

Until you've been involved in organising a rally, you probably won't be aware of the amount of work required, not simply on the weekend of the event, but in the weeks and months beforehand. Unsurprisingly, most events are run by groups of people in an effort to spread the workload, although there are a few exceptions to that rule. The ever-successful Bum In The Mud is one, being the handiwork of just two people, Piglet and Nick, while the Any Spare Change Rally is another.



ANY SPARE CHANGE RALLY

CREATURE'S

Now in its fourth year, the rally was the brainchild of Creature, the larger-than-life DJ responsible for the music at many NABD events. For some time before embarking on this venture, he'd passed around a collection tin at gigs, urging people to give 'any spare change' to the NABD. Although he was able to donate a healthy sum of money to the charity in this way, Creature began to wonder if there was a way of raising even more cash, and the idea of staging a rally was born.

The original plan was to have a few friends' bands, Creature's disco and a limit of about 150 people. That plan, however, had to be rethought as the rally proved to be a great success from its first year. Two years ago Creature found a new site at the Plough Inn just outside Peterborough. A decent pub in the middle of nowhere, and with a large amount of adjoining land, it was ideal. In fact, it was so ideal that, emboldened by the success of that initial NABD fundraiser, the venue now hosts several rallies each year, as well as music festivals and a regular bike meet.



Although out in the middle of the Fens, as you approached the Plough, drawing up to the ASC Rally, you could have been forgiven for thinking that you were in the wrong place. There was no sign of a rally, no bikes, just a pleasant country pub, painted white with black ersatz Tudor beams. But venturing around the back of the Plough, there was a large marquee, a semi-circle of stalls and catering wagons and a large campsite. And, of course, people.



Due to deadlines and a prior engagement for the following day, I was only able to get to the ASC Rally for Saturday, so I made an early start. It might have been 10am, and therefore not all that early in some people's books, but the morning had arrived far too soon for Stevie's liking. The first person I encountered, he was suffering the after-effects of a Friday night's carousing. "I'll tell you before anyone else does. I can't remember the whole evening," he said swiftly. But it was to no avail; as we walked up the campsite, various people were happy to fill in the gaps in Stevie's memory with probably a little too much glee.

The one pitfall of the Plough's site at Farret Fen is that, when the wind blows off the North Sea, there's nothing to stop it until it reaches Birmingham, and the wind blows a lot out in the wild places. The wind turbine farm down the road is a clue as to just how much. Having been here before, I knew how bitter that wind could be, so I'd clad myself in virtually every garment I own. Of course, ▶

ANY SPARE CHANGE RALLY



"Normal size or large mug?"
Silly question.

"Builder's tea or herbal?"

As herbal tea – and there was a choice of around a dozen varieties – is for hippies and friends of Dorothy, the answer to that one was obvious, too.

"PG Tips, Typhoo or Yorkshire?"

I was, dear readers, quite flabbergasted. In all my years of attending rallies, shows, bike nights and Bar Mitzvahs, I have never been offered a choice of three types of proper tea. Nor in anyone's home, come to think of it. I should also add that the 'large mug' was basically a china bucket that I had to lift with both hands. Fantastic.

The afternoon was given over to the custom show. This was

long, awkward pauses during the prizegiving while everyone (a) wonders who the owner is, (b) where the owner is, or (c) if they've gone home.

Rick Hulse's Smacked Arse comedy show took care of the afternoon entertainment, although, with the novelty of a balmy spring day, quite a number of folk chose to lounge around outside the marquee. The pub was doing a roaring trade in food, not least from our table of sixteen. Sustenance dealt with, I made it back to the marquee in time to see Stevie and his mandolin, accompanied by guest bassist, Nick, playing on a couple of songs. Nick sat down for the entire performance, not because he wanted to cultivate the image of a Mississippi blues man (the hat did help), or because he has feeble legs, but because he had borrowed a very expensive bass guitar from music supremo, Huw, and was terrified of dropping it. Huw managed to wrest said instrument back from a very envious Nick in time for his own band's set.



it turned out to be one of the first clement and warm days of spring, so a couple of miles before the Plough, I had had to stop, check no-one was looking and remove enough clothing to ensure that I wouldn't faint from heat exhaustion.

After an amble around the campsite which had, to my surprise, taken well over an hour (mainly due to encountering people that I knew, rather than any slothful pace), it was time for tea. I headed to a promising catering wagon called Davina's Tea & Cakes and asked the nice lady for a cup of tea.



handily held in front of the marquee, thus it required as little effort as possible to be given to the serious business known as 'looking at bikes'. Most I had already seen on the earlier hike around the field, but one or two seemed to have appeared

from nowhere. Unfortunately, the trophies were awarded later in the evening after most people had ridden their bikes back to the campsite, meaning that a lot of people had no idea of which were the winning motorcycles. A rosette on a bike is always a useful clue to the public, as well as ensuring that the winner will actually know he or she has won something and there won't be those

Each year for the last four years, Creature has threatened that it will be his last Any Spare Change rally. He has his own health concerns, and has often found that the work involved in organising an ever-growing weekend event has exacerbated those problems. But this time, he had a definite twinkle in his blue eyes, and kept starting sentences with the two immortal words, "Next year..." Huw has offered his services on the music side of things (and, I believe, the services of anyone else who didn't move quickly enough), and hopefully this will leave Creature to concentrate on being the face of the Any Spare Change rally – and, naturally, persuade people to part with their loose coppers. This year, the rally will have raised around £4000 for the NABD, and that's a lot of spare change by anyone's reckoning.

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