

16 10 11

Georges run to Weymouth Beach Races.

Write Up from Brian Atkinson.



Brian Atkinson 9 Dec (2 days ago) to me

BMW Ride out Sunday 16th October. A personal journey

I awoke and looked at the alarm clock, it was 5.55am. It was time to get up. Today the weather is forecast to be good in the South and a ride out to Weymouth to see the moto cross racing on the beach is 'all systems go'. Going outside to get the bike from the garage reminded me of Captain Oats famous lines. I can hear my wife Pura telling me not to be such a wimp. I'll just have to get all my cold weather gear on and hope for the best, after all, I have biked to the North Cape in the Arctic

Its now 6.50am and time to go and meet the BMW bikers at the junction of the A20/M26. Even the Arctic was not as cold as this. With a 45minute ride it was a case of handle grip warmers switched on. It was also a case of tucking down behind the screen as I drove down to the rendezvous at a gentle 45 /50mph. Gathered round the rendezvous area was fifteen bikers with their helmets and gloves still on in order to keep out the cold. The temperature gauge on one of the more upmarket BMW bike indicated 2C degrees. The leader, George Barlow was tucked up in a café about an hour away near Cowfold on the A272. He was having a nice hot drink whilst waiting for the main group to arrive. Bloody Hell! If only I had known, I could have saved my self an hours bitter cold ride by joining our leader in a warm café and wait contentedly for the others.

The clock had now moved on to 8am and it was off to Cowfold. To save time we went down the M26 on to the M25 and then on down the M23 to meet the A272. My speedometer just occasionally went below 75mph. Our temporary leader Shaun Mulligan thought nothing of it and neither it seems did the rest of the BMW gang. Being committed to being part of the group I just opened the throttle and attempted to minimise the cold penetrating my body. We didn't even slow down as we zapped through the freezing fog that lay in the valleys. When we arrived at the café to meet George I learnt that this event was mainly devised for those guys who like a really fast ride. No wonder they all had powerful modern bikes. When I say modern, I mean compared with my 1995 BMW R100 RT machine which is now some 15years old However, I made it my mission to keep up with them. .

After a nice cup of tea with a hot scone and butter it was off with George leading the pack. It is a little humbling knowing George is older than me and I am nearly 75. He took off at a fast rate. The temperature at around 9am seemed to be the same as it was at 7am, bloody cold. The first destination was Salisbury for a petrol top up. We drove down mainly empty lanes through the country side at a breakneck speed, at least that was my perception. I seemed to be wrestling my bike round corners at what seemed a 20 degrees lean over. Looking at the other bikes they seemed to grip the road like glue so I guess they miss out on an adrenaline rush round each corner. It was also a requirement from time to time to look to the heavens for divine help when you believe you can see an opportunity to carry out an overtaking manoeuvre whilst travelling around 60mph. You cant normally afford to wait for another overtaking opportunity in case the biker your following goes out of sight. If that does happen then your speed can hover around 80mph until the bike ahead comes into view. Nothing more humiliating than to see the guy your following disappearing out of sight. I know, it happened to me from time to time. At least traffic lights and some hold ups at junctions are forgivable. Even so it needs a hand full of throttle to catch up.

After around 5 hours, still feeling very cold we drove into Weymouth and parked up near the harbour. By now the sun was shining and the heat of the day finally made its presence felt. First thing was a good meal of fish and chips. Well that was the idea. The only thing I can say about my measly bit of fish, it was hot. We went for a walk down to the beach and watched a couple of moto cross events that were truly awesome. The beach was prepared with a whole range of obstacles including large mounds of sand which enabled the more senior riders to take off and leap a fair distance. The course seemed to have a circuit about a mile long. There must have been some 20 to 30 riders in each event which gave rise to many riders falling off. We finished off the afternoon with a variety of drinks, although in my case it was a large ice cream. On our way back to the bikes, three of us walked past a three mast sailing ship moored up in the harbour. Looking around the harbour and surrounding buildings it could have been in Copenhagen.

With the sun going down and a distinct drop in temperature it was the full cold weather gear. Because my bike had the poorest acceleration and power it was suggested by Shaun that I ride behind George during the ride home. For about 20 miles we generally ambled along at the pace set by the traffic. George continued to trundle along at a similar pace without the cars in front which suited me fine until Shaun drove up along side and suggested he gives the bike a bit of welly. That done it. It was déjà vu. I was happy to grit my teeth and keep in touch until the sun went down. After that I began to feel very unhappy. The main reason being, I haven't driven in the pitch black for years and secondly my headlight was badly adjusted with the beam pointing almost straight down. I battled on to keep George's tail light within a sensible range. This was at times difficult and I would lose ground with him disappearing round corners. This in turn made the situation worse with me trying to catch him up in the dark. On one occasion I misjudged a bend and found myself giving the hedge a trim. That was scary! The most frightening experience was being blinded by on coming traffic whilst heading into a bend at some crazy speed. It was simply a case of hoping for the best. Eventually, having travelled to Romsey and then on to Winchester, we finally reached Petersfield for a tea and a hot sausage roll.

I decided, when we resumed our run to the A23, some 40 miles away, I would position myself near the back of the group, by now only five of us left. With Mick in front of me and he being somewhat more senior in age than most of the team, I thought he would be more gentle round the dark bends. After a few moments that hope was dashed. He was just another George. However, it was just a case of surviving the last few miles. We all stopped at the A23 and I departed thanking Shaun and George for a great ride out. I told him I would spend the rest of the ride home allowing my heart to regain its normal composure.

I must say the guys in the group clearly knew the limits of their bikes and drove accordingly and I must admit they drove fast and safely. In my case, I was outside my comfort zone particularly in the dark and I have to admit my hair, at least what I have left, would have made Ken Dodd proud. I know I can ride at my own pace and hold up the traffic as long as I like but I also know it would spoil the day out for the rest of the guys. I trust they hardly noticed my racing heart beat. Whilst going home on my own I couldn't get the bike to go less than 75mph. As soon as I consciously reduced speed it would go straight back up. If I start getting tickets I'll tell the old bill it was George's fault. I arrived home at around 9.30pm having covered 400miles. Am I at last recognising I might be just too old for these fast outings? It wasn't long before I had a quick shower and straight to bed. What a day!

