



August 2006
Number 485



***Rhys Edwards
about to plant the
csma banner!***

Newsletter of the West Middlesex Group of the **csma**

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Your Editor Speaking...

Is it me, or is it warm?

Summer appears to have landed with something of a vengeance... Which was good news for the group barbeque - a glorious day, with fierce boules competition and a burger or two...

Fun is to be had this week at work (blimey - it's not often I get to say that!) with Farnborough air show which happens about half a mile away. When the boss isn't looking it's off to the stairwell to goggle at the vast Airbus A-380 performing unfeasible manoeuvres. Not to mention the Mig-

29 OVT - I'm convinced its pilot bungs gravity twenty quid to look the other way for five minutes while he does his display...

Some good articles again this month, with Roy and Barbara Walters breaking their Sump writing 'duck' with a very welcome article about the group barbeque.

As you might imagine, no progress on anything significant this month - so I apologise to those of you who partook of the 'book' on the Westfield completion date and chose (frankly ludicrous!) dates - and more to the point **years!**

Have fun!

Jez Boakes (Editor)

Chairman's Scribblings...

Hello everyone.

WOW!!!!!! Where did that month go? Without getting into a deep and philosophical discussion about time and relativity, it does seem that time slips by much quicker the older you get – or so some one told me!

I can only assume that most people were away on holiday this month – that would be the reason that only a small (dare I say select?) group turned up at the last club night, your chairman was so moved by the small turnout that he bought a round at the bar! You all missed an excellent quiz (as

co-author with Ann I would say that wouldn't I!). Seriously, the committee go to great lengths to arrange 'entertainments' on club nights but more seriously (yes) is the fact that paying rent for the venue, even at the excellent rate that the Liberal Club charge, accounts for a VERY large slice of our revenue from the other events that we organise. So what am I saying? Let's make good use of the superb venue that we have, I know a lot of you have to travel a good distance but it would be great to see more people rather than the 'usual suspects' each month and the more people turning up means we are getting better value for our – your – money!

Enjoy the summer and I'll see you at the next club night (oh, and mine's a pint of Guinness).

As ever, keep your foot in it....

Derrick Holden (Chairman)

Mack's Mutterings

July was quite a good month for me, mainly because most of Nokia (the Finnish lot, including my boss!) are on holiday for the month so things have been quite relaxing at work! WMx wise it has been pretty good to!

We started the month with the National Motorcycle Rally, other commitments meant I couldn't attend (or rather marshal) but it sounded like a good event and I heard that AG at least finished it. Then there was the July clubnight - a very good quiz by Derrick and Ann. I have to admit that I felt a bit daunted at first (especially as I got zero right out of the 1st section!) but it turned out very entertaining with a good compromise between being hard enough for the brainboxes but still allowing us others to get a few right!

Next up was the Motorcycle ride out and BBQ. I won't go into that here as somehow I managed to get "volunteered" to write an article so more on this elsewhere.....

As I said last month, August is the summer month so not a lot is on (except those Finns will be back giving me hassle at work!). However, I'm not sure that is really true as there is still the Summer Run at the beginning of the month and the ride out and Noggin and Natter at the end. If you are not on holiday then no excuses! But I am on holiday so see you in September! Talking of September there is the Combined Retro Run and Three Shires Run, which I am looking forward to. It has been said before but if you are thinking of the Retro Run or Three Shires then contact AG **quickly** as he needs commitment (and money!) fast to make the events viable!

Lastly, apologies if the typing / grammar of this piece is worse than usual, as I type there is a jet on full afterburner a few hundred feet above my head. It is nice to have Farnborough airshow on your doorstep but it can be a bit distracting at times!

That is it for now, have fun!

Toby Mack (Secretary)

STOP PRESS

Haymaker Autotest

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control we have been unable to secure a venue for this years contest and have reluctantly been forced to cancel the event.

Apologies to all - we hope to be back in 2007.

WMx Committee

WMx Annual Golf Day 2006

Thursday June 16th dawned bright and warm – the perfect day to (literally) dust off the sticks clubs and try desperately to remember those lessons twenty plus years ago... What was it now? Left arm straight, knees bent, eye on the ball, or was it left arm bent, knees on the ball and eyes straight? They say it's like riding a bike. Hmmm... something else I haven't done in an awful long time...

