

Charismatic Cheshire

Just six of us set off from the Pennine Trail Station in Lymm to explore Charismatic Cheshire. John B was guiding the ride and was joined by regular attendees Jean, Alan, Denis and Phil plus a new member Liz.

It was a bright, sunny morning as we commenced the ride by entering a section of the Pennine Trail and passing through a sequence of A-gates before reaching the outskirts of the town and the open countryside. We continued for several miles along quiet country roads before reaching the walls of Dunham Massey Hall and gardens. We skirted around the boundary of Dunham Massey before crossing the River Bollin on a narrow metal footbridge adjacent to a weir.

There were several inclines in the early part of the ride – nothing too steep but, nevertheless, requiring a bit of extra effort from the small group. Liz, whose bike has twist grip gear shifters, had a few teething problems changing gear on some of the uphill sections of the ride. Despite this we made steady progress through Little Bollington and on to Bucklow Hill where we crossed the busy A556. More quiet country roads – though there was frequent noise from jets overhead as they headed in and out of Manchester Airport - led us to Tatton Park where we had a short drinks stop. Denis proudly brandished his flask of coffee while the rest of the group had to make do with water. As we continued through the park, admiring the deer mingling with the sheep, we were overtaken by a small convoy of classic cars that had taken part in a classic car show over the weekend. As we came to a halt at the park exit Denis told us that he fancied the blue Lotus – dream on Denis!

We then headed out towards Pickmere and on to Arley Hall for our lunchtime stop. Along the way Liz managed to slip her chain as she crunched her way through her gears on a slight uphill climb. We assured her that it happens to us all and it didn't matter that her chain had about a gallon of oil on it!

We parked the bikes at Arley Hall and managed to fit the six of us together on a bench table outside the restaurant. Jean, Liz, Denis and Alan tucked into their butties while Phil stuffed himself with a tasty looking baked potato filled with tuna mayonnaise. John, conscious of a healthy lifestyle as always, made do with a couple of muesli bars. When Liz indicated that she had a spare booty Denis kindly offered to assist her as he does not like to see food wasted.

We had broken the back of the ride by now having travelled around 24 miles to reach Arley. The final 12 miles would include a mix of quiet country lanes along with a couple of short trails and a field full of cow pats which would provide us with a tricky obstacle course to keep us on our toes. We were heading towards High Legh when our leader, John, came to a sudden stop. He explained that he needed to get off his bike to click his left knee back into place. He said that it happened from time to time and once it was clicked back he was right as rain. He told us it was a legacy of his fell running days. Sure enough, a couple of clicks and he was back together - just like Action Man!

We had a bit more climbing to do before we could sail downhill into Lymm and, fortunately, Liz managed to negotiate her gears correctly without losing her chain - only joking Liz! We were perhaps getting a bit too comfortable as we neared the end of the ride so John took us down a bumpy cobbled section of road to shake us out of our lethargy. Denis had surged to the front now as he eagerly awaited the next stop at The Brewery Tap public house but when we arrived at the pub it was Alan who won the dash to the bar. There was a fine selection of real ales to choose from and the locals recommended Lymm Dam bitter but at 7.8% ABV Alan, Denis and Phil

chickened out. Denis also failed in his attempt to get a sample of every brew on the bar - the pleasant female bar staff clearly wasn't born yesterday.

We sat outside in the sunshine chatting for a while alongside a couple who originated from the North of England but lived in Spain and were holidaying in Lymm for a month. While we were sat there Liz failed in her attempts to stop a pesky wasp from getting at her lager. It finally dived into her glass to meet its near death before John rescued it with his pen. Its demise was completed, however, with a stamp of Alan's foot – that was one less to bother us! John, by the way, was continuing his health drive in advance of his Mediterranean cruise by avoiding any drink while the rest of us merrily quaffed our beer.

We said goodbye to the pub around 3.45pm and headed back the short distance to the Pennine Trail Station. The weather had stayed fine throughout the day despite the tiniest drop of rain threatening to dampen the ride at one point. We had covered a distance of 35 miles.

The group would like to thank John B for planning the route and leading the ride. It had proved a thoroughly enjoyable ride that would be well worth repeating at some time in the future. Finally, congratulations to Liz who had not ridden further than 20 miles previously but completed the ride with confidence.