



Diary of a Club Trip Organiser

Wednesday 5th April, 1.30pm: Sat in my company car in a secluded car park south of Manchester reading the Sun and eating a cold pasty between business calls. Life has no sparkle. Must organise a trip for the lads.

Wednesday 5th April, 8.30pm: Selected maps and sketched out a provisional route. Wife asked what I was doing. Said I was plotting out business calls for next week. "Over the moors?" she asked. I said it was a farm track to an important client. She looked at me, re-started her Hoover and moved away.

Thursday 6th April, 8.30am: Continued to plan route at work. Good-natured ribbing from my tolerant boss who asked what I was doing. Said I was plotting out business calls for next week. "Over the moors?" he asked. I said it was a farm track to an important client. He looked at me, re-started his stop-watch and moved away.

Saturday 8th April, 7.30am: Took wife away for a weekend in or near the Peak District. She asked why I kept driving up dead-ends and farm tracks and getting out of the car and peering round corners. Told her it was work related and she got a bit shirty and told me I already had spent every night for the past week plotting business calls and didn't that generous boss (not the exact phrase she used) of mine know when enough is sufficient? Did he want blood?

Saturday 8th April, 6.30pm: Was going to suggest that we stay at the Snot & Sniffle (Pub of the Season 1973, Belgian beers and organic pork scratchings) but due to the wife's mood chose a nice 2-star hotel instead. Drew lots with the wife as to who would have the bridal suite with a 4-poster bed and jacuzzi and who would have a single non-suite broom cupboard (must try this with the lads!). I won.

Saturday 8th April, 10.30pm: I am very comfortable in my cupboard but I did insist on visiting the wife's room to borrow her complementary hair drier before taking her for a slap up meal at the nearby Dog & Donkey (CAMRA recommended, eight real ales, four guest beers, no lighting and free spittoons). The lads will love it!!

Sunday 9th April, 10.30pm: Have pulled together draft route and now need to launch the idea and prepare a detailed itinerary prior to getting a brochure published.

Saturday 15th April, 12.30pm: Went on a Saturday run to discuss initial ideas with the lads but despite ten of them being out I hardly saw anything of them. Met Mr Knowles near the end of the run, heading in the wrong direction. He muttered something about being late due to trying to find an old car in his garage, but I was moving far too fast to listen as the lads had already closed to within 200 yards of me.

Wednesday 19th April, 7.30am: Jotted down some approximate timings for each day of the trip in a spare moment at work. Read through what I had written and decided to reduce the pre-evening meal period as the lads would just get bored and there are eleven recommended pubs, a licensed donkey sanctuary, a disused brewery and a three mile hike to fit in on each night before the late night taxi booking at 11.33pm. The running route seems quite straightforward.

Thursday 20th April, 8.30pm: Ran the draft past Charlie as it is best to get his input and blessing early to save disruption on the day. He was concerned that a 5.30am start at Burnzie's Café was a bit tardy and that this might compromise the lunchtime stop on the Friday (two pubs instead of three). He also suggested that I add five miles to each day's run and have some contingency miles to add on each day just in case.

May: Re-visited a number of important clients in the area to confirm timings. Tested the Cat & Pustule (hand-pulled ales, sawdust floor, gas-powered toilets and no attractive women allowed). The lads will love this!

June: Re-visited a number of important clients in the area to confirm timings. Tested the K9 Trendy Bar (all lager, £1 a pint, no jeans or beards, full of fit women and loud music, monkeys on the door). Sad to report that after thorough analysis (seven hours), although one or two elements were more than up to scratch, I don't think we can include this in.

July: Re-visited a number of important clients in the area to confirm timings. Tested the Farters Arms (over forty single malts, six real ales, warm Guinness and speciality curries). A tad expensive at £3.99 for a curry but still a must!

Monday 1st August: Drew up the final itinerary and added it surreptitiously to the print run of some local sports activity company. I've heard my philanthropic boss comment that the proprietor is apparently as thick as two short planks so no-one will notice.