Stephen White gave my Dad Peter and I a very welcome lift to the Blue Mountain Golf Complex (welcome in that I could make more use of the 19th hole to drown my inevitable sorrows...) On arriving we decided that it might be an idea to whack a few balls on the driving range since none of us except Peter had picked up a bat club since the WMx Golf Day 2005, so off we trotted. I can't speak for the others, but the less said about my performance the better. I consoled myself with the memory (probably rose tinted) that in the past, when I've played badly on the practice range I've done OK on the real thing. Finger crossed, eh?

Things looked up in the clubhouse when the waitress brought an enormous platter of bacon butties and a barrel of coffee. During the consumption of these items the handicaps were handed out. Cue the traditional waggish comments about limps, dodgy shoulders etc – none of which made any impact whatsoever on our one man handicap committee, Richard Whitehouse.

Bacon butties gone, handicaps assigned and groups defined, the fateful moment could be delayed no longer and the ten of us strode purposefully out of the clubhouse and into battle.

It was at this point that I decided that the weather was too hot, the course was too long and, frankly, I was too lazy to walk the whole way, so Ray Pontet and I hatched the cunning plan of going halves on a buggy. Marvellous!

The first tee. Hmmm. Every annual golfers nightmare. All those people behind you waiting to tee off - a ready made crowd with nothing to distract them from watching you make a total hash of your first golf shot for 364 days 19 hours...

Well, as it happened I only sliced it a bit and managed to *just* clear the bushes separating the first and ninth fairways. And that was how the front 9 continued for me - astonishingly well...

My companions for the "long walk spoiled" were Nick Bray and Ray Pontet - we played tail end Charlie to the other two groups comprising a foursome of AG, Stephen White, Bob Head and Len Hillier and a leading threesome of Peter Boakes, Richard Whitehouse and Alan Wakeman. The smart money was on one of this leading trio of serious golfers to walk away with the prizes...

As predicted the leading group (who could all hit it down the middle of the fairway with depressing regularity) romped off into the middle distance, while the remaining "occasional" racket club swingers zig-zagged from side to side, with occasional forays into the undergrowth looking for their errant balls.

This pseudo-random motion made for fairly slow progress - by the time we finished we were well and truly ready for our ploughmans lunch. Whilst the rest of us were recounting tales of derring do - well, alright, how many balls we'd each lost, Richard was beavering away working out the scores. Imagine my surprise to have won the 9 hole trophy for the best score on the front nine holes! Alan Wakeman took away the 18 hole trophy for the second year running, but given the weather, the course, the nice food and the very good company, I'm not sure there were any losers! Well done Mr Organiser (AG of course!)

Jez Boakes

West Middlesex Group motorcyclists:

Today, 33 degrees, dry lawns, hose-pipe bans & water restrictions. Soon it'll be November fog, December snow, & Christmas! Arrggh! This heatwave will be with us a bit longer yet....so why not make the most of it, book a day out of the office & come out for a ride!

Our seventh mid-week Ride Out of the year will be on Tuesday 29th August and we're off to ride the delightful lanes of Wessex & visit the famous Poole 'bike night!

PLEASE NOTE ! Usually our Tuesday Rides-Out finish at our Noggin' & Natter venue, the Jolly Woodman and this one will be no exception. However, we'll not be leaving Poole Quay until around 7pm so our arrival at the pub will be a little later than usual. But rest assured, we'll still be there in good time for a shandy, a bite to eat and a good natter!

...PLEASE NOTE FOLLOWING DETAILS FOR AUGUST 29th ...

We'll meet at **9.30am** for coffee at the excellent Jack's Café located on the A30 at Bagshot. I plan to have breakfast before we leave.

At 10 o'clock we'll set off and head for the New Forest & Dorset using some of the finest lanes in this part of the World. A special venue has been sourced for lunch (yes, I know, but someone's got to do all the research!!) to be followed by more meandering, and a little 'unusual' motorcycling adventure (?) before arriving on Poole Quay about 5pm.

As usual, this will be predominantly a relaxing 'bimble' using B and C class roads for the most part but, depending on how long we dally in Poole, I may opt for the 'faster' route back to the Jolly Woodman which may include a little motorway mileage.

