



May 2007  
Number 494



***Bob Head receiving a trophy in recognition  
of his 35 years on the West Middlesex Committee!***

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**Your Editor Speaking...**

Please go and get yourself a nice strong cup of tea and make sure you're sat down before you read the rest of this piece. I have some shocking news to relate.

I've made a start on the Westfield.

There - never thought you'd hear that did you?

The new engine now has new camshaft oil seals, a shiny new water pump, a new cam belt, new idler pulleys and a new tensioner!

My old mate Mr Haynes came up trumps again - his instruction not to fully torque the water pump bolts until the belt was fitted failed to point out that when the belt is fitted you can't actually get to the water pump bolts. And there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth...

In two years time I'll tell you what I did next...

Have fun!

*Jez Boakes (Editor)*

**A Note from your Chairman**

Good God! I've been elected as chairman again – although there was a slightly better turn-out at this years AGM you still decided to put up with me for another year. Thank you all, I will do my best in the coming 12 months to ensure that the club continues to go from strength to strength.

Unfortunately we lost two stalwart members of the committee – Toby who did an excellent job as secretary and will be sorely missed, but work commitments have just become too great to afford him the time do the job as he would wish. Thank you Toby.

Also we say goodbye to Bob, who most of you have known far longer than I, and unbelievably, has been a member of the committee for 35 years!!! I'm sure I speak for us all in wishing him a long and happy retirement by the seaside (and can I book the first week in August please?).

The last time I wrote was just before the rally practice day at Barton Stacey. Well, the weather was great (that is DRY) and some really good action was on show as well as some really great cars. I'm glad I'm a petrolhead! Well done to AG and everyone involved.

A report appears elsewhere about the WMx weekend away but I would like to record my own congratulations and thanks (to AG – yet again!) and everyone for a great time, even if I didn't win the quiz. I also realised my long term memory is OK by seeming to recall a goodly number of rugby songs – thanks to Dave (Rillie) for tinkling the ivories. Now that I'm back home I need to lie down in a dark room for a while to recover.

In the meantime I hope to see you at some of the many events that distinguish the WMx calendar.

*Derrick Holden (Chairman)*

## WMx Group Weekend Away

Every so often WMx takes a holiday. The members gather at a suitable rendezvous to board a minibus and embark on a magical mystery tour. On Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, superstition was ignored and we began an extremely fun weekend.

AG had arranged for a few members to convene at his house to set out with him and Gwyn, via Bill and Angie's house to Hook where the rest of us were ready and waiting.

All aboard and we set off amid speculation as to where we were destined. Five of our number took a route of their own on motor bikes and the next we saw of them was at the lunch stop. Meon Springs Fly Fishery had laid on a soup and sandwich buffet for us which was very well received before we were treated to a fly casting demonstration. A few of our number bravely had a go themselves and Malcolm Grubb proved to be a natural.

We then crossed the river to a field where we spent the early afternoon clay pigeon shooting. The majority of us had never tried this before but most agreed that it was immense fun (even for those of us who missed more than we hit) and might even go down well as a future Clubnight.

Once again, Malcolm emerged as somebody who can turn his hand to anything, scoring the most hits (5 out of the initial 6 clays). Finally, last but not least, Nick Palumbo stepped up as the ringer. Unlike the rest of us who took our time, he rattled off his shots and easily matched Malcolm's score – thus joining Malcolm in having to buy everybody a round of drinks! Well, they can't get away with that now can they?

Eventually, AG persuaded us to put the gun down and we returned to our minibus (or bikes) to continue our journey to the hotel.

The Langrish House Hotel is a wonderful place. A country house owned by the Talbot-Ponsonby family for generations (and still home to the current Lord and Lady), it was ours for the weekend. AG had come up with the cunning plan of devising a treasure hunt, after tea and home made biscuits, which gave us ample opportunity to explore the hotel and grounds to get to know the place. Our searching took us to clues such as the bridge over the stream in the gardens, the guinea fowl with the ducks and chickens, the various hallways and landings, the railway lanterns adorning the doorway and even the dungeons! We had been divided into teams of three and I was with Bill and Les (who I hadn't met before). As well as exploring the hotel, it was a great way to meet everybody and break the ice.



We reconvened to mark the answers before dinner and the scores were close. Two teams were on 30½ while Bill, Les and I were just a point behind in third place.

We returned to our rooms briefly to freshen up before convening in the gallery bar for a pre-dinner drink. A splendid large dining table had been laid out for the twenty of us and the food was delicious.

