

Forton & Scorton

Not the most pleasant of conditions for the planned outing, but the forecast was slightly more promising for later in the day, how many would turn up though that's the question? Slowly but surely the day's contingent arrived, in fact more turned up than expected, Mr G being the surprise package gracing us with his presence, bringing his cousin, a certain Mr Lucan with him next time I believe. By the time we set off the rain had abated and bits of blue sky had slowly begun to appear, looked like we could be in for a decent day after all.

The planned route was a gentle meander up to Forton using part of the Guild Wheel and a series of quiet roads, just as a bonus, the outward leg much to everyone's delight (well nearly everyone) was rather flat terrain, the return leg would more than make up for it though! First port of call was to be the Courtyard Café in Great Eccleston, some 18 miles away, didn't stop them from asking how far now every mile or so. The day's first and only incident was a self-inflicted one by John, misjudged his line crossing over a bridge and caught the edge of some slippery stuff, took quite a tumble apparently, but apart from being winded and a bit of bark missing here and there it was his pride that hurt more than anything, all credit though suitably patched up he was soon back on the bike ready to go again. We were treated to some fantastic scenery as we made our way through Salwick, Blackleach, Inskip, Sowerby, Lane Heads and finally Great Eccleston, the café stop came just in time as it happened, there was quite a queue for the toilets. Now I know why they kept asking how far!

Next leg was going to take us to Scorton for our planned lunch stop and as it happened the two-thirds distance mark as well. Suitably watered, fed and more importantly emptied it was time to get underway once more. What happened next came as a bit of a surprise. Knew there was a bridge coming up over the River Wyre, what I didn't know was that it was a toll bridge and that we had to pay! It reminded me of the scene from Blazing Saddles when they came across the Toll Booth, visions of sending someone back to Wigan for a shed load of 20p's, probably took more in that 5 minutes than the rest of the day, (it was a nice bridge though). More superb scenery on offer courtesy of the Trough of Bowland as we made our way through Nateby, Winmarleigh, Forton and finally Scorton for well deserved lunch at the Priory. The Sun was well and truly out by this stage although the breezy conditions were keeping a lid on the temperature, not enough to stop us dining alfresco though! Quite a few of us cheapskates had brought lunch with us and were soon good to go again, the affluent remainder had ordered food and were expecting a bit of a wait, just so happened they were some of the stronger riders so the decision was made for us cheapskates to set off as an advance party, the remainder would endeavour to catch us up, full stomachs permitting or meet us at the Vine or was it Grapes in Goosnargh, (just for you that one Denis).

Inglewhite was the next place on our homeward journey and the aforementioned hills were taking their toll on the weary, quite understandable as well, by this stage quite a few of the group had cycled further than they ever had previously and as you all know the hills don't take prisoners! All credit to them they didn't give up, had to get off and walk a time or two but there's no shame in that. The second group had made rather good progress and we were now one unit again Goosnargh next stop. Quick drink at the Vine / Grapes gave Jim T the chance to ring home and explain why he was going to be late (the dog was rather looking forward to having his tea) and also gave Jean the chance to put on some lipstick, think someone had told her there was a reception for us back at Frenchwood and she wanted to look her best, said it was lip balm but were not buying that story. Only 10 miles to go now, so drinks swiftly consumed and tardiness explained it was time for the last leg, Whittingham, Grimsargh, Brockholes and Frenchwood, not too bad if you say it quick.

The hills were coming thick and fast by this stage and it seemed like it was ride up two hills and down just the one, by the time we reached Grimsargh there was quite a gap developing from front to back so we decided to split the group once again. Jim T led the first group back, (didn't like the idea of the dog eating his tea) past the Crem through Brockholes and along the Ribble back into Frenchwood, yours truly staying put and waiting for the rear gunners. Doreen somehow got caught in no-mans land, got held up at a junction and couldn't catch up with the advance party but didn't wait for us either. Visions of her roaming round Preston for the rest of the evening, quite relieved when she realised what had happened had stayed put till we caught her up.

Last few miles safely negotiated, we reached Frenchwood just as the others were leaving, some of them anyway. Although it probably seemed like an eternity there was probably only about 10 minutes difference. Well done everyone, some personal records set for quite a few and more than likely some tired bodies to go with it. 53 and a bit miles covered but add in the wind factor and it probably felt like a great deal more, the last day in France should hold no fears for you now. All that remained now was a quick rendition of Happy Birthday (shall remain nameless) and for yours truly and John to carry on cycling John as far as Cuerden Park and idiot here back to Wigan.

Fantastic day everyone, great route, (need to do it again in reverse sometime), (the route that is not the bikes), some kind weather, a couple of nice café stops and as always some superb company,

Big thank you to John and Jim H for back marking the return leg and providing some much needed encouragement to some of the others that were tiring towards the end, cheers fellas.

See you all on the next one hopefully!