If you can, please let me know if you're planning to join the Ride-Out by the Sunday before (August 27th) so I can advise our lunch hosts of numbers.

Please note: earlier start time and the different (for us!) start venue.

Call me on H) 0118 934 5726 M) 07785 903 000

or email me on agoddard@csma-netlink.co.uk

After an early start (up at 6!) we rode the 95 miles from Lewes, Sussex via the M23, M25 and M4 (motorways - ough!) to Henley to meet up with the other bikes.



Steven White showing (un?)natural talent whilst Hannah looks after the important beer!

preparing the annual BBQ.

As usual they had ordered good weather and the bikers were soon joined by many other members - 22 in all.

Hannah and Zoe Mack soon got AG to organise the gathering into mixed pairs for the Boullles.

Thanks again to AG for a great ride - where were all the other bikers?

Many thanks to Nikki, Jez and helpers and to everybody for their hospitality!

Roy and Barbara Walter

An excellent coffee and then off, led by AG, around the Thames Valley. Such beautiful scenery and lots of red kites flying above.

A nice breakfast stop for bacon rolls and then on again on traffic free, small roads, through leafy woods and open countryside and picturesque villages.

Cool refreshing drings at a small country pib made the next stop very enjoyable before making our way to Hook, where Jez and Nikki were busy



Some of the BBQ participants!

The deadline for articles for the
September
Sump is **August 23rd!**

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors, and not necessarily those of the csma, csma West Middlesex Group Committee or the editor.

West Middlesex Group
August Clubnight

(There is no August Clubnight)

But there *is* a
September Clubnight!

And it's your favourite!

The Slot Car Stages!



So be there on:

Thursday September 14th

Starting at 8:00pm

At the Liberal Club, Windsor
(175 / 967 766)

Summer Ride Out and BBQ (and Other Things!)

Somehow I got "volunteered" to write this article (more on that later..). This is not a problem, I enjoyed it and am happy to write something. The only problem is that I did not go on the ride out, arrived a bit late and left early so that is my excuse if this article is a bit shorter than it should be and misses out some interesting bits or maybe rambles on to things not strictly related! Right, excuses over with, how did it go?

Well, there also happened to be a car show at Elvetham Heath (just north of Fleet) on the day of the BBQ so we decided to go there first. Some excellent cars for a small show with a couple of Westfields and a Cobra in the kit car section, an Ariel Atom, various old classics, any number of Lamborghinis and Ferraris and some GT40s that appeared to be genuine! Well, Elvetham Heath is supposed to be one of the richest estates in the country so perhaps the exotica should not be a surprise!

Oh, and while we were there we got a nice little airshow from the worlds largest airliner - the Airbus A380!



Ariel Atom



Airbus A380-800

So what has this got to do with BBQs? Well, nothing really but it is the (slightly feeble!) excuse for being late! Anyway, onto the real subject - by the time we got to Jez and Nikki's the drive was full of motor-bikes. I am not an expert on bikes - the last time I owned one was about 18 years ago - but they did seem to go from the sublime to the ridiculous. On the one hand- AGs great big Pan-European that looked like it would go around the world. On the other hand - a little 125cc bike (sorry can't remember what make and who's it was!) that looked excellent for commuting but must have looked like a tiddler following its

mum behind AG! Anyway, there were 7 people on 5 bikes and I gather that the ride out went well. The route started at Henley for coffee, a breakfast stop at Foxes Diner in Berrinsfield for breakfast followed by a big loop around the Thames with an unscheduled stop at the Bull Public House in Stanford Bingley for a few shandies. Sounds good!

Anyway, like I said, I know nothing about bikes or the ride so back to the BBQ! When we arrived the BBQs were lit and food was well on its way, we soon found some beer - draught from the Hogs back which was much better than the one year out of date Newcastle Brown that we had brought! (least said the better I think....) The food was excellent - ie well cooked, (not burnt to a crisp like my normal attempts!) and some excellent salad etc. My only problem was that it was one of the hottest days so far and I really didn't have much an appetite. Still, I managed for force a burger or two down

After food there was the entertainment - organised by AG. This was a Boullés tournament. Now I should go into detail about how it was organised and who did what but that is slightly difficult as by that point the heat (or maybe it was the beer?) had relaxed me and so I was just doing what I was told!