We returned to our rooms briefly to freshen up before convening in the gallery bar for a pre-dinner drink. A splendid large dining table had been laid out for the twenty of us and the food was delicious.

After dinner we moved to the next room for more drinks and a good old fashioned sing song. One David Rillie esq. is a bit of a talent when it comes to the piano and his only fee is a regular flow of beer. As the night went on, the requests became more varied and the singing braver. It appears though, that WMx members know just the first verse and

chorus to many songs. Confidentiality forbids me from revealing who requested and knew the words to some of the more raucous rugby songs and the image of Dave and our Chairman demonstrating the actions to "Swing Low..." will stay with me for years to come! I can't now hear the word chariot without chuckling.

The less vocal of our number had, by now, retired to the relative sanity of the bar and at midnight we all moved to the dungeon for a night cap and to allow the staff to leave us to it.

Bright and early, Saturday saw a few jaded faces round the dining table for breakfast. Maybe that late night wasn't such a good idea after all - we never learn.

Nick Palumbo, by this point, was on his way to a bike dealer in Portsmouth where he was in search of a part for his Honda and a battery for Maurice's bike. On Friday, the bikers had been late arriving at the hotel because of problems with the bike not starting or running properly and it was hoped that a new battery might at least get him back home where he could get to his dealer to have it looked at. I think it is a testimony to the camaraderie within the Group that Nick was more than happy to go off to see whether he could help with Maurice's problem. Unfortunately, he returned without a battery for the Triumph but did have details of another dealer who may be more likely to help.

After breakfast, AG took the bikers to Petersfield station to catch a train (no riding today) before returning to the hotel for us to board the minibus. Our destination was Portsmouth harbour. The bikers were already waiting in the café and once AG had collected our group tickets, we joined the queue for the Spinnaker Tower.



At 560ft, the tower is the highest UK public view point outside London. It has three viewing levels, the lowest of which is 300ft up and has the largest glass floor in Europe. The lift takes just 30 seconds and, despite the hazy day, the views were spectacular. I am not good with heights but braved walking across the glass floor – a very strange experience – although Jez did complain that I was holding his hand so tightly that I'd cut off the circulation.

From the tower, we headed to the historic dockyard area to a café for lunch. After which, we boarded a catamaran for a guided tour of the harbour. I hadn't realised that so many interesting vessels were there. HMS Ark Royal was one of several Navy ships at dock and we had good views of the Spinnaker Tower at the water's edge.

Dave Rillie doesn't have good sea legs so retired to a pub while we sailed and Toby, still suffering from the night before, decided that discretion was the better part of valour and

decided to remain on terra firma. We found both of them after our tour and we all headed to HMS Warrior for a look round the ship.

The ship served for just ten years from 1860. It must have been a very grim existence with 18 crew members crammed around each mess (a long table and bench along side a cannon) where they lived, ate and slept. Below, in the heart of the ship, the stokers had it worse while they fed the boilers and furnaces. Conditions were so bad for them that they were paid 25% extra.

Unfortunately, during the afternoon, Jez's badminton injury to his ankle flared up and so, while the others went off to visit HMS Victory and the Mary Rose, we went for a coffee. Then Dave Rillie cast his bad influence and helped Jez hobble to a pub while



I raided Boots for a support bandage. I knew Jez wasn't well because he was off his beer and turned down a second pint! We rejoined the others in time to return to the minibus back to the hotel.

Our pre-dinner entertainment was outside on the hotel lawn. One of AG's presents last year for his birthday was a rocket and he'd been waiting for a suitable occasion on which to launch it. Jez, Rob and Toby were tasked with setting it off and were actually seen referring to the instructions. The rocket fuel (baking powder and vinegar) was added and the rocket placed on its launch pad. Anticipation mounted. Nothing happened. Unlike fireworks, we figure it would be safe to return to so Toby tentatively returned to the rocket and dismantled it. The consensus was to add more fuel and try again. This time, the rocket was assembled more loosely and it did manage a height of a few feet. The third and final attempt involved yet more fuel and a proper assembly. The result was a very impressive near 50 feet straight up before returning to the ground as Toby ran from the shower of vinegar.

Dinner was once again delicious and afterwards we returned to our teams for the evening's entertainment. Before the weekend, AG had asked each committee member to supply five questions and answers. Each one to be a round of the evening's quiz. Ann had produced General Knowledge questions but with a motoring link – e.g. who sang "Car Wash"? (The answer of course, Rose Royce.) This was followed by Derrick's Motor Sport, Jez's General Motoring (did you know that the first recorded traffic jam was in 45BC?), Malcolm's Travel and Places and AG's round on WMx and **csma** history. Finally, for the "Wild Card", I produced five pictures of every day items in our kitchen but taken from an unusual angle and only a small part of the whole picture. It's amazing how many people think that one of our mugs is a toilet!

