



THE BLUE HAZE 1996

Stuart James pilots his time machine (and trailer) through the misty waters of the past...

A month before the rally I'd acquired a second-hand motorcycle trailer, because John Storrie wanted me to bring a car to the event as well as my Kettle, just in case we needed 4 wheels to run around in and pick things up. So on the Friday of the Rally weekend and with the help of my neighbours, I got the bike onto the trailer and strapped it down. I was really quite nervous; having never driven with a trailer before and I was not looking forward to the experience. On the drive from home in Poole, I must've been looking in the rear-view mirror more often than I was looking at the road ahead! Luckily, I arrived at the Rally site without incident. .

The next morning, the trailer and I were called into action, as Mark Foskett had broken down somewhere near Swindon and I was dispatched to fetch him and his Kettle, back. I think that by the time I found him, he'd already pushed it some 5 miles, poor sod. So we loaded his bike up and headed back to Westcote. On arrival, my first attempt at reversing the trailer went disastrously, as the trailer jack-knifed and smashed the rear lights on the car!

But then there was Mark's bike to fix and John was naturally the man to fix it. The only issue with that being that John was supposed to be leading the ride-out that lunch time. So, as I used to live in the area, the job of lead rider was given to yours truly! Off I went with 16 Kettles trailing behind me. We travelled down to Witney, past Mike Wheeler motorcycles (as seen on Henry Cs M/C Show) past Freiland and on through Long Hanborough and Bladon,

before turning off to Cassington. I bet the guys that followed me that day, still remember the hump back bridge I took them over! Anyway, in Cassington we stopped for refreshment at the Chequers before heading off again, back through Westcote and the thought occurred to me of stopping in Bladon, because St Martins church in the village is the resting place of Sir Winston Churchill and his family.

On the Sunday it was the usual faff of trying to get all the Kettles together for a photo! I seem to remember there was also a representative from the Motorcycling Press in attendance and we lined up about 7 or 8 J Models for a picture that was later used in a publication. I managed to acquire a copy of that photo, but have no idea where it is now. I think we eventually got around 40 Kettles lined up for the club photo (below) and remember that taking it proved to be difficult, because I couldn't get far enough away to fit everyone in! Later that afternoon, I bid my farewells, loaded up the bike onto the trailer and headed back to Poole. On getting as far as Swindon, I looked in my mirror to see the bike leaning at an alarming angle and nearly crapped myself! I stopped, and as I was struggling to right the bike, a van pulled up. The guy at the wheel turned out to be a Hells Angel. He promptly got the bike off the trailer, turned it round, re-loaded it and strapped it in again using HIS straps. What a nice bloke. As soon as I got home, I posted them all back to him. So it was nice to know that when you help someone, someone else will be there to help you when in need.

Needless to say, I could not sell that trailer fast enough. Never again!

Stuart