So I am not too sure how I managed to get in the final (against my daughter Hannah!) and also not sure how I managed to win! Although I do remember AG telling Hannah that she really didn't want to win because she would not like the "prize". I soon found out why - the prize was..... writing this article!

This was followed by separate men's and women's tournaments. In the men's I proved that my winning the mixed was a complete fluke as I was knocked out in a very early round. Ian Roberts went on to win with Jez Boakes in second. In the Ladies', Katie Goddard won, with Ann Holden second. Well done to Ian and Katie and thanks the AG for umpiring and to his two assistants, Hannah and Zoe!

Unfortunately for us we had to take Hannah and Zoe back home before their bedtime so we left early but I gather from Jez that they were still going around 9pm and that they eventually ran out beer! All round, an excellent BBQ. Thanks to Jez and Nikki for all their hard work!

Toby Mack

WMx July Clubnight Quiz

A small but perfectly formed group of WMx members convened at the Liberal Club for the July Clubnight which was a quiz organised by Derrick and Ann Holden. It was a shame that more members didn't make it, to reward their obvious hard work in preparing the questions and answers, but those of us who were there had a great evening.

The quiz was divided into five rounds of ten questions (each worth 2 marks). Because there were only a few of us, we decided it was to be an individual effort rather than team affair.

The first round was motor sport orientated and I got off to a pitiful start – although I was pleased to be able to name two teams that Martin Brundell had raced for (Jordan and Benetton, amongst others).

The second round was more general knowledge and I didn't fair much better although I think everybody in the room knew whose registration FAB 1 is.

Things improved in the third round. I scored a bonus point (as did Jez and AG) for knowing that Pikes Peak is in Colorado (the question just needed the country). Of course, sitting the weekend before with somebody who was wearing their Pikes Peak, Colorado, t-shirt and talking about the time he'd driven up there did help us!

I won't name the member of our committee who was struggling to name Blackpool in the fourth round (apparently it is easily confused with Brighton)!

Also in round 4, there were some novel sports named, other than motor sport and bikes, that use wheels, including roller skating, skate boarding, sand yachting and flying (you need an undercarriage!).

More guesses for the fifth round which was based around motor bikes - not my forté. However, thanks to my musical studies, I did know that Yamaha's logo of crossed tuning forks was adopted because they made musical instruments before they turned to bikes. The baby grand piano at home will be the only Yamaha I am likely to own and that is challenge enough for me!

The scores were mixed but the top two were very close with Jez on 63/100 and AG, assisted by Simon who arrived after we'd started, just pipping him at the post with 65/100.

Well done to the winners and thank you very much to Derrick and Ann for putting on a very entertaining quiz!

Nikki Wild (last place)

csma Karting Group invites
YOU to another "exclusive to
csma" Karting Track Day!



YET ANOTHER GREAT VALUE DAY OF RACING HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR THE csma KARTING GROUP ON

Monday August 21st 2006.

We're returning to the 'Rye House Raceway' near Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire and, as usual we have a maximum number of just 36 places for this Event so you'll need to book promptly!

An Entry Form is attached and completed forms with a cheque for £80 (eighty pounds) per driver, made out to AG Goddard should be returned, as soon as possible please, to:

ALLAN GODDARD, 2 Arnside Close, Twyford Beks RG10

Details of our day

Date of Event: Monday 21st August 2006.

Arrival: by 09.30hrs please,

Briefing: starts at 10.00 ~ Track action as soon after as is practical.

On offer are two Races for each driver, (WEIGHT Categorised – it worked well last time!) each race giving drivers an opportunity to reach the "Grand Final".

Then we'll have a Endurance Race for MATCHED Teams Drivers in the afternoon.

Prizes may be awarded to the Grand Final Winner and possibly to members of the Winning Team in the Endurance Race.

But it'll be a great day for £80.00 per driver !

Any questions or queries? As usual you can contact:

AG on 07785 903000 / agoddard@csma-netlink.co.uk

or Drew on 07745 735 730 / lamtech@bopenworld.com

We look forward to seeing you all there for a great day's entertainment!

AG & Drew

csma Karting Day

ENTRY FORM

Rye House Raceway : Monday 21st August 2006.

Name..... csma Membership number*

Contact details;

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code.....

TEL No's. Home.....

Mobile.....

E mail.....

