

We had been carefully monitoring the weather forecast for the Preston area prior to undertaking the Guild Wheel ride. News of flooding along the route was confirmed by a report from the Friendly Cyclists group who had ridden the route the previous day. Nevertheless, twelve members turned up despite steady rainfall early in the morning.

Jim T, who was leading the ride, indicated that he had changed the route slightly to avoid the area around Brockholes which was known to be heavily flooded. The rain subsided as we set off from the car park on the Esplanade close to the River Ribble. There was a large pool of water in the field adjacent to the car park which was a sign of things to come.

The early part of the route proved largely uneventful as we splashed our way down the riverside paths before heading out towards UCLAN. Storm Desmond had hit North Lancashire and Cumbria over previous days and left a considerable amount of woody deposits on the paths and roads but the route wasn't too problematic until we reached the outskirts of Broughton. It was here that we met our first major flood as a large pool of water some 20 metres long covered the lane.

It was decided that cameraman Phil should lead the way but John B beat him to it and they both successfully negotiated the pool which proved to be about a foot deep so no real problem. The rest of the group followed through without incident so all was well. Unfortunately, that pool proved to be the "starter for ten" as round the corner we hit another of similar length which provided a real challenge. It must have been three feet deep and proved too difficult for a couple of the riders who had to wade through. Jim H lost his rear mudguard half way through so had no option than to dismount and paddle onwards. We had a good laugh afterwards as many of us removed our shoes/boots to empty out the water and wring out our socks. Bits of debris were removed from our chains and cassettes and after a short break we continued on to the Broughton Arms for a well-earned cup of coffee. It was a little early for alcohol and everyone felt the need to warm up after the water splash.

After the coffee break we commenced the second half of the route but soon came to a halt as Doreen suffered a rear puncture. John B with other willing helpers and spectators was quickly on hand to carry out the repair and we were soon on the move again. As the group headed off up the lane it became apparent that we were several members missing. We doubled back to find that Doreen had another puncture on the same tyre – not sure what caused it but we had suspicions that the inner tube could have been trapped against the wheel. John B was on hand again and soon had an inner tube back on the tyre but the darned thing wouldn't stay up. You're supposed to put the new inner tube on the tyre, John, not the one you've just taken off.

Once the tyre problems were resolved we were able to complete the rest of the route relatively comfortably. Five of us called in at the nearby Yew Tree pub for a drink while the rest headed straight home to dry out. The shortened route was only around 18 miles but none of those who took part will forget it as it was the first time any of us had cycled through water up to our knees!