

Wicked Welsh Weekend 2016 report

The Rising Sun, Pandy, near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, 22nd-26th September 2016

Graham Anderson, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

With a late afternoon arrival on the Thursday before one of the most popular events in the Imp Club calendar there were already plenty of Imps on site, the owners obviously making the most of the rather fine late September sunshine and anticipating a great weekend ahead.

Inside the Rising Sun our new hosts Mark and Joanne were already getting to grips with the steady influx of Impers. It was encouraging to note that all of the camping pitches were allocated prior to arrival. The attendance of the Wicked Welsh Weekend continues to grow with 36 Imps present this year plus a few who were Imp-less. This meant an almost full campsite, all B&B rooms booked long before the weekend and several other couples staying locally.



Andy Smith's distinctive Husky provided a passenger seat for a temporarily Imp-less Graham Anderson
Photo: James Henderson

Andy was a bit concerned as he had sealed the sender unit a few days earlier. Thankfully the auxiliary capillary gauge was showing a good pressure so having briefly stopped near Speech House to confirm the oil level was fine we carried on undeterred. Soon we had passed the Dean Forest Railway and headed into Taurus Crafts near Lydney, a small but interesting crafts village with plenty of bespoke shops.

Unsurprisingly the first and most important stop was the coffee shop for refreshments and to sample some excellent triple chocolate cake. With everyone fed and watered we headed off over Chepstow Bridge with its view of the castle ruins. The run north via Usk took us on some more great B roads back to our base in Pandy. After a few ales to round off the day it was time to retire for the night but not before studying the clear and starry sky for a few minutes with Roy Blunt until we spotted a fading red shooting star falling through 'The Plough'.

Saturday's run was started with a lengthy run along the A40 for the Llandovery Sheep Festival, the club having been invited back following last year's successful visit. This time I was in the hot seat of Jim Fraser's Chamois Coupé. This year we were allowed to park in the Market Square in the middle of this picturesque drovers' town, much to the amusement of the locals and visitors alike.

Much our time was spent scouring a variety of gift and charity shops looking for suitable prizes

Being Imp-less myself this year, my chauffeur for Friday's run was Andy Smith in his lovely white and blue Husky. The route took us on some superb B roads through the Welsh Marches above Monmouth on into the Forest of Dean. With the oil light appearing soon after departure



Leslie Smith's, Hilda, leads on Friday's run
Photo: Graham Anderson



The Imps cross
Chepstow Bridge
Photo: Graham Anderson

stunning scenery. A brief stop at a viewpoint allowed us to regroup before an exhilarating run over the Abergwesyn mountain pass including the Devil's Staircase – a series of tight downhill hairpins. A short run from Llanwrtyd Wells past Sugar Loaf mountain took us onto the MOD roads over the Epynt Ranges much to the pleasure of some army cadets who came running out of their huts at Dixies Corner to watch us pass!

With the weather being exceptionally good so far it was a shock to the system to be woken during the night by torrential rain; fortunately it had cleared in time for the Sunday morning Show & Shine awards. Although there were plenty of Imps to choose from the award winners appeared to be head and shoulders above their peers and were therefore worthy winners, although one recipient felt we should have all gone to a well-known optician before voting for his car!

With the formalities over several took advantage of the carvery while others prepared to head for home. This left just five cars leaving for a short run to take in the fine views from Hay Bluff. Later in the afternoon a handful of cars set off for an hour long run in which we passed a very busy cider mill, a ploughing match and sheep dog trials – all of which were noted and passed on to the organisers for consideration next time. Thanks to Chris and Caroline for sharing their ride with me.

With about 20 of us staying over until Monday and with no food available in the pub on Sunday

for the evening's 'Naffle'. With several obscure items bagged it was off to enjoy a superb run over the spectacular mountain roads around the picturesque reservoir that is Llyn Brianne. This road never fails to impress with its tight twisting roads with steep drops giving way to some

evening we all enjoyed our evening meals in two nearby pubs before finally packing up and saying our goodbyes in the morning.

Thanks to the South Wales Area Centre for organising Friday's run and to Neil, Tina & Adam for once again a brilliant Wicked Welsh Weekend. Here's looking forward to next year's WWW!

A Wicked Welsh Weekend Diary

Roy and Dawn Blunt, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran

Thursday 22nd September. Head off from home in lovely weather – we only live about 20 miles from the Rising Sun at Pandy so it's a short and easy run. Set up the 'Dandy' folding camper. Get a call that Lesley Smith's Imp, *Hilda*, has broken down in Abergavenny so set off in *Suzy* on a rescue mission. It's a contact breaker problem so Lesley's husband Phil fits *Suzy's* spare and *Hilda* starts again. She's still not quite right (throttle cable misaligned) so he turns the engine off to adjust it. Try again – now the starter motor won't engage! Unfortunately it's rush hour in Abergavenny and there's no chance of doing a bump-start because of the traffic. However, the recovery truck has turned up and the driver is as excited as a dog with two tails at seeing the two Imps – turns out that his first car was an Imp. He loads *Hilda* on the truck and takes her over to Pandy. She's unloaded from the truck and, before the recovery driver (still wearing a huge grin) has even left the site, Malcolm Anderson has fixed *Hilda's* starter (with a judicious tap on the starter motor casing with a small hammer!) and she's running properly again. Retire to the pub for an evening catching up with friends old and new. On the way back to the camper I see a reddish meteor streak across the clear sky (no, it wasn't the drink – Graham Anderson saw it as well). Interestingly there is an isolated medieval church just a few miles away from Pandy called Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern – the English translation of this is, I'm assured, 'St Michaels of the Fiery Meteor!'