Weight in race gear, (Approx for now !)...Kgs.

Thanks, see you there!

Allan & Drew

* If you're NOT a csma member but wish to enjoy a day with the Karting Group please complete this entry form & return it with your cheque as above but be sure to talk to AG at 'Signing-On' at Rye House on the day.

STOP PRESS...

IN ADDITION to our usual stunning value we have negotiated a **SPECIAL** taster session on **VERY QUICK**, like Ferrari Quick 2 stroke Karts. Those attending the track day may opt for an extra session at the end of the day, available in (approx) 20 minute slots, for £25.00 each slot!!!!!!.

Please let me know in next 7 days.

Motor Sport Coordinators' Bulletin

August 2006

Dates	Event (Status)	Club	Type of Event	Champ
Aug	19/20 * Welsh Enduro (Nat B)		Enduro road event	
	Sun 20 * Photo Phrolic (C)	Harrow CC	Photo Treasure Hunt	
	Mon 21 * Kart Track Day (C)	csma Karting	Kart racing	
Sept	Sun 3 Haymaker Autotest (C)	csma WMx	Grass autotest	Centre
	9/10 * Yorkshire Enduro (Nat B)		Enduro road event	
	Fri 15 Greenhom 12 Car (C)	csma NWL	Navigational rally	
Oct	Sun 1 Autumn Autotest (C)	csma NWL	Grass autotest	Centre
	Fri 13 12 Car Rally	csma WMx	Navigational rally	Centre
	Sat 21 Quadruplex ()	csma MK&B	Inter Group Quiz	Centre
	26-29 * Lombard Revival (C)		Enduro Stage Event	
Nov	Fri 10 12 Car Rally	csma NWL	Navigational rally	Centre
Dec	Fri 8 12 Car Rally	csma NEL	Navigational rally	Centre

Licence required: (I/Nat A/Nat B/Cm) = MSA Licence, (C) = Club Card, () = Nothing, * = Regs available

Previous Events

Grasshopper Autotest Very good weather, 18 entries across both events (a few late entries bumped up the numbers on the day) and 12 open tests saw a good time had by all. The site is getting bumpier each time we go there, not helped by the traction engines that have been going round in circles. This has caused the surface to dry out a lot more than the rest of the field and the ground has split up (like a dried up reservoir) causing the blocks to become loose. Best to avoid those if possible. The tests put on by Bernard Ward were nice and open, allowing a bit of speed in places. A good turn out by the marshals meant everything moved along quite nicely. It's a shame the Nat B event is not better supported by the championship regulars, but every entry helps these days. The winner of the Grasshopper was Gavin Lane in his Mini special and the Groundhog winner was myself in the Corsa.

Future Events

Photo Phrolic Treasure Hunt This is an invite to a Harrow Car Club event on the 20th August which is similar in format to the Farnborough Topographia (but a lot closer), in that you have to work out locations from 6x4 photos and then visit 75% of the locations and answer a simple question. The whole event takes place on map 166 and starts at 10:30am from the northbound services at Toddington, on the M1 (about 3 miles from my home). The event finishes at 5pm at the Bright Star pub in Peters Green. Entries are priced at £12 per car and there is a buffet at the finish which is £5 per head (under 11's £2.50), which has to be ordered before the 16th August closing date. Regs are available from myself upon request.

Kart Track Day The next event will be held on Monday 21st August at Rye House Raceway, near Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire and there is a maximum number of just 36 places for this event, so you'll need to book promptly! On offer are two races for each driver (weight categorised - it worked well last time!), each race giving drivers an opportunity to reach the "Grand Final". Cost is £80 per driver. Arrival by 09:30 with briefing at 10:00. Contact Allan Goddard on 07785 903000/agoddard@csmanetlink.co.uk or Drew Goodspeed on 07745 735730/lamtech@btopenworld.com.

Haymaker Autotest The West Middlesex grass autotest takes place on Sunday 3rd September. I believe the usual field at Church Farm, Bramley, Basingstoke, MR 175/632600. The farm is in the village of Bramley, off the A33, easily accessible from either the M3 (Jn 6) or M4 (Jn 11). More details next month. **(Sorry - cancelled - Ed)**

Greenhorn 12 Car The 12 car designed with novices in mind, returns on the 15th September. If you want a low key event to get back into the night rally mode, then this is the event, with straight forward navigation with the aim of helping newcomers and novices to learn the ropes. Details will be available next month, but look out for announcements from your group secretaries in the mean time.

