

“A”ride, somewhere hilly and long - 14th August 2011 The Old Town Hall Vaults, Whitchurch

We didn't find out where the “somewhere long and hilly “ was to be until the previous week when Janet revealed that she had arranged to meet up with some members from our Welsh section at Holt and that we would be travelling on down to Whitchurch, over the Cheshire boundary and into Shropshire. Having driven down the A41 from Chester through Whitchurch on our way to visit relations in the Midlands many many times over the years we couldn't see where the “hilly” bit came into it. “Surely the A 41's flat around there and between here and there” said Sylvia as we prepared to leave home. We were to find out how wrong we were later in the day!

Janet set a very fast pace following a 9.30am start from a fairly deserted Eureka in order to get to the rendezvous point in Holt for coffee at 10.30am. This turned out to be a new venue, Hildegard's new venture (the proprietor was formerly at Bellis's and Waterways Garden Centres), a brand new café in Holt village centre and very swish and cyclist friendly it turned out to be with fast, efficient service and a good choice of cake, sandwiches and drinks.

Having met up with our Welsh colleagues, all too soon Janet was ushering us out and onward and so flustered had we become at this point following our very rapid arrival that we completely forgot to pay for our tea and toasted tea cakes (a later phone call to Hildegard to apologise and offer to pay brought the welcome response of “no problem, pay me when you pass by next “). All the more reason why we should all make the effort to support Hildegard in her new venture, especially one that is so cyclist friendly.

We had been joined on this ride by Elaine, who had graduated from Saturday “Belles” and Tuesday night rides but who was embarking on her first Sunday “A” ride together with husband Eric, who promptly punctured not once but twice on the outward stretch giving us all a breather from what was becoming rather a pacy ride (up to the lunch stop my cycle computer was showing an average speed of 14.9 mph). Also, as we neared Whitchurch the hills (which I was still convinced weren't there) became more frequent and more taxing.

And so to lunch at Whitchurch after a brief foray along a canal towpath and a crossing of a cantilever swing bridge.

The sandwich eaters (minus Elaine and Eric who had punctured again) gravitated to a bench in the churchyard near the town centre, while the remainder of the party collected at the "Old Town Hall Vaults" hotel nearby. The sandwich eaters, now replete, joined the main party in the hotel and it was good to see Glennys who had cycled out to meet us for lunch.



On the way to Whitchurch



A notice on the gents' toilet door (which would have greatly amused our chairman had he been present) caught my eye, inviting a photograph.

The return leg passed off without further incident. A further stop for afternoon tea at a very busy Ice Cream Farm saw us part company with our Welsh colleagues before

returning via Waverton and Chester at a somewhat slower pace - but it was still near 6pm when we arrived at the Tudor Rose car park with a mileage reading of 74 miles. The overall average had also dropped to 12.9 mph reflecting an easier and less frenetic return journey. Janet later emailed to state that she had recorded 140 kilometers to and from her front door.

Thanks Janet for an interesting foray into parts of Cheshire and Shropshire we seldom visit.

Words and photos by Brian Joyce