

No; 11 of 2012

RIDEOUT REPORT - Gowran Reptile Zoo 1st July 2012

Despite a lot of members being unavailable through one thing or another (e.g. bike being re-shod, bike not well, relatives dying and other less acceptable excuses like "Going to the GAA", "Minding me dog", "working this weekend" and "only back off me holliers"....), we still had a good turnout. We had 8 riders and 7 bikes - Dermot & Claire, Mark1, Mark2, Marco, Andy, J.R. and myself. Dermot from the CRRG Group Meteorological Office assured us that it wouldn't rain 'til late that afternoon or evening (and, unlike Eamonn Dunphy's predictions, he's never wrong!). So, with a fairly long spin planned to the Reptile Centre in Gowran (and NOT Goresbridge as some eegit in HQ thought) we were looking forward to a good spin in dry conditions.

The morning started off fine okay but with a few more clouds than I would have liked to see. I met Dermot and Claire at HQ at Bewleys at 9:00, followed shortly by Mark1. Dermot and Claire were.....what's the word?..... Yes - *RESPLENDANT*..in their lovely new Hi-Vis jackets which showed up the poor state of Mark's vest I must say. Dermot assured us that there'd be no rain 'til way later in the day. We headed off content in the knowledge that our Forecast expert had predicted some decent weather at last.

We took Exit 11 towards Tallaght and met the others at Derek's TOPAZ station (spelled **T-O-P-A-Z**, Marco, and not **T-E-X-A-C-O** !!). Mark2 and JR were already there and Andy promptly followed but there was no sign of Marco. He had ignored all my e-mails, letters, texts, phone calls, telegrams, telegraphs and carrier pigeon messages explaining where we were meeting but eventually realised he might be waiting in the wrong spot and sent his first message of the day on his iPhone. Mark2's Beemer was gleaming and would've put Gary's Black Beauty to shame as he had even polished the wheel nuts and underneath the engine. It too was resplendent!!! Just like the owner, the beemer looks much younger than it actually is....I just prayed that all Mark2's cleaning and polishing would not be in vain and that Dermot's promise that it'd stay dry for us would be kept.

Andy tried in vain to pawn his expensive gloves off on us, despite knocking another tenner off the asking price. I don't think he realises that the cute whores in the Group are waiting 'til the price goes down to €40 before someone grabs a bargain! But Mark1 got some good offers on his wardrobe (to include the Batman suit complete with Batcuffs). We eventually got Dermot to stop yapping and got going with Mark2 taking us from Tallaght to the Naas road via Saggart. Dermot set a good steady pace and we soon hit the M9 where we let the horses loose for a bit. We had a quick stop in Athy for JR to have a few cigars and Marco to check his e-mails and texts again on his iPhone before setting off again for Castlecomer. While the rest of us were starving at this stage, Dermot & Claire were sitting smugly on the Pan after enjoying a sly coffee and bagel at the Topaz station!! To make

matters worse, the Lime Tree in Castlecomer was closed!!! (Mustn't open on Sunday mornings???) So we headed on again, even quicker, to Kilkenny and came to a pub/restaurant just as we entered the town (or, as some people call it, city). Service was fairly quick and the grub was nice but they charged €8.50 each. Thankfully Gary wasn't there or he would've collapsed. I unveiled the CRRG embroidered polo shirt which looked great on me and impressed the local GAA team who made a hasty exit. I just hope that the tops look as good on all you other members. We had a good chat over breakfast and Claire was impressive with her knowledge of the Irish Road Racing circuit including riders, venues, rules, marshalling etc. and she hooked Marco into going to the Skerries racing next week. We had to wait a while for Mark2 to polish off the complete toasted slice pan and butters before heading out to the bikes. I took a few photos outside for my Blog on biker-friendly restaurants while Marco sent a few more e-mails from his iPhone and Dermot and JR finished their cig and cigar.

It was a tricky bit of navigation after that as the new roads aren't well signposted - must get on to those feckers in the NRA who do nothing all day (according to JR anyway). Despite this, Dermot did a fine job navigating with Claire making an excellent call as she spotted a small sign to Goresbridge where the Reptile Zoo was supposed to be located. Having gone around in what seemed like circles, I asked a man in Goresbridge but he told us that the centre was about 3 miles back out the road as you come into Gowran. Mark1 was excellent help as he **later** told us that his Sat-Nav had shown the correct route and that we had missed a few turns !!! That was really helpful. Anyway, we turned back, followed the man's directions and found the Centre with no problem. The Centre itself was interesting with Alligators, snakes, huge toads, Gekos, Cameleons, Lizards etc. But it was like a sauna inside and the less fit among the group had to go outside after a short while. Naturally, I stayed and took a few photos which are up on the Members Gallery and worth a look. While one of the staff displayed a massive albino Boa Constrictor and Monitor Lizard eating mice, Mark wanted to show her his own "trouser snake" but there were a lot of kids about so we persuaded him not to.

As we came out of the centre, Marco was on his iPhone, and I felt a few drops of rain. It had gotten dull with a lot of dark clouds overhead. Possibly fearing a backlash from the rest of us, Dermot said he had to fill up and they suddenly sped off while the rest of us had just started putting on our gear and rain jackets. That was the last we saw of them.....

But Dermot can relax - while it did rain for a few minutes the roads were still dry and we didn't really get wet. The rest of us made it onto the M9 and missed the arranged turn off for Bagenalstown in our haste to get ahead of the few rain clouds. Andy2 stuck with Mark1 while the four of us (JR, Mark2, Marco and me) broke a few "personal bests" records on the lovely M9 !!! We eventually got to the Baltinglass exit and stopped there for some much needed petrol and drinks and smokes (and e-mails) before heading on to Blessington where we had pre-arranged to stop for a coffee. We met Mark1 there while Andy couldn't wait to get back home to Andrea (wonder if the new gloves would fit her? - when's her birthday??).

Unfortunately there was no sign of Dermot & Claire who were by now hiding under a parasol on their new patio which they got done using slave labour and stolen slabs. But lucky for them we only had a light shower in Blessington while Marco sipped his Latté. We had a coffee bit of a chat before hitting the road again and made good time back up the N81 and splitting up as we reached our M50 exits.

It was a great spin - good to get a good fast one out of the system every now and again. We found a new venue for brekkie and learned about Boa Constrictors and Monitor lizards. Dermot's reputation for forecasting the weather remains intact and Marco's iPhone bill will be massive.

'til the next one, Ride Safely,
Alan