Autumn Autotest I think this will now remain on its original date of the first Sunday in October. It will be held at the Studd Farm site near Leighton Buzzard, which is the same one as used by the Greenacres and Grasshopper events.

Quadruplex Inter-Group Event Don't forget to put down Saturday the 21st October in your diaries as the date of the Inter-Group competition. Milton Keynes are hosting the event this year, so can all groups make the effort to send as many teams as possible to support their efforts. Details should be forthcoming next month, but it will be held at Newport Pagnell, which is off junction 14 of the M1.

Other Items

Vauxhall Corsa Rally Car For Sale Don't forget, if you need a new road rally car for the winter season or fancy a go at these Enduro events, I still have the old black Corsa for sale. If you're interested, just give me a call.

Mike Biss NLC Motor Sports Coordinator **Tel** 01525 720299

E-mail mike.biss@openreach.co.uk

Two Go Mad in Wales

After AG's wildly exaggerated accounts of deeds of derring-do on last year's Welsh National Rally, I thought that I might send the Honourable Editor another in my series of "Sump Articles That Never Got Published." This one relates to the experiences of a certain Mick Cotton and yours truly on the same event in 2002...

It was at 3pm on the second Friday afternoon in May that two bold adventurers departed from Burnham-on-Sea, bound for deepest, darkest Wales (and believe me, parts of it were both) and the most excellent Welsh National Rally. The first part of our trip was the run up to the old Severn Bridge, followed by a route that anyone who's ever competed on the Curtess-Bennett will be familiar with – Chepstow, Usk, Abergavenny, Gilwern, Crickhowell, Talgarth, Builth Wells and Llandrindod. We stop at the Little Chef at Gilwern, one of AG's favourite watering holes and take the opportunity to ring and wind him up about the fact that the weather is just perfect and he could have been doing the event with us. The A483 from the junction with the A40 to Talgarth has been resurfaced since I last came this way – it now bears a striking resemblance to a billiard table (apart from the colour and the absence of any pockets, obviously) and the bloke in charge of the re-surfacing gang must surely have been a sports bike rider. Every corner tempts you to see how far you can lean it, but a little caution has to be exercised as high hedges restrict the view; this much fun shouldn't be legal. But then things go downhill; the A470 from Llandrindod to Newtown, one of my personal Top Ten Biking Roads is in the process of being ruined. Trench Diggers Anonymous is hard at work, laying some sort of pipe/cable, but God alone knows from where to where as this truly is the road in the middle of nowhere. No matter, there are still the three open hairpins at the Newtown end that they haven't got to yet, the second of which cause footpeg and tarmac to interact, much to my surprise... I honestly didn't think I was leaning over that far, Your Worships...

So to Montgomery and to our first night's accommodation, the Dragon Hotel. Both of our lodgings for this trip have been source from my trusty Good Beer Guide which has never yet failed to provide me with good accommodation ranging from £15 to £90 a night. The www.csmawmx.com

Dragon is towards the upper end of this scale, but represents excellent value for money and comes highly recommended if you're ever in the area. Food, ale and accommodation are all first rate and we retire replete to our comfy room for some shut-eye in anticipation of tomorrow's exertions.

We awake rather earlier than planned on Saturday morning, as we forgot to draw the blinds over the skylights, thus letting the early morning sun into the room. Despite the fact that one of our number (MC) has done nothing but sleep since he last had something to eat, he somehow manages to despatch a large full English breakfast. Bikes are packed and we make our way to the start at Welshpool, arriving just after nine. We look for Jeff Rampton, but a quick search of the car park fails to reveal the (t)rusty FJ, so either he and Dawn have already been and gone or else are still on their way to the start. We finally get to the front of the very long signing-on queue at 9:30 and get our start pack containing the all-important clue questions. A route is decided upon which will take us south over the Eppynt Ranges and Brecon Beacons to the industrial valleys of the south, then out to the west coast and up to the finish at Aberystwyth.

