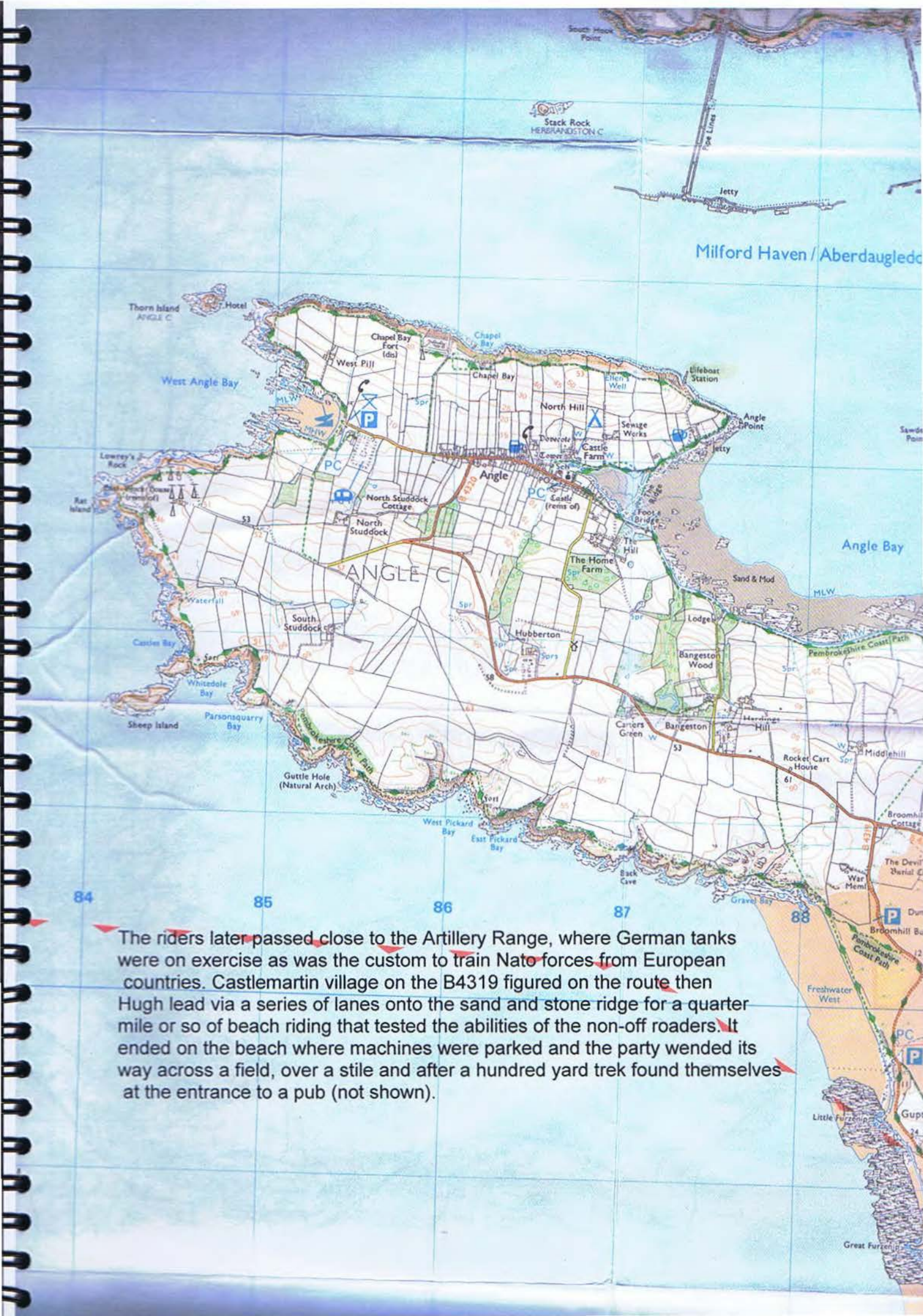
The Quasar deserved more success than it enjoyed. Arguably, the company paid too much attention to engineering, and not enough to marketing.

The strange-looking QUASAR was developed by Malcolm Newall and Ken Leaman in the mid-1970's. Guest John Malfroy worked for them and thus he made the first, and as far as we know, only appearance of this feet-forward device at a Club run. It was Quasar's amazing characteristic on the road not the unorthodox layout or rider position—strange though they were—but the incredible steering that enabled it to corner fast and at seemingly impossible angles of lean. Power came from the neat 848cc four-cylinder in line 4-stroke water-cooled Reliant engine developed for their three-wheeled Robin, giving 40bhp at 5,500rpm. Dry weight was a hefty 700lb but it would speed along at 110mph. Alas, just 20 were sold between 1977 and their demise in 1982.