To make things fair between the teams, there was a table in the corner on which was a photo album in which were various photographs, pictures, maps, etc. Some were as simple as "name the person" and others had questions with them. Each round, the team member who had supplied that round's questions was sent to the book corner and challenged to answer as many album questions as possible in 3 minutes while their team answered the main questions. It worked very well and was an interesting twist on the quiz theme. My team benefited greatly from the book round. My strategy was to ignore anything I couldn't identify immediately and move on to the next picture. As a result, I had a pretty good round and the score, along with the talents of my fellow team mates on the question rounds and our treasure hunt score from the previous day, meant that we were rewarded with the overall win.

By the time the answers had been marked, it was getting late but there was still time for the second part of the entertainment. During dinner, we'd all pulled the names of Grand National runners out of the pot. Having avoided all references to the result during the day, the hotel had recorded the race for us. The tension mounted as we watched the race. As with most years, the result was a bit of a lottery. A few lead changes and eventually the winner emerged as Gail's horse, followed by Sheila's, mine and then Nick's. After the race, a celebratory drink in the dungeon was called for and then bed.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, we checked out of our rooms and put all the luggage in one room before boarding the minibus. An hour later, we were on a ferry crossing to the Isle of Wight. The 40 minute crossing became a bit bracing (standing out



## The Sump May 2007

csma West Middlesex Group

on deck at the pointy end had seemed like a good idea) so we retired to the stern deck to bask in the glorious sunshine.

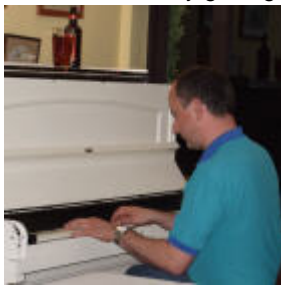
Our first stop on the island was at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, just in time for the arrival of one of the trains to take on water and passengers.

From the railway, we went on to the Fox & Hounds pub for a splendid carvery lunch followed by a quick drink in the garden to enjoy the view down the valley and to take in the sun.

Our afternoon's activity was across the island at a pitch & putt course. Divided into teams of four we set off on the 9 hole round. Fortunes were mixed – the trees proved an entertaining hazard and one team were spotted hunting beyond the boundary. There were the occasional moments when people had to leap out of the path of incoming balls from another hole but overall the quality of play wasn't bad. Perhaps one or two people may have unearthed a latent talent and be lining up for the next Group golf day.

Jez and I went round with Alison and Rob. Jez used to play regularly but in recent years has just had the annual golf day outing. Nevertheless, his coaching of the three of us who were total novices was very helpful. I have played on a pitch & putt course in the lake district several times but each time confirmed that, while I can get to the green fairly painlessly, I am hopeless at putting.

Rob was definitely getting the hang of things as we progressed and Alison seemed to be enjoying the round with a consistent performance.



The cumulative scores of the players in the team were taken (against a par team score of 108) and Derrick's team finished on 203, having had the best value for money in terms of shots per pound. Our team had 197, Toby's team managed 178 and the winning team was that of Malcolm on 176. The individual best score was Jez who completed the round 6 over par on 33.

There was just time for a quick ice cream before we were back on the bus and heading back to the ferry for the mainland.

We returned to the hotel, for the last time, for tea and biscuits and to collect the luggage. The weekend was drawing to a close and the bikers were to leave us for their respective homes at this point. We said our farewells and waved them off on their journeys before boarding and setting out north back to Hook.

When we arrived home, I must confess that I was grateful that we were one of the rendezvous points. As we crossed the M3 and saw that it was a car park, I didn't envy the others completing their journey. Alison and Rob, Toby and Gail and Malcolm and Madeleine extracted their bags from the back of the bus before it headed off to drop off the others. As we all parted company we agreed that AG had done a splendid job in arranging everything (including the glorious weather!) and for keeping us all in the right place at the right time. A lot of hard work had clearly gone into the weekend. At dinner the night before, we had awarded Dave Rillie with a supply of beer as a reward for co-ordinating the bikers' journeys on the weekend and AG had a present of both a mug with "Captain" on it and a whisky glass marked with a plimsole line – highlighting the new depths (or should that be heights?) that we'd all reached during our time away. It had been a great weekend.

