

We were fortunate to enjoy another fine morning as we gathered at Three Sisters for the weekly ride. A healthy turnout of 21 cyclists gathered to listen to Jim's outline of the route. His speech was greeted with smiles when he explained that the route would be virtually all on-road thus avoiding the difficult off-road conditions. Those smiles would disappear towards the end of the ride.

Sadly, Thelma had to pull out of the ride as a second puncture deflated her repaired tyre just as we set off. We headed through Bryn and Downall Green and the group began to spread out as we climbed steadily up to Billinge. We re-gathered and made our way through Tontine and up to Upholland. A few members of the group were slightly shaken up as they approached the Monument when a couple of foolish drivers passed close by them as they raced to overtake a tractor on the other side of the road. After a quick water stop we continued through Roby Mill dropping down to Appley Bridge before climbing up to Shevington. The route then took us through Standish Lower Ground before joining the canal at Martland Mill. There were just a few puddles here to make the ride more interesting.

We kept to the canal past Wigan Pier and on to the iron bridge at the back of Hawkley. Simon baled out here and Anthony chose to take the long route up the canal to Bamfurlong thus avoiding the "devil's backbone" path up towards Three Sisters. Perhaps, they both knew what was coming!

Many of us have been cycling up and down the "devil's backbone" on a weekly basis for several years but we have never seen it as rutted and incredibly difficult to navigate as it is now following the recent bad weather. Even Len struggled to get up it on his bike! Thankfully, we all got up the path in one piece with many choosing to walk up most of it. There was an extra treat round the corner at the front of the farm with a 10 metres long deep puddle covering the whole of the track. Those happy smiling faces were no longer in evidence - but you've got to take the rough with the smooth as Phil 1 says. The tea, coffee and biscuits were most welcome on our return after the 19 miles ride. We all agreed afterwards that next week's Tuesday ride would commence from Trencherfield Mill car park since it is so difficult to get out of Three Sisters without encountering difficult off-road conditions at present.