Friday 23rd September. Another fine day. More people arriving on site all morning. The Friday Run sets off at about 12.45 with Lesley and Phil in *Hilda* leading and Dawn and I in *Suzy* as the last Imp (I don't particularly like driving in convoy and I'm definitely not a fast driver so I'm happier at the back – also we have already done Phil and Lesley's route twice to check it) and we travel at our own pace but with Chairman James and Jason in a modern following on behind. It's a fine route on



The first 17 Imps to arrive in Taurus
car-park, just half of the Imps participating
in this year's Wicked Welsh Weekend!

Photo: Roy Blunt

Imp-friendly roads out of Wales up into the Forest of Dean and to Taurus Crafts just outside Lydney. The Imps and variants make a fine sight lined up across the car park; all told we had about 23 Imp-based vehicles and about three moderns on the run. After a break to see the exhibitions and shops at Taurus, plus a spot of lunch or other refreshment for those requiring it, we head back to Pandy using a different route, again along Imp-friendly roads. In the evening it's back to the pub for a meal and another excellent evening among other Impers.

Saturday 24th September. Another fine day. (It doesn't always rain in Wales. Honest.) This morning's run, led by Tina, Neil and Adam Gurner in *Rod* is to Llandovery where we – described in the programme as 'Vintage Hillman Imps' – are part of the annual Sheep Festival. The organisers have closed a road in the centre of Llandovery so that we can all park together and display our cars for an hour or so and they attract plenty of interest. On leaving Llandovery we head out into the wild, hilly, and narrow but spectacularly beautiful roads towards Llyn Brianne. Somehow, as a result of the parking arrangements in Llandovery, we've found ourselves in the leading group. as intimated earlier I'm not happy travelling on that road at those speeds so pull off at the first opportunity and wave the convoy through to carry on at our own pace. Catch up with them at the Carreg Clochdy car-park to admire the fine views over the reservoir from the viewpoint. Make sure that we are still at the back as we leave! Catch up again with a few Imps at the Devil's Staircase climb as Gill and John's Imp *MarGoWie* baulks on the hill. There's no room for us to stop for long as we are blocking the road, so we leave our tow rope (just in case!) and carry on, leaving James and Jason (in their modern) plus a couple of Imps to support *MarGoWie* (who, I'm pleased to say, eventually made it back safely without assistance). The Devil's Staircase is a very hard climb from a standstill but *Suzy* does it and her clutch seems to have survived – as did the brakes on the steep and twisty descent towards the river. Catch up with the main group again at the Pwll Bo car-park for more photos. Then follow on back towards Llandovery again and on towards the Epynt



Llandovery Imp-jam!
Photo: Roy Blunt



ature! While we are working on *Hilda* a modern car stops and the driver asks if he can take pictures of the three Imps! Andy does a wonderful improvised repair and (after Phil and I bump start his car which was suffering hot start problems – seems to be an increasing problem with Imps these days – personally I think it is another issue with modern petrol!) our three Imps proceed together directly back to Pandy. It's still 55 miles away but *Hilda* gets there without further issues.

Saturday night at the WWW is traditionally a 'naffle & quiz' night in the Rising Sun. For those who aren't familiar with the term 'naffle' it is WWW-speak for a raffle with prizes ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous (and, occasionally in past years, the embarrassing). This year Drew had donated a red Stiletto so anticipation was high. In fact (shame!) this turned out to be a red stiletto *shoe* rather than the anticipated car and I won it!

Sunday 25th September. Very heavy rain overnight – but it is sunshine and the odd shower in the morning. I dig out a suitable replacement long alternator bolt among *Suzy's* spares and Phil fits it to *Hilda*. Dawn has tried on the red stiletto and it fits. I comment, "So Cinderella *can* marry the Prince," and Andy Smith instantly comes back with, "Yes, that's all very well – but until then she's got to carry on kissing the frog!" What it is to have friends! Sunday morning is 'Show & Shine' time and Dawn and I are amazed and absolutely delighted when *Suzy* is voted 'Best Rootes Imp'. It is her first ever award (and she's won it twelve years after she was restored). Lesley's *Hilda* gets the 'Best Chrysler Imp' award so it's a double celebration for 'the locals'.

Although most people have to pack up and head off for home there's still interest in another outing and the Gurners lead a small run out to Hay Bluff and back on some more Imp friendly roads. In the afternoon Phil and Lesley lead an improvised run around the local area for people staying overnight.

Monday 26th September. Rain overnight and it's still raining in the morning as we all pack up. We say goodbye to Neil Chard (the last Imper on-site) and head home after yet another great WWW (the 17th!). Now our garage contains one white Imp, one blue Spitfire 1500, and one red stiletto! Sincere thanks to the Gurners for all their work, to my fellow members of the 'Friday Team' (Dawn, Phil & Lesley Smith and Peter Hurst) for their enthusiasm and ideas, to the new owners of the Rising Sun for looking after us so well, and to everyone at WWW for making it such a great event.

Ranges. However, we come across Andy James' Imp and Phil and Lesley's *Hilda* on the side of the road and stop to help. *Hilda* has shed her bottom alternator bolt (the long one) so the fan belt has come loose and is no longer driving the water pump resulting in a soaring water temper-