

Lavender Farm

Freezing conditions put paid to the last attempt at this ride, no chance of that this time though, it was a beautiful spring morning, even the sun had made an appearance for the days proceedings. 09:30 start time came and went but we were still some riders missing, Roy being the chivalrous type he is, had kindly gone to help some of our damsels in distress, to get their bikes to Three Sisters, what a bloke!

Better late than never, ten of us eventually set out for the Farm. A mile or so of urban road led us to the greener outskirts of Spindle Hillock & Garswood to meet up with Elaine before making our way through open countryside to Carr Mill, (had one or two lost I think) quite a few calls of "where the hell are we" (there's a joke in there somewhere) even managed to throw in a bit of muddy trail (just for Anthony and Roy's benefit, you know what they say about one good turn Roy)

On reaching the Waterside (literally) we had a choice of routes, Elaine's original route, or a more scenic but tougher route, the fools chose the scenic route, they may come to regret that. Seriously though it is a nice route, one or two climbs but nothing too strenuous. Skirting the edge of the Dam we worked our way to Carr Mill Road for the almost continuous climb past the Masons Arms to Chapel End in Billinge. Crank next up, with another little climb thrown in for good measure, followed by Rainford and finally Lavender Farm (Inglenook Farm now apparently). Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the ride, we'd kept up a good pace and even the hills hadn't fazed them, little did they know what was in store for the return leg. No point in telling them at this stage, better let them enjoy their Coffee & Cake.

Eleven o'clock over with it was decision time over what route to take back, suggested Shaley Brow over Billinge Hill but no-one seemed too keen on that idea, Elaine was heading back along the bypass so we rode with her as far as Mill Lane before bidding farewell and beginning the long drag back up to Billinge. Billinge to the Farm had been almost all downhill (apart from the additional climb I threw in) tables were now turned it was nearly all uphill, yippee! Got asked the question before heading back "how hard was the ride back compared to going", told them it was about the same, (I lied). Climb it was to the Red Cat then following a brief respite it was climb again to the bottom of Billinge. Whilst stopping for a breather and chance to regroup I hinted that the steep part of climb was yet to come, got a mixed reaction to that one, a couple that knew the area believed me, some of the others thought I was joking, "hope that's your strange sense of humour" Sue announced, unfortunately not Sue, not this time anyway. Took pity on them and led them up a series of shorter climbs through some estate roads instead of slogging it up Main Street, just a softie really.

Billinge scaled it was relatively all downhill from here back to Three Sisters, took advantage of some quiet roads, first to Downall Green where we said goodbye to Sue and then via Drummers Lane to Landgate and onwards to the route back that everyone was familiar with, nearly everyone anyway. Thanks for coming along everyone, it is the people on the ride that makes the ride and this was great one, well I thought so. They do say that to get better at climbing hills you need to climb hills, probably not thank me for it the day after, or ever if it comes to that but it will help, promise! (There's that strange sense of humour again Sue).

See you all next time out, hopefully!