

Dartmoor 2004



We do hope that this most excellent weekend will not be Terry and Shirley's organizing swansong, but if it is, then it was swanlike indeed. You know the adage, all placid above and paddling like mad underneath.

Their organisation was faultless, the hotel amongst the best we've patronized and the scenery, well, it was Dartmoor wasn't it? We didn't paddle but the weather did threaten to dampen our tyre contact once or twice, but it was Dartmoor wasn't it? And speaking of Dartmoor and its weather, who can be surprised that a prison was built up there. The place oozes despair couched in a fold of the summit watershed leering out through slit windows over bog and broken futures.

No such burden for us though as we swept past in the murk, following a call at Widecombe with not a sign of any Cobs or grey mares. Perhaps we should sue someone for wrongful description? Then down off the high country towards the coast and a visit to Slapton Sands, the site one of Combined Operations rehearsals, which ended in appalling tragedy. Here we were caught by someone discovering that they had no rubber left on his contact patch and a squall of savage intensity that had us scurrying for, where else, the public conveniences?

Onward to naval Dartmouth and specially created cream teas. After reorganizing the cafe layout to ensure that all personnel AND one motorcycle were under the awnings, we enjoyed a feast most typically Devon.

Sunday was different. Much more of the softer Devon through the loveliest of valley systems and to the coast again. Teignmouth for coffee in the sunshine, my first visit to Torquay in forty years and lunch at Dartington.

Of course, as always, there was much more to our enjoyment than solely the ride. Terry had arranged little subtleties like the provision of a couple of casks of real ale, ensuring that Alan Kay had brought the odd balloon; not that he needs any persuasion. Our first intimation of this latter success was the launch of a flight from his bedroom window, which merely served to presage a whole squadron on evening patrol at dinner. Even Steve Martin was observed to launch two!

Terry's suggestion that we bring 'cossies' was well received as the hotel had a good indoor pool and a gym. We experienced excellent parking, superb food and a very competitive specially negotiated tariff.

The hotel welcomed us and accepted our noisy enjoyment at meal times with good humour and indulgence. As I intimated earlier, such success doesn't come without considerable effort on the part of our valued organizers and Terry and Shirley both deserve our appreciation for their contributions to our Fellowship and our very good wishes for their 'change of life.'