Tuesday 2nd August: Visited the CAMRA website via the office computer and made contact with the regional representative. Arranged to meet him on the trip at the Fusty Ferret near the canal (log fires, no lager, dripping sarnies and no women without beards before 3pm) and asked him how I would recognise him. He said to look for a man with a wispy beard, a CAMRA sweatshirt and a half pint of real ale without a head (the ale, not the man!). "You must look a bit like my friend Keep!" I told him over the phone and he laughed.

Wednesday 3rd August: Entered the office to find my effervescent boss proof-reading the itinerary!! He was surprised to read that half term holiday activities for kids in Keighley included a trip to the Ragged Beaver (rough cut potato crisps, Theakstons Old Peculier, deep shag pile and a stripper on Saturday afternoons). Eventually had to offer him a place on the trip to avoid sanctions.

Thursday 4th August: My affable boss left me copious notes commenting on the brochure, stating that there are far too many stiles and too few stiff hills on the running sections and could I kindly get this sorted pronto. Only a month to go! I'm so excited, but a little tense about the schedule. The lads are worryingly lax when it comes to timekeeping.

August: Several last minute reccies and adjustments to schedules. Rang Charlie to let him know. He advised bringing the start time forward.

Thursday 1st September: Rang round to advise the lads of the revised start time tomorrow of 4.30am. Booked bacon butties from Burnzies to be picked up at 4.37am. I reserved a special bacon and egg butty because I am the Trip Organiser.

Friday 2nd September, 5.15am: Immediate harassment when Sam couldn't find reverse on the minibus and got stuck up Charlie's lane. Lost 13 minutes on the schedule. Bacon butties cold. Someone nicked my special butty and when I stood up in the van to complain and collect money I got hit by a yolk-filled paper bag. I suspect the culprit to be my jovial boss. I really don't know why I take all this on.

Friday 2nd September, 8.00am: Made up time when Smiffy took over the driving and thought the tacho was the speedo. Arrived at the start of Leg 1 of the run 20 minutes ahead of schedule but the bus needs a rest.

Friday 2nd September, 11.17am: An hour down on schedule after Charlie got lost on a straightforward leg and insisted on running to the nearest trig point to recuperate.

Friday 2nd September, 12.24pm: Things going from bad to worse. Have had to arrange for a heart by-pass surgeon in a rural hamlet due to Dave Hamer snagging himself on rusty barbed wire. The sight caused the sub- postmistress to have a heart attack.

Friday 2nd September, 1.15pm: Lunchtime! Just sat in the corner gibbering and eating crisps. Told the president to start thinking about drinking up and received a stream of abuse. Back on the bus I exhorted the lads to put a bit of effort into the afternoon legs, but when I looked up from my itinerary everyone (including Brett, who was driving) had fallen asleep.

Friday 2nd September, 5.26pm: Did the draw for the rooms and could not believe the result!! The two bridal suites with 4-posters and jacuzzis went to the two most unsuitable candidates imaginable, namely the president, who is past it, and our chief slowcoach who is obsessed by the ladies captain and thus in no position to go on the pull. As Trip Organiser I am in a non-suite broom cupboard with vertical bunk beds.

Friday 2nd September, 6.28pm: Absolutely beside myself!! After an afternoon's incompetent dithering on well-marked and fully reccied footpaths we narrowly missed our post-run hostelry, and we now have only two minutes before our evening meal is served. Went to round up the lads and unbelievably found one of them actually going to the toilet prior to having a bath!!! My friendly warning that he couldn't do this was met with yet another diatribe. My schedule is in tatters!! I need a drink!

Friday 2nd September, 8.15pm: Finally out on the (foreshortened) evening programme. Met the CAMRA guy who was very jovial until I introduced him to Keep, after which he stopped laughing and went very pale and quiet.

Friday 2nd September, 10.15pm: I give up!! This diary is finished as I cannot bear to write more. The lads are ensconced in the K9 Trendy Bar drinking cheap whisky (even Keep) and my suggestion to move on to the Cat & Pustule has been flatly ignored. Attempts to pull rank as the Trip Organiser are ineffectual against Lagavulin and short skirts. Never again!!

Wednesday 7th September, 1.30pm: Sat in my company car in a secluded car park east of Shrewsbury reading the Sun and eating a cold pasty between business calls. Life has no sparkle. Must organise a trip for the lads.....