**Nikki Wild**

*Postscript - three of the disposable cameras are still at large!  
Please will their custodians return them to AG to be processed!*

## WMx May Motorcycle Ride-out

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> May

We'll meet alongside the river in Henley at the usual cafe outside the River and Rowing Museum, from there we will ride to Todington in Gloucestershire

This ride-out is £10 per person to cover the cost of the 12:15 steam train ride!



We **must** leave the cafe by 09:30 sharp!

Please contact AG before May 15<sup>th</sup> at the latest - we need to know numbers.

The ride-out will finish at the Noggin and Natter at Littleworth Common as usual.

csma West Middlesex Group

May Clubnight - Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>

## Walking Treasure Hunt

Starting at the Liberal Club Windsor

8:00pm

The deadline for articles for the **June** Sump is May 23<sup>rd</sup>!

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.

## Motor Sport Coordinators' Bulletin

May 2007

Dates	Event (Status)	Club	Type of Event	Champ
May 12/13	* Miglia Quadrato (C)	UH&ULMC	City of London T/H	
18-20	* CB Weekend (C)	csma HQ	Rally / TH / Autotest	
Sat 26	* Quadruplex ()	csma Surrey	Inter Group Comp	Centre
Jun Sun 3	* Juniper A/T (Nat B)	csma NEL	Tarmac autotest	BTRDA
Sun 24	Greenacres A/T (C)	csma NWL	Grass autotest	Centre
Jul Sun 22	Grasshopper A/T (C)	csma NEL	Grass autotest	Centre

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

Previous Events

**12 Car Rally - April** James Newbould was running this event and a departure from our usual areas. The event started up near the Silverstone circuit and then did a clockwise loop around Buckingham before finishing back at the start venue. It was a shame that only five competitors turned out but they got a good mixture of roads and navigation, which was well received. Mike Harrison so nearly got second place but missed the very last instruction that said the final control was in a layby and instead drove to the finish. Not a happy bunny when we arrived and told him of the problem, especially as we were now on the dual carriageway and they would have to go the long way round, hence the 9 minutes. Hopefully it will be run as the March event next year and James is looking to see if he can find a start a little bit closer to our patch.

1st	Car 4	Mike Biss/Ian Buxton	Exp	NEL/NWL	0 Fails	0 Mins
2nd	Car 6	Dave Smith/Andrew Duerden	Exp	NWL	1 Fail	0 Mins
3rd	Car 5	Allan Goddard/Tony Brooks	Exp	WMx	1 Fail	1 Mins
4th	Car 2	Steven Harrison/Mike Harrison	Nov	NWL	1 Fail	9 Mins
5th	Car 1	Philip Brent/Graham Robinson	Nov	NEL	3 Fails	8 Mins

**Concorde PCT** Well we only managed to get seven entries in the Nat B event and four entries in the clubsport one. Dave Smith was going very well with lots of cleaned hills, however his challenge for the Concorde Trophy evaporated when the other car in his class retired (with two drivers) with the engine not running properly due to the fuel getting too hot in the engine bay. Did I tell you that it was extremely hot during the weekend and plenty of people went away with tans! In the end it was the Citroen AX of Robin Howard who got his hands on the trophy with Dave getting the award for lowest score.



**AutoSolo** This West Middlesex event will have taken place by the time you read this, so a report next month and hopefully some pictures to go with it.

Future Events

**Miglia Quadrato** This is running on the night of 12/13th May and is the City of London treasure hunt that involves looking for 60 clues in the Square Mile. You plot the clues, given by map references on a 1:10000 map, drive to the locations and then try and find the answers. They are split into 20 easy, 20 medium and 20 hard and you have five hours to find them all. As long as it isn't raining, this is a fantastic event to do and all for the princely sum of £11. Contact me if you want some regs.

**Curtis Bennett Motor Sport Weekend** The event will be running again this year, along similar lines to 2006, but this time it will be based near Cheltenham rather than White-mead Park. There will be the two 12 car rallies on the Friday evening, then there will be

the Windrush Run (which is a touring assembly/pictorial treasure hunt) on the Saturday and the Dunlop autotests (all forwards) on the Sunday. All three of these events will count towards the Curtis Bennett trophy. The awards presentation will be on Sunday afternoon at 4pm. This is a fun/sociable weekend and you can pick and choose which events you want to do, no compulsion to do them all. Give me a call if you want a copy of the event regs.

