

Chester Touring and Mountain Bike Club Coffee, Tea, and Cakes Ride – 6th September 2009

I had given up checking the weather before cycling so I was quite happy with a slightly grey but dry Sunday morning in early September. Nine of us met at 'the pond' as usual, before following Martin, the designated stand-in leader, down the canal to the riverbank. A slight upturn to the café at Hawarden gave Nosheen's chain wheel too much trouble, and she sadly had to make her way home while we explored the delights of the café. To be fair, as 'two-rounds-of-toast' goes, the slices were so thick that John and I took much longer than usual to polish them off, before our diminished group of eight riders continued through Hawarden and the North Pole (or Northop Hall, as some may know it as. Say it quickly - you'll see what I mean).

I became a little suspicious in Northop at the direction we were taking, given that Cilcain, our lunchtime destination is near Mold, which was off to our right, and we were going straight ahead! My fears were confirmed as we climbed over Moel-Y-Crio. You can see Moel Famau in the distance – which was supposed to be our lunch-stop. The lovely view of the Clwydians from the Halkyns is panoramic and worth every pant (I'm not referring to either valleys or underwear). Cilcain was then a thrilling 3-mile descent (and 1 mile back up again) to the very pretty White Horse Inn.

Jolly tales and banter ensued over lunch – taken outside for possibly the last time this year (?) – before we left to tackle more hills. As the afternoon progressed, the absence of our original ride leader and his bad back was debated. We had flickering images of him tittering while he imagined us battling with arrows on the map (steep hills). Add to this our ride leader's inability to remember more than a few miles of the route before consulting the map again. (This is probably no worse than my own memory which seems to leave me as soon as I fold the map up...!). It was nearly 5pm before we rolled into Chester.

At this point John had the idea that the time was nigh to celebrate our Member Group's 70th birthday (DA for us oldies), with Coffee Tea and Cakes (alternative acronym for CTC). But...where to have Coffee, Tea and Cakes in Chester? The Eastgate clock (yes, but it is raining now); the Cathedral (café shut now); The Town Hall (no café at all); or the River Dee (maybe for a summer picnic). We decided to push the boat out (not on the river), and approached possibly the finest hotel in Chester, where we were allowed to take our picture with the doorman - and were even allowed inside to partake of our Coffee Tea and Cakes in true style!



Many thanks to Bryan for a super route, to Martin for putting up with the jibes, and to the Grosvenor Hotel for humouring us with photos.

Sue Booth