

**Dragon Rally Feb 13th 2016** – attended by Caerphilly Club.

An unusual 10am meet allowed an unhurried start to a trip that stayed that way. Big Nige provided the map, Jason, Ian & Mark provided the company. Friday's destination was a Premier Inn in Caernafon for '*a great nights sleep*' - according to Lenny Henry. Saturday night's destination was a two man tent at the foot of mount Snowdon!

The day was dry but dull and cold with low cloud threatening rain at any moment.

From Crumlin garage we headed for Brynmawr and over Llangynidr moor to Bwlch then took the Llangorse road and on to Talgarth and Glasbury. The roads were wet and generally covered in mud thanks to the amount of farming on the Welsh/English border, this kept the speeds respectable and took the gleam off the shiny paintwork, much to Marks disgust. As we hit Kington Jase picked the busiest T junction he could find to stop to relieve himself, much to the amusement of the group of senior citizen ramblers crossing the road behind us!

By now we were ready for a bit of brekky so a blast up the road to Knighton and a full breakfast in the Cafe set us up for the afternoon.

The Sun came out briefly as we crossed the Welsh border into Shropshire heading north before crossing back into Powys to skirt Welshpool and take the country road to Lake Vyrnwy. A brief stop at the tea rooms for a cream scone and coffee then some photos on the dam and we headed north anti-clockwise around the lake before heading for Bala on the mountain road. This is a great road with stunning views into the valley and sweeping bends making it a nice alternative to the Bwlch Y Groes pass.

We rode into Bala at the head of the Lake and down the high street for Mark to refuel at the novel petrol pump on the pavement, bizarre.

We set off West on the A487 enjoying the view of the Snowdonia mountain range, snow capped in the distance. The Sun was breaking through the clouds but the mountains were shrouded in mist. We took the B road to the Aberglasyn Pass and on to Beddgelert enjoying every twist and turn. We turned left at the stone bridge in Beddgelert and followed the Pass through the mountains and down into Caernafon. It was still daylight, remarkably mild, sun shining and only 4:30pm! By 7pm we were in 'Spoons' looking for a table for 4. Fish Friday turned out to be 'no fish Friday' but the alternatives went down ok and 6 pints later we went around the corner to the Black Bouy just to compare the bar tariff – ouch - Jase nearly passed out! The 'Bouy' stopped tap at midnight but we managed to find another pub for one more drink before hitting the kebab house. All that was left was a '*perfect nights sleep*'.

Saturday morning was Breakfast in Morrisons before picking up supplies (alcohol) and we were off again on a lovely blue sky morning, heading for the cafe at Capel Curig to find out where we were camping for the night.

The siabad cafe on the A5 is a biker hot spot at the best of times but today it was buzzing, the car park full of eager campers enjoying the menagerie of bikes from around Europe.

Ticket stamped and sticker in pocket we were off to the venue, 8 miles down the road to the lakeside at Nant Gwynant camp site. The fields were already filling up but we found a romantic little spot under the cliff by the crystal clear waters of the river. worryingly after pitching the tents, we spotted the flood line was 3 metres higher up the field than our tents were so we were praying that the snow on Snowdon wasn't gonna melt over night!

All pitched up it was time to collect our goodie bags and mug of soup, oxtail, awesome. The campers were arriving in droves now so we had a wander round the camp taking in the sights - everything from Harley's to Honda C90's to trikes to side cars with car engines. Trail bikes, enduro bikes, sports

bikes, adventure bikes, you name it, there was one there. Modifications are always a talking point, particularly top boxes or fairings, some people can be quite inventive! There were groups of French, Germans, English and Welsh as well as Dutch and who knows what else.

By now the pub was calling and since Wales were playing Scotland in the 6 nations it was a priority. We took the bikes down the valley to Porthmadog and a brief stop at Tesco to stock up on meat for our bbq supper before hitting a pub with a decent TV. 2 hours later after chewing our nails watching Wales win again we headed back to the campsite looking forward to a big fire and the first bbq of the season. By now the wind had whipped up and camping in Snowdon in February was beginning to feel like a bad idea, too late now. Half hour later we had a roaring fire and the sausages were sizzling. Beer, Cider, Scotch, Port plus some Tennessee honey helped to warm the soul and after a couple of hours of listening to Mark signing Macarena we'd had enough laughs so headed for the barn to see the band who turned out to be very tidy. By 1am we were heading back to the tents and since the fire had already been blown out by the strong wind we headed for bed.

At 6am engines were starting and some sort of commotion was going on, turns out a couple of our neighbouring tents had been robbed of wallets and phones, tents had been unzipped and trousers nicked while people were sleeping, unbelievable! We escaped somehow but a few around us were done, we'd never heard of something like that at the Dragon before, damn shame.

Jase got the burner going and porridge and coffee was breakfast. We packed up the tents and leisurely loaded the bikes before heading off at about 11am. Most everyone had left already just a few die hards remaining.

We headed south to Beddgelert, it was dry but overcast, we were heading for the Coast road hoping for some sunshine. Sure enough as we rode through Harlech and South to Barmouth the sun and blue sky made an appearance. At Barmouth we couldn't resist the short cut across the estuary that is the railway bridge, a bit rickety on the big bikes but still a novelty and a photo opportunity. We took a brief stop on the cliff top road above Fairbourne to enjoy the view across the sea to the Llyn Peninsula and back in land to the snow covered mountain range, stunning. Heading still South we enjoyed the fast, winding coast road to Aberdovey and followed the estuary to Machynlleth before heading in land over the mountain road and dropping into Llanidloes and a well earned Beef dinner at the ever popular Dolwyn Cafe. Jase spotted his rear tyre looked a little low on air and soon spotted why, a 1 inch posidrive woodscrew, great! Ah well, back to Llanid to the garage and 46psi hoping it would hold out till Caerphilly!

From Llanid we took the mountain road to St Harmon and over the top to Rhayader before joining the A470 south to Builth. We then took the mountain road through Upper Chapel and dropped down into Brecon before rejoining the A470 heading for Merthyr. Jason's rear tyre was holding out so we kept good pace and got down the A470 to Mountain Ash in no time. We waved good bye to Mark then headed for home.

Near enough 500 miles worth of awesome roads and scenery, the weather had been kind and the riding was superb - what more could you ask for? A great weekend! Anyone thinking about attending next year tickets go on sale in October. Highly recommended if you like a bit of winter riding.

Ride Report Ian Craig.