**Quadruplex Inter Group Competition** Surrey Group will be organising the event on Saturday 26th May and the venue is The Community Centre, Park Road, Banstead, Surrey (doors open 6:30pm). There should be an advert elsewhere in the newsletter showing a map and giving a few more details. The evening will be a quiz format event with teams of between two and four each. Also, during the break, there will be a Ploughmans supper available. You will need to contact your Group secretary to help advise on numbers attending for catering purposes.

**Juniper Autotest** Well this could well be the last time we visit the site at Hatfield as the site will definitely be sold off after the event. This is one of the best venues on the championship calendar, so come along and watch the best drivers in the country doing their handbrake turns and using superb car control to get round the courses. Offers to marshal either to Graham McLean or myself, as we will need a lot to make this event happen. To help you, each marshal will get a voucher for a free cup of tea and a burger (very nice they are too) and guidance on what is required. There is nothing tricky or difficult, but you do get time to see the action at close quarters.



**Greenacres Autotest** The first of the grass autotests will be held at the usual Studd Farm site over near Leighton Buzzard. Pete Gregory will be organising again and more details will appear next month.

### Other Items

**Concorde PCT** I think the time may have come to stop organising the Concorde PCT, especially as there are no actual **csma** competitors, other than Dave Smith, taking part. This I think is mainly because the site is a bit hard on the car, as you will hit a front corner on the ground at some point and really, nobody will want to damage their road car. What I would like to do is replace it with an AutoSolo event which will allow anyone with a road going car to have a go and not have to worry about doing any damage to the car. These are becoming very popular now as they are all forwards driving (handbrake turns not required) and are getting people out who might have worried about the difficulty of remembering the autotest routes. The only thing we need now is to find a suitable tarmac venue to run it on. As the organiser of the Concorde, I would be interested to hear any comments you may have on this suggestion.

**Hollstar Table Top** I am currently running a discussion forum with certain members of the other Groups in the Centre, about how we can get more people interested in taking part. The aim is to come up with ideas that would make the event interesting to people who wouldn't necessarily be interested in rally navigation but may be interested in solving puzzles. If you have any thoughts on the matter, then please let me know and we can then try and come up with a format that can attract more people to this Inter Group competition.

**Mike Biss:** NLC Motor Sports Coordinator

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## WMx Motorcycling Review of 2006

The following report chronicles some of the Group's motorcycling activities that WMx organised, or were involved with, in 2006. As usual, it's not a full list but enough to give a flavour of the West Middlesex Group's involvement with motorcycling over the past year and some would say another good indication of why I'm never at home!

The 2006-year began in mid-January when the csma's Motorcycle Committee arranged a '**Motorcycle Tour Members Tour**' in Redditch with several WMx members attending for an evening of entertainment and noggin' and nattering with fellow Tour members from the previous 12 months. And despite the wet, cold weather the real die-hards still turned up on their 'bikes too!

Just four Group members made the annual pilgrimage to the **London International Motorcycle Show** at Alexandra Palace in late January – as I said in last years report, this is a good show but spoilt by the extortionate parking charges and, despite that, the distinct lack of spaces! That means it's a long walk or a bus ride to get in !

Every year since 2000, on the last Tuesday of every month, from March to October we've run the **Mid-Week**

**Ride Outs**. These past 12 months various café's hosted our Starts and, among other places, our routes took us to the historic Jurassic Dorset coast, London's Ace Café, Brighton Pier (on the second hottest day of the year - Phew!), the Cotswolds, Bosham Harbour, the NEC (for the National Motorcycle Show), and, of course, the **Bike night on Poole Quay** (a really enjoyable few hours among an estimated three thousand bikes and riders). And on each occasion we finished the Ride-Outs at the Jolly Woodman on Littleworth Common timed to coincide with the Group's Noggin n Natters when we're joined by the other Group members for a shandy or two and a good chat.

Early in 2006 I had been 'persuaded' that I ought to attempt the Three Nations Challenge which involves completing the Welsh, English & Scottish National Rallies all in the one season.

Needless to say in each case I had help and some WMx company in doing this but no other WMx rider did all three with me. It began in May when a small group of us make our way to Welshpool to contest the **Welsh National Rally**. This year six West Middlesex motorcyclists made the trip, all of us successfully completing the event to each earn a Platinum medal and the coveted Dragon Award. An excellent weekend's riding and predominately in beautiful weather too. The sunshine more or less followed us around Wales for the second year running with DR once again demonstrating his amazing ability to remember a hundred miles or so of quite complex routing without ever referring to the map – seriously, how does he do that? Back home my 'bike's mileometer had recorded

1,040 miles over the three days. Brilliant! And it goes without saying we'll be going back for more in 2007 when maybe a few more WMx enthusiasts will be able to join us – it's a great weekend, you'll love it!

