

IFMR – FROLICS in the FOREST, Sep-2017



Mom!!! The International Fellowship of Motorcycling Rotarians are coming

For your humble trainee scribe this trip started at the IFMR Wells weekend which I attended with my brother, Anthony. Normally I am allowed by Management to have one trip per year but fortunately (or unfortunately), the Friday evening at the Swan Hotel saw us sitting next to Paul and Enid who did such a brilliant sales job that I found myself discreetly booking a New Forest hotel room for who-knows what 'Fun and Frolics'; I was up for 'Fun' but not too sure about the 'Frolics'.

Casually mentioning to my Rotary and sailing chum John McCarthy that for some strange reason he was on the official IFMR list as my pillion (shurely shome mishtake) he wasted no time in securing the pillion seat for a second time. So, it was that we dutifully attended our Rotary lunch meeting on Monday 11-Sep with the idea of departing for the Forest of Dean; in theory a great idea but various delays conspired to force us to travel in 'one hop' and made it just in time for a small pre-dinner libation – phew! The only incident to report was John filling my helmet with 'LOOK OUT' at the top of his voice just as a large deer ran right in front of us – the brakes were further squeezed when it's fawn followed a second later – ahh, how nerve wracking, but how sweet, we must be in the Forest.

The first evening saw us on a table with Dr John who regaled us with (too) detailed medical stories over dinner – good job we did not have Devilled Kidneys. He further tried selling me a

no novel 'bone technology' comms system which he freely admitted did not work over 40mph – he must have thought the Rally Wisp in the car-park was mine. More of this later. Amazingly, no-one held John's scooter-riding days against him but there were a few sniggers. To some relief the last of our company finally arrived but Mike Colbert assured me he had not got lost – just taken a rather scenic detour.

An early alarm necessitated by a re-fuelling mission on Tuesday morning saw a rather wet and miserable little trip but with tremendous timing Paul (or was it Enid) managed to get the rain to stop at precisely 09.59hrs just before wheels turning at the decidedly lazy, but welcome, time of 10.00 hrs

With very wet and muddy roads – and a chatty pillion – the first coffee stop at The Walwyn Arms was welcome albeit there is something relaxing about riding through a forest (until I remembered the deer). Leg two followed in similar manner and at least the rain kept at bay although, again, the lunch stop was timely and welcome. Lunch was at the fascinating Dean Forest Railway and at this point your scribe needs to thank our President, David Biggs, for embarrassing him and drawing everyone's attention to the fact I 'overshot' the lunch turn. John and I were enjoying the ride so much that when we saw the marker, we saw a very rough turn and only realised this was the lunch stop as we sailed past. That said, the short ride to turn around and back was an excellent short twisty stretch which we were tempted to do again.

During the day Alan's normally balletic riding was interrupted when his orange TEC screen marker became detached by an errant Forest breeze and temporarily obscured his vision; due to his lightning quick reflexes he quickly retrieved the situation and resumed his TEC duties. 'Fumbling John' managed to lose his helmet chin air intake fitting around the same time, with witnesses. There was talk of a fine but counterbalanced by witnesses not picking up the errant fitting leaving John with a permanent gale at all speeds – although even this did not stop his chatter!

After a day of some good riding – at precisely the speed limits – we enjoyed some unexpected up/down twisties. The ride saw Nigel belatedly coming back into form with spirited Nip and Tuck riding – suffice to say, as you would expect, he won but I blame my non-aerodynamic pillion totally and the fact I was doing 31mph in a 30 zone with double white lines – on a bend – I shall say no more!

Tuesday afternoon found us back at 'base' in good time for refuelling and some 'R & R' before the obligatory pre-dinner tinctures. Having failed to sell his comms system, Dr John proceeded to raffle said item with a very eloquent explanation of how well it worked (below 40mph). Suffice to say the, erm, 'item' was won, yes, by your humble scribe – oh joy.

I should also mention the award of Enid's 'Spot the Pinstripe Church Spire' competition very deservedly won by Jill Johnston; my excuse was that with slippery conditions my eyes were firmly on the road, though I am not sure where Pillion John's were.

I was worried when one or two said we were stopping next at 'Tintagel' but was relieved our last ride out on Wednesday morning led us via a coffee stop at The Bell, Skenfrith, near Newent, to 'Tintern' Abbey and The Anchor Inn for lunch and farewells. The previous evening Enid had let slip that today took us on her and Paul's favourite road and, once again, the trip did not disappoint with plenty to enjoy throughout the ride both in terms of roads and scenery.

My only real problem of the trip was in reluctantly turning to home and not realising we were in a new country – Wales. My Satnav gave me two 'Stroud' destinations in Wales before I realised it had automatically switched but needed to be manually switched back to my home country of England. The Welsh ½ of me was secretly pleased to realise a semi Welsh leg had been included where I could see the Green Green Grass of Home as a bonus, though no sheep.

Having never been to this area, due to skirting but never entering, I had heard some tales about the Forest of Dean but was pleased that, firstly, it was actually in my Satnav and secondly that Paul and Enid's trip did live up to their hype and sales pitch – a very big Thank You to you both on behalf of all attendees. John was also pleased we were not embarrassed on this occasion by being overtaken by cyclists (Lake District trip). It was also good to see Secretary Rob and his new knee, albeit on 4 wheels, and I should also thank him for distributing the 'Motorcycle Convoy Route Marking System' but hope it was nothing to do with my novel approach in the past. Chris (with no help whatsoever from Pillion John, as usual)