The weather's not up to much as we set off – not raining, but dull and cloudy as we head down to start our clue collecting in the familiar territory around Llandrindod Wells. We take the B4518 to Pant-y-Dwr, then on down to Newbridge on Wye, a manned control last time we did the event but only a clue this year. Considering there's a rally on, we don't see that many bikes about as we head over Eppynt to Upper Chapel and down into Brecon. There's another clue just down the A470, then we double back onto the A4215 before I decide to take a short cut through Heol Senni onto the A4067. It's a quiet little lane and we were only doing about 40 when the biggest bird of prey I've ever seen flew out from the hedge on my left and narrowly escaped death under my front wheel. I was too busy panicking to notice much but according to Mick it dropped the mouse it had just caught and banked hard left, just making it over the hedge. From the size of it, it was almost certainly one of the Red Kites which are clawing their way back from the brink of extinction in this part of the world.

We climb over the next fold of hills on minor roads, strewn with sheep and processed grass, then drop down to Ystradgynlais for our next clue. We've been looking for somewhere to have lunch for the last half hour and in the absence of a better alternative settle on the fish 'n' chip shop at the head of the town. The next twenty miles to the first manned control at Pontardullais take us through typical Welsh valleys environment – endless rows of terraced miners' houses, built in the days when old king coal provided employment for thousands and the energy for most of the British Empire. From there we repair to Pont Abraham services at the end of the M4 for tea, pee and petrol – not necessarily in that order.

The weather has bucked its ideas up quite substantially by now and our next clue is at St. Clears, straight along the M4. From there we go on to the North Beach at Tenby, beautiful in the afternoon sunshine, followed by the second manned control at Haverford-west. For some reason, temporary insanity grips me at this point and I ask Mick if he'd like to have a go on the VFR. About 300 yards after leaving the control, pottering happily along at about 55 on his BMW 650 Funduro, I was passed by a yellow VFR that quickly receded into the distance at a speed later alleged to have been *** mph. (This figure has been edited out to protect the extremely guilty.) I didn't know it went that quick, but at least both wheels were in contact with the tarmac, unlike a certain other National Rally that could be mentioned, eh Mick??

So via Cardigan, Aberaeron, then on up the beautiful coast road to Aberystwyth - only the half-way halt for those mad fools doing the night time section (ie Jeff!) but close of

play for us. We hand in our cards and head for Tregaron, 20 miles away where our second night's accommodation awaits us. Apart from the fact that we were the only non-Welsh speakers in the place, the fight outside after closing time and the fire alarm going off at 1:45 in the morning it was great! Still, what do you expect for £20 a night? Never mind, the food was very good and the beds were comfortable (well, mine was anyway), and following another filling breakfast for Mr Cotton we made ready to depart.

Tregaron is at the western end of the Abergwesyn Pass and we decided that as we were in no hurry and the weather was fine that we would go home that way. It took us over an hour to get to Llandoverly, just 25 miles away – but what a 25 miles. I've been that way several times, but always in the dark in the left hand seat of a car shouting, "AND FLAT OVER CREST INTO K RIGHT, CONTINUES OPEN RIGHT DOWNHILL INTO FORTY FIVE LEFT" – you know the sort of thing. To see the place on a quiet, warm, sunlit Sunday morning was a revelation. Spectacular is the word; if you haven't been there in the daylight either, do yourself a favour and go take a look. To make matters even better, the next part of our route home is along the A40 to Brecon. This is the sort of road that must have been made with bikes in mind, an eel of wide, smooth, undulating tarmac with mostly good visibility and plenty of overtaking opportunities. Trouble is, Dyfed Powys Police know that too, and anytime from Sunday lunchtime they can regularly be found hiding in the hedges waiting to prey on unsuspecting bikers heading to the West End Café in Llandoverly; but it's still only ten o'clock and we're pleased to find we have the road pretty much to ourselves with no signs of official interference. We rejoin our outbound route just west of Crickhowell retrace our steps back over the Severn Bridge and down the M5 to a sunny Burnham-on-Sea. My tripmeter showed 599.4 miles for the weekend as I stopped on the drive; my shoulders, back and wrists all ached and the front of the bike was the usual fly's cemetery. (Handy hint for prospective purchasers:- Yellow bikes attract far more insects than any other colour. Honestly.) So a good time was had by all – well, by the two of us, where was everybody else??? It really is a much better event than the English National – feel free to join us on it sometime.

Dave Rillie

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