The **July BBQ Ride Out** began with an early start on the Sunday morning in Henley-on-Thames for a run around Berkshire, Oxfordshire and a bit of Buckinghamshire, taking in breakfast on route before descending on the home of Nikki & Jez in Hook for



our Annual BBQ. Invariably, whenever free food's on offer, our Gourmet members respond well and we had a great turnout with some 21 people enjoying a beautiful sunny afternoon, nine doing the Ride-Out first, and the rest joining in to devour the delights prepared by Jez & Nikki. Superb cuisine, excellent company, and the Annual Boules Championship of Hook and the World was also played out.

The **National Rally** takes place over the first weekend of July and, as usual, West Middlesex had an involvement in 2006. Jeff Rampton & I rode together to earn Silver Awards whilst four other WMx riders tooted around to pick up Bronze Awards. Rhys Edwards co-ordinated our regular Control site just south of the M4 junc.11 at Reading and was helped out by a dozen or so Group members throughout the day. On what was described as officially the hottest day of the year our volunteer Marshals had an impressive number of 'bikes visit the WMx Control and, due to the exceptional heat, a great deal of drinking water was dispensed to the riders too. Well done to everyone involved in this effort, especially those that supported Rhys on the late-night stint.

The **Scottish National Rally** in September was the third & final element of the Three Nations Challenge and Dave Rillie & I set off northwards on the Wednesday, over-nighted in North Yorkshire and started the Event on the Thursday morning. We chose to do the Islander Challenge which involved visiting Controls throughout the mainland plus those on Arran, Mull and Skye (six ferries in all) before the Finish on Sunday afternoon in Crianlarich right in the centre of the Highlands. A fabulous experience & with just a dozen miles of motorway over six days of riding and no rain at all until we got back to Oxfordshire on the way home. Result! Personally a very satisfying event for me and certainly the best motorcycling event of the year as far as my own effort was concerned. And I was particularly pleased that, over the 3 Nationals, I was able to do more than enough to qualify for my Three Nations Award too. Many thanks to DR for his support & encouragement to ensure that I did!

Our final last-Tuesday-of-the-Month event involved a visit to the **National Motorcycle Show** at the NEC when eleven of us ooo'd & aah'd our way around this huge exhibition, all spending our imaginary Lottery wins on the very latest machines from the World over – I think we all decided to buy at least four 'bikes each if that day ever comes, and Angie really did splash out – one new helmet with fitted Auto Com, gloves and more – cor!

As for 2007 and beyond, we are already thinking of new & exciting things for the coming season. There will be more Mid-Week Runs on the last Tuesday of the month from March to October, undoubtedly some of us will do the three 'National Rallies' again, and we really should do a 'Run to the Sun' & pop down to Catalonia or Northern Spain for a long weekend sometime soon. How about it – are you up for that? Full details will be revealed in each monthly Sump.

My sincere thanks to all of you for the encouragement you've given the WMx group motorcycling events over the last twelve months, it really is much appreciated. Whatever we end up doing this year, I look forward to the support, the company and camaraderie that comes from being a West Middlesex Group motorcyclist.

Ride safe .....and keep it shiny side up.

*Allan Goddard*



## 99% Dry - The Scottish National Motorcycle Rally 2006

*Part 2 - continued from last month...*

### FRIDAY

Friday was always going to be the most challenging day of the Rally; 195 miles plus four ferry crossings to get to AG's choice of digs at Uig on the Isle of Skye. Our hotel didn't do breakfast before eight, so rather than miss it we had elected to catch the 9:30 ferry which would consequently mean covering the sixty miles to Oban at an average of 40mph in time to catch our next ferry to Mull. Having toured in the area before, I was confident that this would be achievable without difficulty once we got onto the A83 which is an ideal biking road, fast and sweeping with plenty of overtaking opportunities.

Once again, the day dawned fine and clear; the silence was almost total and the view from my bedroom window was a photographer's dream with the morning light as clear as crystal over Kilbrannan Sound. I was up early and set about repairing Dora's mirror housing using the tube of superglue kept in the VFR's much-augmented tool kit for just such an eventuality – once a WMx service crew, always a WMx service crew! After 20 minutes work, repeated use of the hot air dryer in the Gents and only j-u-s-t avoiding gluing my fingers to the back of the mirror, the job was done to my satisfaction and proved to be good enough to survive the rest of the trip. I re-fitted the mirror, cleaned myself up then joined AG for breakfast. His knee was still painful but the lump had subsided enough for him to be confident that he could continue the trip without needing medical assistance.

