

Only managed to tempt five riders out to brave the day's weather, not rain this week but glorious sunshine. Thought we may have been inundated, perhaps next time!

Cycling attire to suit the conditions was the order of the day, short-sleeved shirts, shorts and factor 15 sun-cream, all apart from Harold that is, he had a jacket on for some strange reason! Usual discussion about the route etc. over with we set off on our quest.

Canal towpath heading eastward's towards Bedford High, over the bridge and across the first road as we made our way into firstly Colliers Wood, followed by Lilford Park, (one of our usual Coffee stops) eventually reaching Howe Bridge. Crossing another road we found ourselves on a cycle track that Jim had identified to be part of the Tour-de-Wigan (just recyng it for you Jim). This took us through West Leigh and into the fringes of Hindley Green, The track continued and was rideable, but Harold informed the group that he had ridden it a day or two earlier and it was in very poor condition. Erring on the side of caution, it was agreed to sacrifice the quest, at least for this section and take an alternative route for a few hundred yards, albeit on-road. Road section navigated, it was back on the tracks heading past Hindley remand centre and into Low Hall. Here we bumped into Jim, no the other one, the one that managed to get away with being out on his bike for most of day last Sunday and squeezing in a couple of pub visits in the process. Missus was with him today, so well and truly kept in check this week. From Low Hall we crossed into Amberswood before taking a seat by the Lake for our mandatory Coffee break and to observe while a 10k race passed us by, much easier on the bike it seemed. Harold even had to turn down a bid for his bike, think one of the runners was getting desperate.

Coffee consumed and with the last of the runners out of the way it was time to get on our way again, not before Harold finally decided to discard the jacket, how he'd managed up till now defies belief. Through Amberswood up to La Cava and along the Whelley Loop took us to Lock 73 and the off-road link into the Plantations. At the Lock we turned left and headed along the towpath towards Wigan and back to Plank Lane passing Scotsman's Flash and Dover Lock along the way. The Nevison for some much-needed liquid refreshment was deemed to be a good idea, so that's where we headed, as good an excuse as any. About half a mile before Plank Lane we caught sight of a familiar looking figure, complete with arm in a sling, yes you're right it was "Clumsy", out walk training so he could keep up with Ray & Joyce apparently. Came along to the Nev with us, or should I say 20 minutes behind us.

Another great ride, with as always great company. Did we complete our mission? Not quite. Was it possible? Certainly, once the tracks dry up again. That's what we'll take from the day anyway, you can get from the East side of Leigh to Haigh Hall without using roads or the canal towpath.

Thanks to Harold for leading once again and for his investigative work on the route. Not forgetting to mention Jim, no not that one the other one, for planting the seed of intrigue in the first place.

Till next time!