

2018 IFMR 'Castles Tour' 7 - 9 Sept



[Click on this line to see the photo album](#)

Friday dawned bright for us in Newmarket and with just over 70 miles to the Rockingham Forest Hotel, a leisurely start was on the cards.

Planned refreshments at Thrapston were curtailed due to closure of “Burger King”, only the Shell Garage functioning with a coffee machine and one loo for many cross-legged travellers!!

Arrival at the Hotel and sandwiches in the bar restored equilibrium, being mindful not to spoil appetites for the evening meal.

When I enquired of the reserved parking I was shown to the rear carpark, access restricted to the width of a Motorcycle. I would estimate you could have parked 100 cars in the space we had for 17 bikes!! Due to lack of onlookers some slow speed manoeuvring was practiced, especially as it was a brand new, surface, shame to waste it!

I am always impressed with the distances that some members travel to attend these weekends, so I conducted some research and it would appear the furthest travelled (approximately 230 miles) were Michael and Jean, well done, sorry but no prize!

As we all arrived, the information packs were handed out, I read the “Important Numbers” page with some amusement, illuminating to say the least, the culprit

I believe to be a Non-BMW owner, who has some previous experience of “bombing selfies” and answers to “Flash”, I can say no more!

As we assembled in the Bar for pre-dinner drinks, are there any other excuses to attend the bar? Doctor John was seen to be making a fashion statement or just setting a new trend in footwear. He had packed a left shoe from one pair and the right shoe from another which resulted in a light tan /dark tan effect, his excuse was that it was dark in the wardrobe and Jean had packed them!!!! As ever, the observant, Mr Kay, noted Doctor John had another identical pair at home!

Before we started to dine, Gordon enlightened us about Uli Welker’s funeral, which he had attended and kindly circulated an Order of Service for us all to view. The photos, it contained, refreshed fond memories of one of life’s true characters.

After dinner Nigel delivered the usual pre-ride briefing, warning of bumpy roads, advising suspension set, to soft, castles hidden by trees, castles missing with just bumps left behind and the weatherman’s warning of torrential rain!

Saturday dawned with overcast skies and looming black clouds as forecast. However, there was some brightness on the horizon with Nigel and Gordon (TEC) resplendent in what could only be described as “Post Office/ British Rail” orange, or as one member later commented, “errant council workers who had mislaid their hard hats, cones and shovels!”

In a sea of yellow they were very easy to spot, and made re-joining, after marking, in front of TEC that much easier.

There was a minor panic before setting off as it appeared that Alan had lost 9 pounds, not from an overnight extreme diet, but from his front tyre! Following a heavily supervised inspection of his front tyre by numerous inspectors, no sharp protrusions were found, and it was confirmed the tyre was indeed black and round, some kicking of the tyre did leave the accuracy of the pressure checking system in doubt. A circumnavigation of the reserved parking area, confirmed it was rideable, so off we set, Paul and Enid giving us a very sunny send off on dark and dismal day!!

The roads were bumpy and soft suspension was a help, the views were stunning, as we wended our way through chocolate box villages, with properties built of golden local stone.

Although overcast the countryside was colourful to say the least. The roads, kept us pilots, concentrated, linking the bends together and chasing the ever elusive, vanishing points and so we arrived at coffee.

We then passed through Warmington, but no sight of the Home Guard? Probably because the "on Sea" was missing???

Narrowly missing the view of Elton Hall before seeing the trees obscuring Barnwell Castle, but we saw plenty of majestic churches and water towers, even one with castellations!! What more architecture could you want?

As we passed the lake, we ticked off two Herons in our "I Spy" book before dodging a rather large Kite dining on carrion in the middle of the road. At our next marking position, I did say to Celia that I hoped we would not be there too long as two Kites were circling overhead, I could see the newspaper headline motorcyclist carried off by Kites!!!!

Lunch was taken at Riseley, good clay shooting ground not far from here!

After lunch we then "meandered" back to the Hotel on open, flowing main roads, we had dodged the forecasted torrential rain, suffering only a couple of showers. This had added to a great day exploring the Northampton country side no one appeared bothered about the Castles doing a no show!!

As per Friday's format we gathered in the Bar, before dinner, another enjoyable meal with great company. Alan did his usual trick and took wine with himself and then enlightened us with what might be described as an essay written by a lady about a glass of wine, you just had to be there!!

Sunday arrived bright but cloudy, only to get sunny and hotter as the day progressed.

Once again, excellent views and enjoyable roads to arrive at Castle Ashby, for your information, built in 1574, in 35 acres of gardens set in a 10,000-acre estate. Glad I do not cut the grass!! Present resident is the Earl of Compton, son of 7th Marquis but elected not to serve us coffee on his drive!

We lined all the bikes, riders and pillioners up in front of the vista to the house, it did look grand, not the house but us!!

Gordon did ask a passing motorist to take a photo for us, but he declined, perhaps intimidated by the gathered throng, who knows?

Then all re-mounted and we headed to Ecton and the World's End and probably the best beef sandwiches I have ever tasted.

Many thanks to Nigel and Gordon for all their efforts and time spent pulling everything together and making a memorable weekend for us all to enjoy.