

## 2018 A Pembrokeshire Poodle with Phil Watson



Tenby didn't sound a very Welsh name to us nor was it constructed with the usual numerous letters common to many Welsh town names, so we didn't know what to expect when we arrived. A little research revealed the Welsh name to be Dinbych-y-pysgod meaning 'fortlet of the fish' - I think I will stick to Tenby.

What we found was a jewel of a place nestling on the western side of Carmarthen Bay within Pembrokeshire. Having never been here before, we were, like many others in the group, seduced by her charm.

Having stayed overnight in the Cotswolds, we arrived about 1:00 p.m. to a totally deserted hotel with Michael and Alison's 'Pan' standing lonely in the car park. Staff were excellent as were the facilities and we were shown to our room where everything was just right?

Throughout the afternoon, while Sue and I toured the newly discovered Tenby and enjoyed a drink in the sunshine, everyone arrived and gradually the group assembled having melted en route in the 31° heat. Not everyone's journey was without mishap. Our trusty Yamaha sank into the tarmac on its side stand which I rescued just before it went over. Arthur told us of his incident, giving his permission for it to be included in the report, caused by a brief glance at another motorcyclist, who he thought to be in trouble which was enough to lose concentration on the road ahead which in turn caused a spot of bother with a number of lorries which ended up with Arthur and Carol having a slight spill, some damage and a shakeup but thankfully no injuries. For even the most experienced riders, these things can happen.

Sue and I are new members to the group, so we are very grateful to the warm welcome we have received on both rides we have attended. IFMR seems to have it just right, so thank you all for your kindness.

This 'kindness', even extended to being allowed, following having my arm twisted almost to dislocation by Gordon, to complete the report after the ride.

About the report I received advice from a passing sage who insisted that if there was anything wrong it was Gordon's fault. This was followed by words about his Yamaha and plenty of laughing but I'm not sure what that meant, being a Yamaha owner myself.

We all gathered in the bar for a pre-dinner drink with Phil, our organiser for the weekend, laying out at the agenda for the next two days.

With 40 attendees involving 17 bikes this has obviously taken a great deal of time and organisation because the information Phil provided was excellent and needed little further explanation. However, questions were raised about the forthcoming match England were playing the next day in the World Cup and what time we would arrive back at the hotel. Phil whose interest in football seemed quite low, feigned indifference. Perhaps he might even have been trying to pretend he didn't know the World Cup was on!

To get us into the mood, while waiting for dinner, Phil treated us to a quiz. A sort of non-PC style of 'dingbats'. This caused much laughter and head scratching when we tried to remember titles previously unknown to us, which in turn resulted in some even being made up for the occasion. This also led to some people resorting to Google on their mobiles - well really! Towards the end of the meal, which was very good, a birthday cake appeared and the IFMR chorus sprang to life and sang happy birthday to Jill Johnson to help celebrate her 70th birthday.

The next morning after breakfast everyone was ready and raring to go. The riders gathered outside the hotel for a full pre-ride brief from Phil. Once complete there followed an orderly departure onto the Pembrokeshire roads, through the surrounding countryside and on into the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The scenery was stunning with glorious views of the coast. The weather again was brilliant, with wall-to-wall sunshine.

The route was well laid out, and as Phil had briefed on earlier, some of the roads were narrow, lightly used and some a tad gravelly but everything was passable with care. A great adventure, in good company, with plenty of fun.

Everything was going well and then we came to Strawberry Hill. In some parts a very steep road, wide enough for one vehicle only, (overall distance of 0.7km averaging a 4% rise but rising to max 16.5% in some places). Most riders, having a clear road, took this in their stride.

Unfortunately, vehicles then coming the other way, caused three bikes (us included) to pull over and wait for them to clear. At the restart Alan Kay found gravity taking its toll on the weight of his bike, but after a juddery start, he managed to get his bike moving up the hill. Fortunately, Jeff and I were lower down on the less steep section, so ditching our pillions, Sue and Dottie, we were able to get going easier. We found a suitable place a little further up the hill to wait for our other halves, who had been forced to walk up in that heat and their gear.

