

Tatton Park

Finally got round to doing the revised version of this route, only fifteen months after doing the recce, no point in rushing things as they say! Typical spring morning to start the day off with, bit of overnight frost (was when I turned out anyway) with just a hint of sun trying to break through, that's all it did though, hint. Saracens Head 09:20am got my timings wrong, must have set out too early, either that or it was the additional effort I'd put in trying to escape the jaws of 8 angry Jack Russells. One by one the days riders made their appearances, going to be a decent turnout by the look of things. Joining us for the day were 4 guests, 3 of them recruited by Joyce, the other, someone that had seen our website and had still decided to come along, all were very welcome. Following a quick safety briefing and I do mean quick (yours truly this time, don't worry Jim you can have the job back) it was time to get underway.

Coffee stop was planned for Knutsford, only about 5 miles away but this was one of my routes so better make that about 12. Dunham Massey was the first port of call following a brief incursion into the outskirts of Altrincham; from Dunham we crossed the River at Little Bollington before making our way through Rostherne village and into the grounds of Tatton Park. Quite open this stretch and although very scenic the prevailing wind played havoc with our progress, the group had got rather spread out at this stage, but we were almost within touching distance of the planned Café stop, so after re-grouping at the park exit it was just a short ride into Knutsford for a well earned breather. The centre is quite bustling with quite narrow streets, not really suitable for accommodating fifteen bikes, so we dumped them on the fringes, and let the ones desperate for a Coffee & cake fix to make their way on foot while the rest of us tended the transport. Our reward for such selflessness, the hint of sun disappeared, the mist came in and the wind picked up, never mind though, at least the select few had the comfort of a nice warm café (not at all resentful, honest!).

Suitably warmed and refreshed (some at least) it was time to press on, Over Tabley, Bate Heath and High Legh being just some of the places we passed by as we headed towards Lymm, the countryside views had been fantastic, not so much the countryside smells though. Even managed to get this far without any incidents, well almost! No prizes for guessing who, yes it was Enid again, didn't throw herself under a bus this time but did manage to get her laces caught in the chain, why always Enid? Laces freed next stop was Lymm and as promised in the pre-ride literature a lap of the Dam, no takers to lead even though John one of our guests hailed from Lymm, so it was left to muggins here. Tried a slightly different route to the one on the recce, the result was a fantastic ride along a boardwalk that overhang the dam almost at water level. To get down to the boardwalk which was probably about a hundred foot below us it just seemed a matter of following the gravel path, rounding the first corner though we came across about a dozen or so steps, don't mean your standard staircase type steps, these were definitely the rideable versions, bit more path followed before coming across a countless number of additional steps, negotiated the first few before biting the bullet and walking down the rest. The end result though was superb; the boardwalk afforded us some beautiful views across the Dam certainly worth the effort getting there, (I thought so anyway). Rounding the first corner I noticed a dog walker in front of us who seemed to step to one side, thought at first she was letting us go through, to my horror the boardwalk ended rather abruptly, she wasn't letting us through, she was following the path. We were faced with quite a few steps (to say the least) in order to get us back up to the level we'd just descended from. Everyone enjoys carrying his or her bikes up steps it appears, hardly got any criticism at all (as you may well imagine). Suitably thanked by everyone (one they'd got their breaths back) for the brief but very picturesque adventure it seemed appropriate to resort back to the recce route for the rest of the lap. Don't really like saying this in case it gets taken the wrong way but you'll all relate to it, boy am I glad that Roy wasn't with us!!!

No ride would be complete without a bit of mud to show for our efforts, a dirt track alongside the canal seemed to fit the bill perfectly, always thinking of you Roy. As it happened the recent dry weather had dried the path up, tell tale signs were there that it could have been a mud bath, fingers crossed for the next time. All that remained now was to get us back to the Saracens. That would prove harder than first thought, the planned route had a road closed sign, what to do? Risk being able to squeeze through or take an alternative, wasn't quite sure on the alternative and completely forgot we had one of the locals with us so onwards we pressed (to be fair though the local wasn't very vocal in suggesting any different, were you John). Skirting round some barriers and avoiding the wagons as well as absorbing some strange glances from the workforce the first part of the closure was very pleasant, a newly laid stretch of Tarmac, almost certainly the first to use it. The next section not quite so good, the old surface had been planed and we were left with the ruts and raised manhole covers to contend with. Not to worry though we all made it safely through to the end of the roadwork's, even Enid! Really surprised that we were allowed through, can you imagine if we'd been stopped and made to turn back, I would never have heard the last of it! Probably wont anyway if Roy finds out!

Saracens Head next stop, short stretch of about half a mile was all that was left to do apart from the usual beer swilling session that is, had just got back from about 4 hours in the quite chilly fresh air (slightly longer for some of us) but you got the impression that not a lot of hot drinks were going to be ordered. The old saying rings very true you can take the man out of Wigan but you can't take Wigan out of the man! First stop the bar to decide on which bitter to order, Saracens I believe proved to be popular. Special offer was on the lunch menu, 2 meals for £12.00, not sure what the saving was but they nearly all buddied up to take advantage, one exception was Jim H hadn't bothered with any food, was still recovering from the shock when he found out the cost of the beer, may take him a while to come to terms with that, certainly not Brockett prices in Cheshire Jim.

Feedback received about the ride was all pretty much positive, especially about the hundred-yard panoramic boardwalk section. The weather had been kind once again and some of the scenery had been spectacular, suppose the motley crew that turned up were the only downside, even they weren't that bad! Many thanks to everyone for turning out, especially our guests for the day; John, Alan, Ritchie & Fran. Hope you all enjoyed the ride; know I did, even after getting chased by the dogs! Took a slightly different route home though, wasn't chancing it again.

See you all next time hopefully!!!!!!!!!!!!

We do really need to appoint another photographer, the current ones absolutely useless! Never got round to taking a single photo out on the ride, so you'll have to make do with one from the pub.

Any takers? (No pun intended)