

Help to complete LEJOG - 2nd June 2011

Earlier in the summer, **Chester and North Wales CTC** received an email from 'The Mad Cyclist' in **Hamilton, New Zealand** asking for help with a route from Chester to St. Helens. Terry, Kevin, Brooke and Les were planning to ride the big one from Lands' End to John O'Groats. They thought this stretch looked especially difficult. In fact, there is a network of dedicated cycle ways and roadside cycle lanes as well as quiet roads and lanes that can be used. It just needs a knowledgeable person like **Peter Williams, our Rights of Way Officer**, to link them all up. And better still, meet and lead the 4 visitors through what can seem a vast, frightening urban sprawl. Of course, it takes a woman (me) to arrange it and I went along on the day to supervise.

A speculative phone call late on the previous night to the **Backpackers Hostel in Chester** finally had us speaking directly to Kevin, 'The Mad Cyclist' himself. We agreed to meet him his 3 pals outside Chester the next morning in a rather good café at Manley Mere – we are the CTC! Peter's instructions were simple. Go to the local bike shop which is close to your hostel. Ask them for a cycle map and directions to Mickle Trafford using the greenway where I will meet you. One problem, the shop doesn't open until 9.30am and no-one in Chester seems to have heard of the greenway. This is a Cycling Development Town!! Perhaps the problem was the Kiwi accent. Anyway, these guys are not afraid to main road it and somehow do hook-up with Peter just as I roll-up having cycled a fast 20 miles from the Wirral.

We introduced ourselves over tea and cakes. I did the promotional bit about the CTC and what about writing something for our Link magazine?



Then it was time to move off. Peter had designed the route to take in the best sights of the area. We wound through lanes before climbing **Helsby Hill** to view the full, dramatic landscape that surrounds the **Mersey estuary** below.

View from Helsby Hill across the Mersey estuary

From Frodsham, we were soon negotiating a maze of cycle ways to reach the Runcorn Widnes Bridge. There was one hairy moment losing the route in the shopping centre. The bridge crossing is an engineering experience – the men seemed to think so. We passed Spike Island to join the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62.

Trans Pennine Trail



Finally, we landed at the Ferry Tavern for lunch. That was the plan and Peter had checked it out couple of days before. Unfortunately, we found no food is served on this particular day. In true British style, we settled for a cup of tea! I may have had an emergency marmalade sandwich with me - thank goodness.



Cup of tea

This was where we parted company with our visitors. Peter and I needed to turn for home. We set them off in the direction of St. Helens and hoped that they might also find food along the way. Until recently, we had no idea how they had got on. Kevin has kindly sent photos of our day together and confirms that they did complete the challenge. However, our intrepid Kiwis reduced in number from 4 at Lands' End, to 3 at the Scottish finale.

Lands' End



That's because Terry decided to leave the group in Liverpool and head off to Ireland. When you have travelled half way around the world, it is too good an opportunity to cross that strip of water on our doorstep. Kevin went to London after the cycle ride to meet his new granddaughter for the first time.

Well done guys. We have an open invite to look them up in New Zealand.

Here is the route I followed from Heswall to Fiddlers Ferry

<http://goo.gl/4PiH0>



John O'Groats

Janet Gregory