Our coffee stop at the Ocean Cafe, Broad Haven was an excellent choice and Phil acted the part of the Maitre d'hotel, ensuring everyone got what they wanted. Once the inner parts were refreshed, we pressed on through more glorious scenic countryside until we reached our lunch stop at the Sloop Inn, Porthgain, a disused industrial port. There was quite a bit of talk as to why this port had been effectively abandoned. Interest caused me to research this little gem and this revealed that slate was quarried nearby and cut by water powered mills, bricks were made from the slate waste and another material, dolerite, was used as a road stone - all shipped from the harbour until approximately the 1930's when the trade ceased. Today the hoppers, standing adjacent to the harbour, that stored the material have been classified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and cannot be altered. Overall a quaint port to visit that has an air of abandonment and mystery.

A great spread was laid out for us in the pub and sitting eating lunch outside, chatting and laughing together in the sunshine was excellent. Following lunch, more scenic riding for the return journey and at one stage we turned a corner into a bay (I can't remember where it was) only to be enveloped in a sea mist that was a great temporary relief from the heat of the day.

We returned to the hotel having had a brilliant days riding and melted into the bar. After a quick change we saw the end of the football (England won two nil) and then swam in the pool before meeting up in the bar prior to dinner. Following another excellent meal, we were entertained by that famous (in their own lunchtime) cabaret duo Alan Kay and Phil Watson singing the well-known Maurice Chevalier song - I remember it well. After this performance I don't think I will be able to remember it in quite the same way in the future. The duo sang like a pair of old troopers to the delight of the diners. No-one was quite sure which of the pair was singing in a falsetto voice but the laughter it caused was worth it - brilliant. The IMFR Chorus was then handed the same song sheets to sing a further rendition of the piece. It will never be a number one, but it was certainly a good laugh. Alan Kay turned from singer to joke teller. The quality of the jokes were of dubious quality but the laughter from Alan, which delayed him completing the full joke for some time, caused more laughter than the jokes he told. Got to hand it to him - a man with a good sense of humour and very entertaining.

On the Sunday morning, due to the distance we had to travel home, due East for 330 odd miles, we decided with some others, that after breakfast we would wave off the Sunday riders at 10:00 a.m. and head for home so as a result Michael Studham very kindly sent me a brief report of Sunday (which I have copied in below):

The 'poodle' on Sunday morning started as planned at 10:00 with 12 bikes and quite a fast 41 miles to the Daffodil by 11:15 for coffee. A very friendly pub, with decking in the sun, so some of us chose to sit inside. The original plan was apparently to leave at 12:00 for a 2-hour 60mile ride to lunch booked for 2:00, but Phil heard certain pillions not happy with any 2-hour non-stop run, so he very sensibly adapted the plan for a direct run via GPS guidance to a route he did not know, showing as 35 miles, just 1 hour, and so we enjoyed an extra hour at the Daffodil. Even so John and Jean Rees chose to go straight back to the hotel, again John just followed his GPS which went down some very narrow green lane, Michael and Jean Blackledge opted to use the time to go their own way and visit a National Trust Garden near Tenby, and 4 others left for home, so there was a very select 6 bikes and 3 pillions eventually went to lunch. Phil's GPS found the B4309 which turned out to be a great road, and indeed

we used it again in reverse in order to get back to Tenby. Very impressed with the Daffodil, particularly their "Local friendship group". OK, it probably gets them new customers, but even so they promote it as somewhere for anyone to go to any Tuesday morning from 10:00 to 11:30 for free tea/ coffee and biscuits, and generally to meet and chat, not just cheap, but free.

Finally, overall a great weekend of fun, laughter, friendship and fellowship all topped off with motorcycling in the brilliant sunshine as the icing on the cake. What more could one ask? Superb organisation by Phil and Jeanette Watson and I'm sure everyone would join with me in thanking them for all their hard work and for ensuring the weekend worked well for everyone.

Pembrokeshire Poodle - Report by Pierre Turner & Michael Studham