We both decided on kippers for breakfast, and I had the audacity to enquire whether they were the boil-in-the-bag variety or proper ones. With a look of utter contempt, I was advised by our elderly waitress that they were Loch Fyne kippers – and so they were, two enormous whole kippers that tasted exactly as kippers should. They were the best that I've had in donkey's years and I'd go back and stay at the hotel just to have them again.

Comfortably replete once more, we left the hotel car park VERY carefully to avoid further carnage and set off for the ferry at Lochranza, just a mile away. This was AG's first encounter with what the Scots call the 'Wee Ferries' – a bit like a landing craft that can sail in both directions with hydraulic ramps at each end and a bloke who goes round on board collecting fares like a bus conductor. When we got to the slipway the tide was out and there was a lengthy delay getting a coach on board as it kept grounding out on the ramp. I was keeping a watchful eye on the time and mentally doing speed and distance calculations as the minutes slipped away; our required 40mph average was nearly up to 45 by the time we landed at Claonaig on Kintyre. Fortunately the roads were as good as I had remembered and even though it was still slightly misty in places we were making excellent time until, with fifty minutes to go to get to the Oban ferry, disaster struck at Lochgilphead.

As we turned left onto the A816 we were flagged down by a man in a grubby fluorescent jacket standing next to a 'Road Closed Ahead' sign, who was clearly Rab C Nesbitt's brother. His opening remark was, "Yecannagettaeoban," followed by a lot of unintelligible gibberish which was clearly intended to be helpful advice on the choice of diversionary routes available. Fighting back the urge to ask, "Do you speak English?" on the basis that it would probably get me a Glasgow Kiss, I dragged out my map and asked him to point to where the road was actually blocked. This turned out to be at Kintraw, about half way to Oban and the problem in Scotland is that as there aren't many roads to start with, if they close one you're looking at a very, very long diversion. In this case, Oban had

suddenly gone from being 36 miles away to being 74 miles away. So that was that - any hope of getting the midday ferry was gone, the only bit of good news being that the next one was two hours later meaning that we now had plenty of time whichever alternative route we chose to take. In the end, we went the scenic route that Rab's brother had suggested – the spectacularly beautiful single-track B840 which winds alongside Loch Eck for 21 miles. The only downsides were a fair amount of gravel washed across the roads, usually in places with minimal visibility, and repeated encounters with logging trucks that were clearly used to having the road to themselves and not expecting there to be anything coming the other way.

By the time we joined the A85, the famous Road to the Isles, we were both dying for a cup of coffee and stopped at the hydro-electric station visitor centre at Cruachan. My nomination for "Most Amusing Event of the Trip" happened here, when AG, wandering in behind me and obviously looking a bit lost, was stopped by the kindly lady at reception who asked "Are ye with the coach party?" The party in question was a Saga 'Lochs and Glens' tour, much to my amusement and AG's indignation! We took our coffees out into the sunshine and were joined by a handful of old blokes from the said coach party, all of whom started talking wistfully about how they missed their Triumphs and BSAs. One of them started chatting quite earnestly to AG about what the Pan was like to ride until his wife pulled him away before he got re-infected with Motorcyclists Disease.

We completed our journey to Oban and found our way through the town to the Mull ferry. Like the ferry from Ardrrossan, this route is the island's principal supply line and so although the crossing is a short one it's operated by a larger vessel that can keep going in all weathers. I also checked with Caledonian MacBrayne that we would be able to get a place on the 15:40 ferry off Mull to Ardnamurchan, as the timetable showed it as requiring advanced booking during busy periods, and was assured that there would be no problem.

As we were now running two hours late, we were only on Mull for about 40 minutes, but we still managed to get to Salen where I quickly wrote and posted some cards. It was then off for our next 'wee ferry', from Fishnish to Lochaline. As we sailed across the narrow Sound of Mull, I explained to AG that our next leg would once again be against the clock. The road closure had put us well behind schedule; the last ferry to Skye sailed from Mallaig at six o'clock so for the second time today we had an hour and a half to cover sixty miles at a 40mph average. The difference was that this time, more than half of that mileage was going to be on single track roads!

