



Ladies Road Run

John Chapman reports on the Ladies Road Run organized by the Suffolk and Norfolk David Brown Tractor Club.

When we go to rallies or ploughing matches most of us are vaguely aware that the proceeds of the day will go to support one charity or another. That's great, but we know we are really there to plough or have a 'mardle' and a drink with our mates, or just to be amongst the machines that are irresistible no matter how many times we have seen them before.

Sunday 4 July 2004 saw something quite special take place at South Green, Pulham St Mary, in south

Norfolk. Fifty ladies gathered together, each with a tractor and each having made a personal commitment to raise a specific sum of money for the Breast Cancer Awareness Appeal of Cancer Research Ltd.

Many had not driven a tractor before. Few had ever taken part in any sort of a rally.

Some had breast cancer and recovered. Some were on the way to recovery. They did not know it then but their contribution to the first ever Ladies' Tractor Road Run, organized on behalf of the Suffolk and Norfolk David Brown Tractor Club by Annie Chapman, was to result in a fantastic day and a



Annie Chapman arrives at Sydeham Hall on her 1950 Cropmaster.

fantastic contribution to the charity of over £16,000.

The start of the run was a wondrous sight as fifty tractors, ranging from big, modern machines, such as John Deeres and Massey Fergusons, to a little BMB President and a 1942 Case, lined up sporting pink balloons and ribbons. The ladies wore pink too; the colour of their chosen cause. Some had gone several steps further with their creative imaginations, producing everything from a fully-planted window-box on the back of a Fordson Dexta, to a blow-up doll on the front of a large four-wheel drive Ford!

Left: Anne Wolton, the secretary of the Suffolk and Norfolk

Top: The happy bunch of 'pink ladies' who participated in the run.



The route took in many quiet country lanes of the Waveney Valley. The first leg of ten miles took the tractors to Syleham Hall, the home of Roy and Rosie Goodwin, for lunch. The tractors were lined up here under Roy's direction, exactly where a village fete had taken place in the grounds 100 years previously – and



Tractor line-up for the Ladies Road Run.

Roy had the photograph to prove it! Lunch was washed down with a generous quantity of rain as the heavens opened for an hour or so but, as if fate was smiling on the day, the downpour stopped ten minutes into the second eight-mile stage.

Along the route, the ladies were helped by their men folk who acted as marshals, and were encouraged by the many people who were waiting on the roadside or in the gardens, waving cheerily and even pressing donations into Annie's hand as she led the way on her faithful 1950 David Brown Cropmaster.

The route brought everyone back via the beautiful rose fields of Wharton's Nurseries to the start at South Green. It was then that the special spirit of that day emerged as the ladies joined together in a totally impromptu line-up of their tractors. Meanwhile, Annie's daughter, Libby, the official photographer for the run, organized what for everyone will be a 'treasured team photo' of ladies and marshals.

No-one wanted to go home. Several of the ladies who had collected their tractors at the start, decided that they were going to drive them home themselves. Slowly the tractors dispersed. Most were quite local but some had come quite a distance – one lady had even travelled from Cumbria to drive her tractor!

The run, conceived by Annie and her partner John, as 'a bit of fun' turned out to be just that: great fun! It raised funds for the charity beyond everyone's wildest dream; it put ladies in the driving seat on a tractor road run in every sense of the word. But it did more than that: it created the chance for contact between ladies who had suffered from this terrible affliction and allowed them the chance to 'talk to someone else who knows'. For some it meant the first opportunity to recover some of their self confidence which breast cancer so quickly destroys. For everyone it was a day to have a lot of fun while achieving something very serious.