

## Rally, what rally?

Crumlin petrol station at 4 pm should be daylight unless it's storm Abigail time, it was dry at the garage but raining by the time we reached the traffic lights. (For those that don't know crumlin that's about 50 yards!). By the time we reached aberbeeg the wind was whipping and it was bloody dark. A blast up to Ebbw vale and on to Llangynidr moor through the fog and avoiding the sheep we dropped into Llangynidr then headed North on the Brecon road.

At this point we have two GS's and a Tiger, Big Nige, Russ Cosway and Ian, all excited about a bit of rallying (WRC that is). The plan was to find a bothy in the forest that is 500 yards away from the Myherin stage of the Wales Rally GB. Get the log burner going and maybe a bbq and a few beers then up early enough in the morning to watch the rally stage, what could go wrong?

Storm Abigail was due to sweep in from the west but the worse was due to be in the north - well let me tell you, when she did show herself, all hell broke loose, by the time we got to Bultth we'd been blown and battered by winds and rain, gusting from all directions. Some lovely roads to Rhayader were dark, dingy and bleeding wet, much nicer on a warm summer evening - typical. We met Richard Smith at Rhayader and set off over the mountain.

With every foot we climbed, the wind blew twice as strong. Blown sideways, riding at a 30 degree angle, visor not working so blizzard rain is attacking my eye balls, bloody mid wales sheep are trying to commit suicide, leaves and twigs are hitting me in the helmet like the world is about to end and the fog is fifty feet. With big Nige wanting to do seventy miles per hour everywhere there was no holding back. Thankfully he slows down to sixty on the mountain road when he narrowly misses a Welsh Black (big ferking cow) which has wandered off the moor onto the road! Could do with some tail lights on those bastards! Yet more black cows appeared through the mist as we came down off the mountain, that could have been ugly, we chuckled about that afterwards! The next half hour is stormy and wet, and wet and stormy then even wetter and even more stormy!

By the time we get to our entry point into the forest there is an ambulance heading in. We tag behind it but soon enough we reach the security barrier which is manned by about 9 guys in hi-vis. The expression 'fort' and 'knox' came to mind. Nige had a chat and one guy offered us entry for £30 each - ummm, no thanks butt! Back to the road not believing what we just saw and backtrack to the only other entry point. This time a road closed sign and a teenager in little van, should have been a pushover but the hi-vis vest gave him special powers and to be fair to him he stuck to the organisers line - no passes, no entry. We thought about tying him up and chucking him in the back of his van but we figured he'd probably already been on the radio for some backup so we let him be.

So, now what? We were cold and wet and had nowhere to stay for the night.

Nige mentioned that another bothy was a 20 minute ride away but nowhere near the rally. That'll do. Let's just get out of this storm. Fook the rallying!

We took the mountain road and splashed our way through the deep puddles as the Tarmac road got narrower. The bothy is 300 yards off the tarmac along a soft track which was pretty sodden by now. Time for a bit of scrambling! Russ dropped the big BM within 3 yards! Nige and Ian were feet down 3 mph and roosting, Richard must have had lower tyre pressures as he was sliding along nicely on the Vstrom. Some deeps ruts full of water tested the grip of the road tyres and as the bothy came into

sight there was just a small river to cross! Talk about adventure riding! The water in the river was over the front discs so a bit of an obstacle for the loaded up road bikes but we all made it to the front door. 10 minutes later the log burner was lit and the kettle was on. Turns out Russ had carted half a ton of Somerset coal and 3 quarts of timber in his panniers and between us we had enough grub to feed a bothy full of hairy bikers! Tea lights provided the romance although the stream running through the living room and under the front door did kind of put a dampener on it. The bbq didn't fail despite the gales and with port, southern comfort and IPA on tap, as well as a bit of ZZTop for ambience, we were pigs in the proverbial. By 3am we'd scoffed, sipped, talked and laughed enough to be ready for a kip. Earplugs are a must when you're trying to sleep in the same building as the Smith brothers, good quality ear plugs! By 7am Warpigs rang out from Nigel's phone alarm which woke everyone up except Nigel! 30 minutes later after more and more Warpigs everyone was up (except Nigel). Coffee, porridge, bacon and egg bap, sunshine and blue skies plus a Kharzy with the view of the Welsh moors. Must be heaven? Having decided the rally was a lost cause, all that was left to do was pick a nice scenic route home, so we took the mountain road to Llandovery past Llyn Brienne and a brief stop for soup and a roll at the Owls nest in Llandovery before the head south to Builth, Brecon and home. A good couple of days on the bikes and a good laugh - bothy accommodation is highly recommended, if you can find one!

Ride report: Ian Craig.