We jockeyed for position to make sure that we were first off the ferry as the ramp came down, and set off north on the A884 towards Strontian. Despite being single track, this was one of the best biking roads I've ever ridden in the UK with good visibility, a good surface, no traffic and absolutely stunning views. I was tempted to ease off a bit on the basis that if the road was like this all the way to the A87 we would have no trouble making our ferry. Fortunately we kept up a brisk pace, for once we reached Strontian and turned west onto the A861 matters deteriorated sharply. This road was also single track, but didn't travel consistently in any one dimension for more than 50 yards; think of the Abergwesyn Pass and you get the picture. We were riding at a maximum of 35mph and averaging a lot less, as every twist and turn in the road required maximum concentration to avoid either a head-on collision with oncoming traffic or becoming part of the magnificent scenery. Twenty miles of 'point and squirt' later, we were a long way short of our required 40 average as the road finally widened to two lanes alongside Loch Moidart and we wound up the bikes to try and recover lost time. The scenery was breathtaking (again/still) but for the moment we had no time to admire it as we had less than half an

hour to go before missing the ferry and being stranded on the mainland for the night.

Very, very, very luckily the last ten miles of the old A87 to Mallaig have been replaced by a brand new bit of road, otherwise we definitely wouldn't have made it. We urged our trusty steeds up to licence-threatening speeds and rode into the harbour exactly at last check-in time. I collapsed across my tank bag, absolutely knackered with the strain of concentration on the single-track road followed by even greater concentration scanning for Mr McPlod during our final frantic dash. This was the last ferry crossing of the tour and like the others before it, it was a flat calm. The sun was starting to dip behind the Cuillin Hills as we docked at Armadale and set off at a much more relaxed pace for our digs at Uig. Skye is a big island and we still had 55 miles of riding to do before we were finished for the night, but once through Broadford we seemed to have the place almost completely to ourselves. As per the previous evening, although we were riding north-west into the setting sun, the Cuillin Hills did an excellent job of keeping it out of our eyes until we got past Portree. The final fifteen miles of the day were along the eastern side of Loch Snizort and as we finally approached Uig we were treated to the unforgettable sight of the sun setting over the Outer Hebrides.

AG had sorted our B&B for the night, and my enquiries concerning appropriate licensed premises fell on fruitful ground. It turned out that the landlady's husband was the drayman for the Isle of Skye brewery, and not content with telling us where we could sample some of his wares he actually gave us a lift up to the Uig Hotel, much to AG's relief as his leg was still giving him some discomfort. We rounded the day off with a couple of excellent pints of Skye ale; we should only have done 195 miles today, but Rab's brother's detour had put that up to 233 and although I was certainly ready for my first pint, by the time we had finished our second I was having trouble staying awake. We strolled back down the hill to the welcoming lights of the village and unsurprisingly, I slept like a log.

***To be continued...***

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# Juniper Autotest

Sunday 3rd June

csma North East London Group

New Barnfield Library, Travellers Lane, Hatfield

Come along and help marshal on this national championship tarmac event and get as close to the action as you can get. No previous experience needed (all can be explained), so just contact either Graham McLean 020 8553 4700 or Mike Biss 01525 720299.

There are Mini's, saloons, sports cars and specials, all competing in the BTRDA championship and the things they can do with a car are sometimes unbelievable. Hot food and drink is available all day, with marshals getting a free drink and burger.



csma NORTH LONDON CENTRE

## QUADRUPLEX 2007

Hosted by SURREY GROUP

Organiser: Roger Clark 01293 772 838 [roger-ann@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:roger-ann@tiscali.co.uk)

THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, PARK ROAD, BANSTEAD, SURREY

7PM ON SATURDAY 26TH MAY 2007 (Doors open 6:30pm)

Easy route: The most direct route is to travel on the M25 to Junction 8 (A217 signposted Sutton, Reigate, Redhill). Take the northerly A217 road, signposted London & Sutton. Stay on the A217 for 5 miles to the junction of the A2022. Turn right at the filter traffic lights, signposted Purley. Go straight over first small roundabout (approx 100 yards), turn right at the next roundabout (approx 400 yards) into Sutton Lane, take the first turning left (approx 150 yards) into Park Road and the Community Centre is on the right (approx 150 yards). There is plenty of parking at the Centre (approx 75 spaces).

The Competition will comprise of a QUIZ on general subjects. There is no limit on the number of teams that a Group can send (with teams made up of between 2 and 4 people). The winners are decided by the best placed individual team and the team award (The Quadruplex Trophy) goes to the Group with the best score from two teams. The judge's decision will be final.

Please let us know approximate numbers coming (for catering purposes)

**A free Ploughman supper will be made available during an interval**

