

Summer Solstice 2012

Written by A. Cyclist

Thursday, 21 June 2012 22:46 - Last Updated Friday, 07 September 2012 13:23

At 01:00 this morning, five brave (foolhardy?) souls and a dog left Ledbury to walk up Midsummer Hill, following what has become an annual pilgrimage to watch the sun rise on Midsummer's Day. The weather prognosis was not good - heavy rain was forecast from midnight until 07:30.

03:00 and the alarm clock woke me up. There was no sound of the forecasted rain - encouraging, so I dragged myself out of bed and went onto the landing. No rain? Was there ever! There was a strong north-easterly beating rain against the rear windows of the house. This made me decide:

1. Going there on the bike was a no-no;
2. I had a moral duty to rescue my friends from their predicament, so going back to bed was not an option either. Good thing I'd cleared all the firewood I collected yesterday out of the car...

A stiff cup of coffee later and the old bus started. Not a soul about in town - the New Street traffic lights sensed my approach and duly went green in my favour, which proves the detection system sometimes **does** work (for a car, even if it can't always detect a bike). I was heading eastwards through the lashing rain on auto pilot and, since I seldom go to Tewkesbury... OK - so turn right by Posterity and down the little lane that crosses the railway - back on course for Hollybush. Just turned left at Eastnor Castle and I realised I'd forgotten my camera. Too late to go back, and probably too dismal for any photos anyhow. So no pix - unless Davy Thom can prise the camera-prosthetic from his face and email me some... (see **U**
pdate
below)

I arrived at the Hollybush car park and one car was already there. Good - company and proof that I was not the only fool out this morning. The rain had reduced to drizzle - I could cope with that. As I was changing into my boots, two other cars arrived, and it transpired that their occupants had arranged to go - for a **run**. I watched them disappear into the mist as I stumbled up the steep path, glad I had my walking pole but wishing my gammy leg would stop constantly reminding me of its presence. Entering the trees, I was glad of my LED torch and that the path was well defined - but then, the only way was up! Emerging from the trees it had actually

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stopped raining and I was greeted by discreet birdsong, but not the noisy chatter of a fine morning. Finally the concrete shelter at the top of Midsummer Hill loomed into view.

The Famous Five plus dog climbed through Dog Hill Wood on their way to Eastnor. As they approached Eastnor church, it really started to chuck it down so they sheltered in the porch for a while. After this first lot relented, they headed towards the Deer Park and the Obelisk. Then, with nowhere to hide, a second lot drenched them. The bedraggled ensemble finally squeezed into the shelter at the top of Midsummer Hill and tried to warm up with coffee laced with whisky. A few minutes later a voice outside said "*Good Morning*" - there was a big sense of relief that their chauffeur for the return journey had arrived.

The shelter was anything but - the north-easterly had filled it with water, so all the inside was one big puddle. We all noticed a large number of patches of white flowers all around - with very small florets (four petals, about 2mm across), they looked a bit like heather. Strange that none of us had noticed any on previous occasions - perhaps they like rain. "*That's snow*" quipped Croydon Phil....

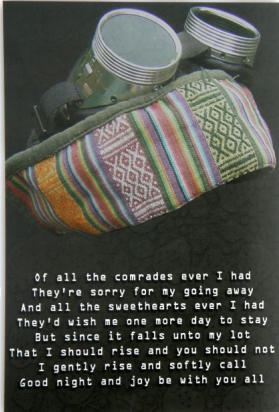
We had had other company on previous solstices - most memorable were in 2005 and 2010, which both gave good sunrises. Not this time - there was just the six of us, plus dog. Although it was getting less gloomy, there wasn't even any indication which direction was East.

But there was a seventh member to consider. Our friend Marcus Morris would have been with us, but for his untimely departure from this planet on 30th March 2012. There was a duty to perform. Su (Marcus's partner) had brought his ashes to this spot where we had convened at the same time of year many times before. There was a bit of doubt as to whether to do it in this foul weather, but I said if the [Maya are to be believed](#), this would be the penultimate solstice of any description, so we had to go for it. Agreed, and the deed was done, trying not to get too much blow-back from the gusty wind.

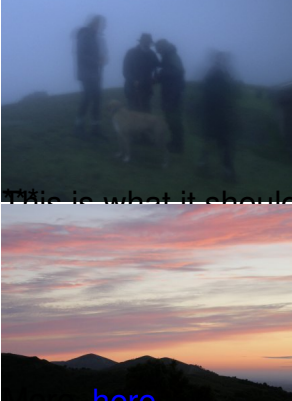
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~~This is what it should have been like (as it was in 2010):~~



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