## RECORDING THE RUN ON FILM

Hugh's route was a short one, the morning section meant heading South to the narrow winding road that skirted Manobier Castle then passing Freshwater East (Hugh lived up the hill) before turning towards Stackpole and the rocky coast. Archivist Fred Green a keen and capable photographer decided to enlarge the club archives in his care by shooting a cine film of the day's riding. On a quiet section of road the first sequences were recorded from the pillion of a solo bike with the ever-resourceful Fred astride the pillion only facing *backwards* so as to take real action shots of the riders. Also filming took place from the rear of a van.



84

85

86

87

88

The riders later passed close to the Artillery Range, where German tanks were on exercise as was the custom to train Nato forces from European countries. Castlemartin village on the B4319 figured on the route then Hugh lead via a series of lanes onto the sand and stone ridge for a quarter mile or so of beach riding that tested the abilities of the non-off roaders. It ended on the beach where machines were parked and the party wended its way across a field, over a stile and after a hundred yard trek found themselves at the entrance to a pub (not shown).



Hugh's planning and organisation was impeccable

The Club members pose with the entire crew, the office staff and the maintenance engineers before boarding to experience the launching of RNLi lifeboat "*North Foreland Civil Service No.11*" from Angle Bay Lifeboat Station.

Previously she had served for twenty seven years at Margate, Kent before becoming part of the RNLi relief fleet and presumably was on loan while the regular lifeboat at Angle was being overhauled.

"*North Foreland Civil Service No.11*" is now on display at Chatham Boatyard. She was built and launched in 1951 by J Samuel White of Cowes, Isle of Wight.





Dennis and David in lifeboat boarding mode.

Both worked for almost twenty years on promoting motorcycling including the successful Institute of Motorcycling campaign financed by the industry, and also contributed much to the outstanding success and record attendance levels of the International Motor Cycle Show at both Earls Court and finally the National Exhibition Centre.

In 2010 Dennis was elevated to the Presidency of The Club







## WHO WAS WHISKED SKYWARDS?

Reports persist that someone in The Club volunteered a member to be hoisted up to the helicopter. There is no reason to doubt this claim, in fact Mike Jackson recalls the supposed incident it but like others present doesn't remember who was 'volunteered' to become the white-faced recipient of this favour.

Some say it was David Dixon but as he had become seasick that claim would appear to fail, unfortunately it is not possible to tackle David even today. Two people sported red riding gear—Maurice in his one piece suit and Old MJ—but neither member (with great respect) would have attracted decent odds at the bookmaker, also neither would many of the other members!



Mike Riley takes a shot as the volunteer starts his ascent to the helicopter and Tom Waterer caught the moment on film.



## WHO TOOK PART?

After more than thirty years memories become important, however, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Even so by dint of asking questions and checking photos it seems that there were eighteen members and guests on Hugh's run of which sixteen are named below;

Hugh Palin, *Organiser*

Peter Sheen, *Secretary*

Ivor Davies, *Treasurer*

Maurice Knight

Michael Jackson

Peter Fraser

Bill Smith

Derek Norton

Bob Norton

Fred Green, *Archivist*

Tom Waterer

Bob Reynolds

Mike Vickers

David Dixon

Dennis Bates

John Malfloy *Guest*

## CHANGE IN THE AIR

Looking back at the faded photographs from Tenby it is possible to chart much of the change that has taken place in The Club. Chief among them is the thirty-year passage of time that has seen members pass on but many more arrive to swell the ranks. But still there remain those with long service in the industry and membership of The Club stretching back to the earliest days. The other is the change in the reason for our club—the motorcycle. Where once British bikes dominated Japanese multi- and twin-cylinder machines were much in evidence at Tenby for the Brits were fast-fading although, surprisingly, there was a swan song with more British machines than foreign in Peter Sheen's 1984 Lake Vyrnwy Spring run. Somehow in many runs even today a British machine may be in evidence ---a Brough Superior, a one owner from new competition AJS and famously, on many occasions including in 2012, a long-serving trusty BSA B31.

All too soon after the formation of The Club the industry found itself fighting the ignorance and prejudice not only of the politicians but the closed minds of their civil servants, a not surprising state given the excessive deaths and injuries among young learner riders. That battle continues now turning into one of survival against the mighty and ignorant politicians of the European Union, and those in Britain who dance to their tune.

We do nothing at our peril

